

# Daily Reading & Meditation

Sunday (November 17): "Take heed that you are not led astray"

**Scripture:** *Luke 21:5-19*

5 And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, 6 "As for these things which you see, the days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." 7 And they asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?" 8 And he said, "Take heed 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 this 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 a time for you to bear testimony. 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 and kinsmen 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.

**Meditation:** How would you respond if someone prophesied that your home, land, or place of worship would be destroyed? Jesus foretold many signs that would shake peoples and nations. The signs which God uses are meant to point us to a higher spiritual truth and reality of his kingdom which does not perish or fade away, but endures for all eternity. God works through many events and signs to purify and renew us in hope and to help us set our hearts more firmly on him and him alone.

## *First signs of the end times*

To the great consternation of the Jews, Jesus prophesied the destruction of their great temple at Jerusalem. The Jewish people took great pride in their temple, a marvel of the ancient world. The foretelling of this destruction was a dire warning of spiritual judgment in itself. They asked Jesus for a sign that would indicate when this disastrous event would occur. Jesus admonished them to not look for signs that would indicate the exact timing of impending destruction, but rather to pray for God's intervention of grace and mercy.

Jesus said there would be many signs of impending conflicts and disasters - such as wars, famines, diseases, tidal waves, and earthquakes - which would precede the struggles of the last days when God's anointed King would return to usher in the full reign of God over the earth. In that day when the Lord returns there will be a final judgement of the living and the dead when the secrets of every heart will be brought to light (Luke 12:2-3; Romans 2:16).

## *Jesus foretells the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem*

Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem was a two-edged sword, because it pointed not only to God's judgment, but also to his saving action and mercy. Jesus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the dire consequences for all who would reject him and his saving message. While the destruction of Jerusalem's temple was determined (it was razed by the Romans in 70 A.D.), there remained for its inhabitants a narrow open door leading to deliverance. Jesus said: "I am the door; whoever enters by me will be saved" (John 10:9). Jesus willingly set his face toward Jerusalem, knowing that he would meet betrayal, rejection, and death on a cross. His death on the cross, however, brought about true freedom, peace, and victory over the powers of sin, evil, and death - not only for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but for all - both Jew and Gentile alike - who would accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Do you know the peace and security of a life submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ?

### ***We need to recognize the signs of God's judgment, mercy, and grace to save us***

Sometimes we don't recognize the moral crisis and spiritual conflict of the age in which we live, until something "shakes us up" to the reality of this present condition. God reminds us that a future judgment and outcome awaits every individual who has lived on this earth. The reward for doing what is right and pleasing to God and the penalty for sinful rebellion and rejection of God are not always experienced in this present life - but they are sure to come in the day of final judgment.

The Lord Jesus tells us that there will be trials, suffering, and persecution in this present age until he comes again at the end of the world. God intends our anticipation of his final judgment to be a powerful deterrent to unfaithfulness and wrongdoing. God extends grace and mercy to all who will heed his call and his warning. Do not pass up, even for one day, God's invitation of grace and mercy to seek first his kingdom of righteousness and peace. This day may be your only chance before that final day comes.

### ***Satan destroys and kills - God restores and gives life***

The real enemy of the Gospel - the good news of Jesus Christ - is Satan (also called Lucifer), the powerful leader of the fallen angels who rebelled against God and who were cast out of heaven. Satan opposes God and all who follow his rule of peace and righteousness (moral goodness) on the earth. Jesus calls Satan a "murderer" who turns brother against brother and the "father of lies" who twists the truth and speaks falsehood (John 8:44). Satan not only opposes God's rule, he seeks to destroy all who would obey God. Satan will use any means possible to turn people away from God. He tempts people through envy, deception, hatred, and fear to provoke hostility towards those who follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

### ***Endurance never gives up hope in God***

Jesus tells his disciples that if they *endure to the end they will gain their lives* - they will inherit abundant life and lasting happiness with God. Endurance is an essential strength which God gives to those who put their trust in him. Endurance is the patience which never gives up hope, never yields to despair or hatred. Patience is long-suffering because it looks beyond the present difficulties and trials and sees the reward which comes to those who persevere with hope and trust in God. That is why godly endurance is more than human effort. It is first and foremost a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit which enables us to bear up under any trial or temptation.

### ***True martyrs live and die as witnesses of Christ and the Gospel of peace***

The word "martyr" in the New Testament Greek means "witness". The Book of Revelation says that "Jesus was the faithful witness ...who freed us from our sins by his blood" (Revelation 1:5). Tertullian, a second century lawyer who converted when he saw Christians singing as they went out to die by the hands of their persecutors, exclaimed: "The blood of the martyrs is seed." Their blood is the seed of new Christians, the seed of the church.

God may call some of us to be martyrs who shed their blood for bearing witness to Jesus Christ. But for most of us, our call is to be 'dry' martyrs who bear testimony to the joy and power of the Gospel in the midst of daily challenges, contradictions, temptations and adversities which come our way as we follow the Lord Jesus.

### ***We do not need to fear our adversaries***

What will attract others to the truth and power of the Gospel? When they see Christians loving their enemies, being joyful in suffering, patient in adversity, pardoning injuries, and showing comfort and compassion to the hopeless and the helpless. Jesus tells us that we do not need to fear our adversaries. God will give us sufficient grace, strength, and wisdom to face any trial and to answer any challenge to our faith. Are you ready to lay down your life for Christ and to bear witness to the joy and freedom of the Gospel?