

Luke

Carefully Investigating the Gospel ... Together

SSBC Luke Bible Study #82

Take this Bible Study home and use it to guide your exploration of the scripture passage that next Sunday's sermon will be focused on.

Passage: Luke 21:20-33

Sermon Date: Apr 29, 2007

The Coming Flurry of Tragedy and Distress

What do we do when a student mercilessly guns down 32 young students who seemingly had their whole lives ahead of them? What do we say to those who loved them? How do we comfort the many students whose once-peaceful campus has suddenly begun to echo like a recurring nightmare? There are no easy answers or quick ways of comforting. Perhaps the model for responding comes from 2 Cor 1:4-5, which says "[He] comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows."

Suffering and tragedy will continue in our world. How will we respond? This week's passage provides a striking but necessary reminder that when we encounter severe circumstances, we must let it remind us yet again that our Savior has risen and delivered us, and that He is also coming back to complete our restoration. That return will somehow involve a flurry of destruction and distress.

Are you ready?

These studies are produced by South Shore Baptist Church in conjunction with our weekly sermon series. Studies are distributed one week prior to the sermon as inserts in the church bulletin and are also posted at <http://sermonhouse.com/SSBC>. Sermons are also recorded and can be listened to later by visiting that same website. Have feedback or questions? Contact studieditor@southshorebaptist.com

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Bible Study:

1. Read this week's Bible passage and use the chart below to note your observations and any questions you have.

Scripture	Your Observations & Questions
<p>²⁰“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. ²¹Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. ²²For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. ²³How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. ²⁴They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.</p> <p>²⁵“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”</p>	

Scripture	Your Observations & Questions
<p>²⁹ He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.</p> <p>³² “I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.</p>	

2. What do you wonder about as you read this passage?

3. The gospels of Matthew and Mark have similar passages. Read Mt 24:15 and Mark 13:14-31 and note a few key observations below.

4. Next, use this chart to **interpret some key observations**.

a. Select a few of your observations & questions from pages 2-3 that you find most interesting or important. Rewrite these below, and interpret and apply them using the columns to the right.

b. For each observation, begin to interpret by asking yourself these kinds of questions:

- What does it mean?
- Why is this important?
- What does this tell me about the Father? Jesus? The Holy Spirit?
- Are there other scriptures that could help me understand this?

Observation What does it say?	Interpretation What does it mean?

5. Now consider how you can **apply** the Word to your life. Look for:

- **S**ins to avoid
- **P**romises to believe
- **E**xamples to follow (remember "SPECK")
- **C**ommands to obey
- **K**nowledge to share

Don't just write things to write them – listen carefully to God's Word and what he seems to be teaching you, and look for relevant things that you're truly stirred to do. Then as you do them, God will help you learn, grow, and help others grow.

Application How do I apply what it means?

The Unsettling Forecast:

6. The overall flow of the Luke 21:20-33 passage moves from a tone of despair and destruction to a tone of hope and restoration.
- a. Note in the first half of the passage the steady stream of harsh and unsettling words:
- surrounded ... desolation ... punishment ... dreadful ...
distress ... wrath ... fall ... sword ... taken ... prisoners ...
trampled ... anguish ... perplexity ... faint ... terror ...
apprehensive ... shaken ...

What are some of the past and present events or trends in your life and world which come to mind as you read through this list of words?

- b. According to Scripture, why was Jerusalem to be destroyed? (See Luke 11:49-51, 13:34-35, 19:41-44)
- c. It is estimated that Luke's gospel was written either shortly before or after the actual fall of Jerusalem occurred in about 68 A.D. How would his early readers have felt while reading or listening to Lk 21:20-24 given the great destruction of their beloved and sacred city and the horrible death and imprisonment of its people? How would the meaning of this passage (both Luke's intended meaning and his readers' understanding of its meaning) have been affected by the recency of these terrible events in Jerusalem?

The Turning Point:

7. What does the "Son of Man coming in a cloud" (v. 27) refer to? Why is this important? What makes it a turning point? (Explore Dan 7:13-14, Mt 26:64, Acts 1:11, Heb 9:28, 2 Pet 3:10, and Rev 1:7)

The Call to Be Ready:

8. What did verses 31-33 mean to the first century disciples? What do they mean to you today?

9. Are you living as if verses 31-33 are true? How are we to live and prepare our hearts and minds for Jesus' return? (Explore Mt 24:42-44, Lk 19:13, 1 Cor 1:7, 1 Cor 4:5, 1 Thess 5:23, 1 Tim 6:11-14, Titus 2:11-14, 1 John 2:28)

10. How is Jesus' return significant for those who do not know him and have not chosen to follow him? (Consider Mt 25:31-32, 2 Cor 5:10, 2 Pet 2:9, 3:7)

Walk with Him

11. Jesus shares a parable about springtime in Lk 21:29-31. Since it's April, you have an opportunity to literally step into the middle of this passage by going out and walking or sitting among some trees which are beginning to bud or blossom. From that vantage point, re-read this passage and process more deeply its meaning and how the parable fits in. While there, take time to talk to God and to listen for the whispers of His heart into yours.

- Ask him to help you understand this passage and the whole “end times” thing.
- Talk to him about whatever aspects of your life are especially unsettling right now.
- Ask him to show you how to respond to this passage – what should preparing for the coming ‘season’ of his return look like for you? Ask him. He is faithful, and if you listen with your heart, you will experience his love and guidance.
- As a wrap-up for your time, read and/or pray through the following verse from Peter's second letter.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

2 Peter 3:8-14