

Jesus the Lord of History

Luke 21:5-38

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- I. History's Horrors
- II. History's Hopes
- III. History's Hero

We've got a fairly decent chunk of text to go through this week, so let's go ahead and jump right in. We're in Luke 21:5-38 in a sermon I've titled for today, "Jesus the Lord of History."

Luke 21:5-38

5 And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, 6 "As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." 7 And they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" 8 And he said, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. 9 And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once."

10 Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. 12 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. 13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. 16 You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers [1] and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. 17 You will be hated by all for my name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, 22 for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. 23 Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

29 And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34 “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

37 And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. 38 And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.

- Pastoral Declaration: This is the Word of the Lord.
- Congregational Response: Thanks Be To God.
- Pastoral Prayer

Jesus the Lord of History. This is a fascinating text and I think one of those texts that hits a nerve. It peaks the interest. It taps into something we all wonder about and are captivated by. The future.

Do you guys like movies? I don't know of anyone who doesn't like movies. For me, hands down, movies about the future are my favorite kind of movies. Sci-fi fantasy is my favorite. And it's a lot of other people's favorite too, it's one of the most popular genres. Think of how many movies there are out there that are all imagining the future in different ways.

Aeon Flux. The Alien Movies. Planet of the Apes. Bladerunner. Gattaca. The Godzilla movies. I, Robot. Last Man on Earth. The Matrix Movies. The Mad Max Series. Mission To Mars. Pacific Rim. The Robo Cops. All the million Star Trek movies. And Star Wars too. The Terminator series. I just finished re-watching all of that. So good. Ultra Violet. Total Recall. All the X-Men movies.

And that doesn't even count all the zombie and other apocalyptic disaster movies. Like 28 Days and then Weeks Later, Armageddon, Babylon A.D., Cloverfield Lane, The Book of Eli, Hunger Games, Legion, Dawn of the Dead, Day of the Dead, Shawn of the Dead, End of Days, Independence Day, Maze Runner, the Resident Evil films, War of the Worlds, Watchmen, Water World, World War Z, Zombieland. The list goes on and on.

So many good movies. It just makes we want to go re-watch them all. Just google films about the future or apocalyptic movies. Hundreds and hundreds of films all about the future and how history will end.

Why? Why is that? Why do we have this fascination with the future and what's going to happen?

I have a suspicion and I think I have an answer but I'm not going to tell you yet. First, let's dig into to what Jesus says about it. I've got three points for us to go through this morning, “History's Horrors”, “History's Hopes” and “History's Heros” and the main theme I think Jesus would have us walk away

from His words today are simply this, “Redemption is Coming”, “Redemption is Coming.” Let’s unpack that together beginning with the first of these three points.

I. History’s Horrors

II.

So, there is a long-running conversation that Jesus has been having with His disciples, the crowds and the religious leaders hanging out. It’s been going on for like three pages in the Bible but we broke it up into three different sermons because otherwise I would just stand up here, read the text and then we’d all go home.

This is the end of teaching and discussion Jesus has been having covering a wide range of topics ranging from talking about authority, creation, the afterlife, marriage, money and all kinds of stuff. Here at the end of His talk, Jesus turns His attention to the end of all things, the end of history.

Now, before we get into the future stuff we need to talk a bit about what’s going on here with Jesus’ prophecy here. There are two kinds of prophecy, foretelling and forth telling. Foretelling is telling the future and forth telling is being forthright, telling it like it is, just speaking truth.

And what you need to know is that not everything in this section is necessary foretelling prophecy. Even though when you’re looking at this chunk of text in the Bible there are these titles breaking up the paragraphs using the word, “foretelling.” My Bible has, “Jesus Foretells Destruction of the Temple”, “Jesus Foretells Wars and Persecution”, and “Jesus Foretells Destruction of Jerusalem.”

Those paragraph titles were not originally in the Bible and were added in only added in my translation in 2001 by the translators to make it more readable. And here’s the thing, the destruction of the temple, wars, persecution and the destruction of Jerusalem, were all things that had already happened in history before Jesus even came on the scene.

The temple that was originally built by Solomon was destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonians who also destroyed the city of Israel at the time and carried off any survivors as captives. Israel’s history had been fraught with wars, earthquakes, famine, and pestilence.

There are stories about all of that in the Old Testament. So everything Jesus was talking about was not new, they were things that had already happened before and Jesus says they were going to happen again and keep happening until a certain point, at the end of, the ultimate and final end, which we’ll talk about in our third point today.

Now when we look at those things and think about those things, I think that’s the hardest part of this text we’re looking at today. Just the mention of destruction, war, catastrophic disasters, beatings and even pregnant women and children being put in chains provokes and casts this dark mood.

We don’t like those things. No one does. War is ugly. Earthquakes, famine, floods, fires, avalanches, mudslides, hurricanes, tornados, tsunamis and volcano eruptions are not fun things. They are devastating. Heartbreaking.

Jesus says in verse 25 and 26 that they cause stress, perplexity, and fear. Those are stressful things to experience, they make you perplexed asking “why” and cause great fear in people. People fearing for their lives and for their future.

So that’s the first thing I just want to acknowledge today. Those things are horrible. I’ve never been in the military or fought in a war. Some of you have. And I’ve listened to stories from some of our own soldiers in our church who have had to kill people in battle, or had to rescue their friends who have lost limbs or even been killed. It’s horrific.

I’ve had friends in different parts of the country who have lost everything to tornados. Last year the Lilac fire almost burned down my parents' house. It’s stopped two feet shy of their fence but took down their neighbors house. People in Hawaii right now are living in fear of Mt. Kilauea that exploded Wednesday morning and is pouring out lava destroying homes and land left and right.

These things are horrific. They are horrible. And Jesus acknowledges that here. He acknowledges an important truth that is a big part of the biblical story and it’s simply this, the world is broken. Human beings are broken and planet earth is broken. It was not created and designed to be like this.

We call them natural disasters but they are not natural, they are unnatural. God’s desire for the earth was not for it to destroy itself and it was definitely not His desire for humans to destroy one another. These are aberrations to the goodness of God.

The story of the Bible is that human beings sinned against God and then because of that all hell broke loose in the created world. Things got broken. People’s hearts and lives were broken and the way things were meant to operate got broken.

So Jesus’ point is in acknowledging that this has been happening and will continue to happen, there will be more of it until something special finally takes place to end it all and redeem people and the earth, restoring it to the way it should be.

Romans 8:18-22 explains it this way,

“18 The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning.”

These horrors cause people to suffer. The creation itself has been subjected to futility. It longs to stop causing destruction and groans to be set free. And that being set free is tied up with human beings being set free and becoming true and full children of God.

Do you feel that? Have you felt the stress? Have you been confused asking why? Are you afraid? Those feelings are real, aren’t they? We feel this groaning.

History has been in an ugly cycle. Wars and cataclysmic destruction has been happening over and over again on planet earth for hundreds and thousands of years. It's a problem. But as Jesus says in verse 28, it will end, He says, "Redemption is drawing near." Redemption is coming.

We'll get into that in just a few minutes but before we do we need to take a look at what the world's answers have been to these problems. So let's move into our second point, "History's Hopes."

II. History's Hopes

So Jesus has been having this long run of teaching in the final week of His life talking about all kinds of stuff for the last hour or so I'm guessing, He turns His attention to the end of all things, the end of history. What sparks the shift in the discussion is someone speaks up admiring the temple.

Verse 5 says, "Some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings."

Here's what happened. In 586 BC the Babylonians completely destroyed the temple. In 445 BC Nehemiah, who was born to parents who had been carried off as captives, returns to Jerusalem and gets permission to just start rebuilding the city wall.

Herod the Great was the Jewish King at the time of Jesus birth and actually ordered all babies under two to be killed in hopes of killing Jesus, whom he heard was the newborn King. He felt threatened and wanted to leave his mark on the world as a great king, so he undertook a massive building project that took over 30 years, the rebuilding of the Jewish temple, making it bigger and better and more beautiful than it had ever been.

Josephus, who was a Jewish historian of the day recorded the luster of the temple in detail. He wrote,

"The whole outer works of the temple was in the highest degree worthy of admiration; for it was completely covered with gold plates, which, when the sun was shining on them, glittered so dazzlingly that they blinded the eyes of the beholders not less than when one gazed at the sun's rays themselves. And on the other sides, where there was no gold, the blocks of marbles were of such pure white that to strangers who had never previously seen them, they looked like a mountain of snow."

Somehow, I don't know, I didn't look into how, they made these blocks of stones that were up to forty-five cubit blocks, which is like 70-foot blocks of marbles and then they'd stack them on top of one another. [Here's one artist's rendition of it.](#)

This thing was massive. You could see it for miles. Just look how small the huge doors look.

Jesus looks at it and look at what He says, Oh that thing that you think is so great? Verse 6, "The days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." Oh, that thing? It gone.

Jesus then launches into a discussion about the false hopes people have put their trust in as a solution for history's horrors, which can basically be boiled down to buildings, leaders, countries, and cities. I'll just say a brief word about each of them.

Buildings, people thought the temple was so great, this place of worship, a place of protection and safety. Nope. Buildings are nice but buildings don't save people. Church buildings won't save and protect you. Your house can't save and protect you. The earthly disasters have shown that to us again and again. Government buildings can't save you. 9/11 showed us that, that even those massively thick multiple walls of the Pentagon were still not strong enough. No, bigger and stronger buildings are the solution.

A supposed leader, like the right kind of president, governor, king, whatever can't solve history's problems. Jesus says in verse 8, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name (as the savior), saying, 'I am he! and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them."

Isn't this what we hear during every election season? I am he. I've got the answers. It's time. Time for change. I can do it! Nope. No, you can't. Jesus isn't saying don't vote for people but He is saying don't put your hope in people. No one can save the human race, no one except Him. That's what He's claiming.

The third option, a country, a kingdom. Some don't put their hope in building or a supposed leader but they put it in the "right" form of government or political policy. If countries were just democratic then there wouldn't be any problems. Nope. If the government just controls and runs everything to keep everything level and fair then that'll work. Nope. Communism sucks.

I mean seriously, does anyone really think that after all the hundreds and hundreds of years of wars and nations fighting against nation that any kind of government or peace treaty is really going to put an end to it. It never has. Never.

Look I'm not saying we shouldn't try. We're to long for peace and pray for peace and work for peace. At the same time, Jesus says in verse 9 & 10 that there's going to be wars and nations fighting against nation, wars, and rumors of wars until He comes. Do not put your hope in the US government, or any other world government or policy. You'll be disappointed, I guarantee it.

Lastly, cities. We talked about the importance of cities a few weeks ago. As human beings, we're created and meant to flourish in cities. That's why we so easily jump from city to city trying to find the perfect one. But Jesus point in verses 20-24 is that there is no perfect city until he comes. Every city will disappoint, fail and many even fall before He returns bringing the new eternal city with Him.

Buildings, a supposed champion leader, the right country, policy or city...no, none of them have been able to do anything about the horrors of history and none will ever be able to. History's supposed hopes have all been failures. Human beings cannot save themselves. Human beings cannot generate a solution. The answer is not with us. It's with God. Redemption is coming, but it can only come from Him.

Have you been putting your hopes in those things? Today I believe God is calling us to put our hope in Him. To look up and trust in Him and His plan for our redemption. He is our only hope.

We've been talking about some dark, heavy, serious stuff. But I actually don't think that's the tone of the text. Jesus ends it all on a high note and I don't believe He shares with us these things to discourage us but rather to encourage us. Because it's not that there's no solution or that there's no answer or hope for history's problems. There is a hero. And it's Him.

So let's see the hope and redemption that Jesus provides in our final point for today, "History's Hero."

III. History's Hero

Alright, so earlier we talked about the difference between foretelling and forthtelling. It's not always clear when the Bible, and even times when Jesus, is doing which one. And that's true of our passage today.

Some of the things Jesus said would happen have happened since He said them. For example, He looked at the temple and said it would be destroyed and it wasn't even thirty years later when Titus, the Roman Emperor had his army ride into town and completely demolish the thing. Josephus, the Jewish historian I told you about earlier wrote about this too. Here's what He said,

"As soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder because there remained none to be the objects of their fury, Titus gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and Temple.

It was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it Jerusalem had ever been inhabited."

Dang. Guess Jesus was right about that.

So some of the stuff Jesus said was about things that have been happening all throughout history, some of the things Jesus said were about things that have already happened and some were about things that will happen in the end. In light of that, how are we supposed to know which is what? Which I think is an important question.

It's important because from my perspective it seems that a lot of people seem to get caught up in fancy imaginary myths that they are reading into the Bible thinking it's trying to convey some cryptic message about the future. So then they'll read the news and hear about what's happening in the world and think, "oh, this is happening now." This thing going on in Israel, the Bible predicted it!

And I just think that's not how Jesus meant to take His words and I think that's a lot of hocus-pocus concocted by dispensational preachers who like to scare people and put their names on the Bible... Scofield Bible, the Darby Bible, the Ryrie Study Bible, the MacArthur Study Bible. I'd never want to add my name to the Bible. Seems like a bad move.

Here's what I think is a helpful tool. It's the picture of a prophet looking out into the plane of the future. He sees the hilltops and from a distance, it looks like it's all together happening at once because he

can't see the valleys between the different points in history and some of those valleys last hundreds of years. And all of it is set against the backdrop of one great and final conclusion. What the Bible repeatedly calls throughout its pages, "The Day."

When we think about history and the things that have happened and the things that are happening and the things that will happen we are faced with a very important question. The question of meaning.

We were sitting down eating dinner together as a family the other day and I was thinking about this sermon and so I asked my daughters a question. I said, "Hey, what's history girls." "You learn history at school" and they're at a public school. "What do they say history is."

My oldest gave me the textbook answer, the one I was actually expecting. She said, "past events." "The study of things that have already happened."

I said no, that's incorrect, sweetie. I know that's what they teach at your school but that's not what we believe. We believe that history is His story. History is His story. God's story. If we only think of it as past events then that means nothing that's happened has any meaning or any purpose or is going anywhere. But we believe that it is and that God has been working and has acted in history and has a great and grand conclusion for us ahead when Jesus returns.

You see, the position of the Bible is that nothing has ever taken place apart from the plan of God. The Bible teaches that back behind everything God has been working and ordering history. The Bible's view is that none of the catastrophes, wars or deaths have been meaningless but instead are all part of a grand plan of redemption.

Here's how Isaiah 46:8-11 in the Bible explains it,

8 "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, 9 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,' 11 calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it."

Did you catch all? Remember this, recall it to mind. That means this is important, especially for us transgressors who have a hard time believing it.

God is God. There is none like Him who has planned everything from beginning to end. And He will accomplish all of what He purposes and plans. From every flap of every bird's wings to every decision of every man. God will bring it to pass and God will do it.

I could bring up 20 other passage which basically says the same thing. But this one is pretty clear. I mean this is even one of God's names. The Bible calls Him the "alpha and omega" which is the beginning and the end. He plans everything from the beginning to the end. He is the LORD. The Lord of all of history.

Jesus in our passage adds His own weight to this conviction in verse 33 saying, “Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.” That’s a way of saying His plan and what He says will happen, WILL HAPPEN because Jesus is the Lord of history!

So what is His great plan and purpose? It’s one thing, the redemption of men and women through Jesus.

The late Edmund Clowney is one of my favorite writers and theologians. In his book “The Unfolding Mystery” he says it this way,

“The Greatest Story Ever Told (is a) title that has been used for the Bible, and with good reason. The Bible is the greatest storybook, not just because it is full of wonderful stories but because it tells, one great story, the story of Jesus.

God’s creation is by His Son and for His Son; in the same way, His plan of salvation begins and ends in Christ. Even before Adam and Eve were sent out of Eden, God announced His purpose. He would send His Son into the world to bring salvation (Gen 3:15).

God did not accomplish His purpose all at once. Rather, God showed Himself to be the Lord of times and season (Acts 1:7). The story of God’s saving work is framed in epochs, in periods of history that God determines by His Word of promise.

In the miracle of the Incarnation, the Lord Himself comes to provide the salvation of His people... Christ the Lord is confessed as God the Son in the New Testament. He comes to do the will of the Father, to give His life as a ransom for many.

Resolutely He went to His death on the cross. On the third day, He rose from the dead, then ascended into heaven to receive His glory at the Father’s right hand. Now He is Lord of the universe, and Head of His body, the church. All of history unfolds to complete the story of Jesus, until the day that He comes again.”

In verse 29 Jesus says to look forward to it. He says to “straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near.” When we straighten up, raise our heads and look up, what we look up to and look forward to is Jesus’ coming again.

His second coming will not be like the first. He’s not going to come as a baby and He’s not going to come in disguise. He’s coming in His full power and glory. Listen to His words, how Jesus says He will come.

Verse 27, “they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and great glory.” Other passages say He’ll be in royal armor, with a sword, riding a white horse, followed by the angelic armies of heaven.

And when He comes everyone will see it and know it, no disappearing people. Verse 35, “It will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth.” And this will be the end, the end of the history of horror and false hopes. This will be the grand conclusion when Jesus re-makes heaven and earth and physically set up His kingdom for all those who have called Him Lord and King.

You see, this is redemption in the true sense of the word. In verse 17-19 He says all those who have believed and trusted in His name, they will gain life, eternal life.

He is the hero. Jesus is the true hero. The hero and hope of history.

So what do we do in the meantime? Well, He gives some instructions in verse 34. He says don't get drunk and hungover and don't get weighed down by the cares of this life. Our culture can put a lot of pressure on us because it teaches us that we need certain things to be happy in this life.

Jesus says don't worry about that. Don't worry about all the things that are wrong with the world. Don't worry when you suffer and are mistreated. Don't turn to escapist coping mechanisms that can't help.

Instead, stand firm in His promise, pray, wait, watch and work hard until He comes.

Redemption is coming. It's coming. It's coming on a cloud in the person of Jesus, the Lord of History.

Today do you feel weighed down? Just look up.

Have you been turning to coping mechanisms because of the stress, the fear, and the worry? Look to Christ. He's coming and He's got it.

Jesus is coming and in Him, we have redemption and life.

Conclusion

Well, I started out the sermon today talking about movies. So many good movies. I know I'm biased but I think all the best movies are the ones about the future. When we're talking about all the great movies imagining the future I asked the question, "Why do we have this fascination with the future and what's going to happen?"

I think it's because we long for an answer, we long for a conclusion, we long for a great ending the story. We long for His story, the story of the hero, a divine man who was better than us who could save the world and the people of it. It's a good plot line.

What we long for is the story of Jesus, for Him to come and to save the world. And that is the heart of the Christian faith, that Jesus came, that Jesus died, that Jesus rose and that Jesus coming again.