

Part 74: The Name and the People Who Endure

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My wife and I could not get our first two kids to take pacifiers. But when my youngest daughters were introduced to them, they fell in love with them. As night time neared, Ellie would just get deliriously giggly as time came for what we called, “the bop bop.” She’d put it in her mouth, hold it with two hands, and melt into a puddle of snuggle goo.

My youngest, June, would have a similar level of amicability when she had the pacifier. But unlike Ellie’s eager anticipation she would just be mad until she got it.

But my wife and I made a rule that once you turned three there’s no more bop bop, but you were able to get a new toy. So to prepare our daughters for that, we started to warn them of what would come as they would get nearer to that date. For Ellie, it made the anxious joy a little more anxious, for June it made the anger a little more angrier.

In today’s text in the book of Luke Jesus is going to talk about a day of loss and a season of great trial. We are beginning Jesus’ largest teaching in the book of Luke on the end times, or what is often called “eschatology”—the study of the last things.

For some of us it is these passages that get us up in the morning. For others, it’s something we’d rather not discuss at all. One commentator captured the humor of this while calling Christians to a better response. He says, “**...Eschatology has very bad press among many “mainline” Christians. Eschatology is left to those who claim to know that we are now on the fourth or the fifth trumpet of the Apocalypse; or that the beast is X or Y; or that the “rapture” will take place this coming Wednesday. But the fact of the matter is that the gospel of Jesus Christ is unintelligible without eschatology—Were we to take the very Gospel of Luke we have been reading, and tear out every page that speaks of the promise of the kingdom, or of the day of the return of the absent Master, very little would be left!**

In other words the potentially over-zealous must learn to read these passages *in light of the rest of* God’s word and those who are potentially disinterested must learn to read these passages *as* God’s word. Just as Sarah and I did with my girls, Jesus does for us today—he warns us of what is to come so that we might prepare our own hearts and to remind us that what seems like loss gives way to greater gain.

In a way that would have baffled the minds of the Jews, Jesus has entered Jerusalem only to go on to predict the undoing (or theologically speaking—the fulfilling) of three hopes of the Jewish people. Last week he predicted the condemnation of the scribes, today he’s going to predict the destruction of the temple, and next week the destruction of Jerusalem itself.

While biblical prophecy often has multiple points of fulfillment, it seems that Jesus is preparing his disciples for the destruction of the temple and the endurance of the church. The temple will be thrown down—but the Lord’s disciples will endure. In times of trial, disciples must resist counterfeit hopes and instead cling to the name Jesus in the midst of hardship.

This is our main point today: **Jesus' name is always certain hope in ever uncertain times.** We'll see this in three parts. First we will see **The Name that Brings us Peace**, then we will see **The Name that Brings us to Witness** and lastly **The Name that Brings us to Enduring Life.**

You'll notice that I've included in this passage the story of Jesus and the widow which we covered last week because I think Luke means for us to see the contrast. Jesus, standing in the midst of the temple just affirmed this poor, destitute widow's offering as the object of greatest value and immediately what do the disciples start talking about? Big beautiful rocks.

Luke tells us in **Verse 5-6** "And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, '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.'"

Jesus predicts the destruction of what they see, because he wants them to see something of greater beauty and hope. This is our first point today: **The Name that Brings us Peace.**

This temple was started by Zerubbabel in the OT, but Herod finished the temple mount and refurbished the temple as an arrogant display of his own power and glory.

Josephus, a first century historian said, "**The exterior of the building lacked nothing that could astound either the mind or the eye...To approaching strangers it appeared from a distance like a snow-clad mountain; for all that was not overlaid with gold was of purest white.**"

But Jesus says those big beautiful rocks will be thrown down like an oversized Lego set. The best comparison I could think of is if someone went to the National Mall in Washington D.C. and tore down the Lincoln Memorial or the Washington Memorial. It's well recorded that in 70AD Jesus' prediction came true as Rome captured Jerusalem and completely disassembled those big rocks.

Why is Jesus allowing this to happen? Three quick reasons:

First, and we will talk more about this next week, it was part of God's judgement against unbelieving Israel.

Second, the destruction of the temple reminds us that we are not to put our hope in physical things. John Calvin says of the temple, "**So great was the reverence entertained for the temple even in remote districts, that scarcely any person would venture to suppose that it could ever be destroyed.**"

Our hearts, just like the disciples tend to immediately forget what Jesus points out as beautiful and valuable and instead we put our hope in what our own eyes and the world sees as beautiful and trustworthy. We struggle to see what truly brings us beauty and the promise of endurance because we are blinded by the bling of big rocks.

God was removing the physical temple because throughout Israel's history they often worshipped the temple of God—but not the God of the temple. In our own hearts we get stuck on the physical gifts of God and wrap our lives around those instead of the God to whom those gifts ought to point. Like Jonah, we are more appreciative of the meager vine that gives us shade from the sun than we are the God who grants us relief from sin and judgment.

Third, the destruction of the temple signified God's global plan for his people. Perhaps you're familiar with the line in the movie *Jaws* when they see how big the shark is? And one character reflects with one simple conclusion: "We're going to need a bigger boat." The temples of Solomon and Herod were massive and beautiful—but God needed a bigger temple. Even Solomon, when he dedicated his temple prayed that on account of the temple, "all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other" (**1 Kings 8:60**). God himself said through the prophet Haggai, "And I will shake all nations so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts" (**Haggai 2:7-9**).

It was true that when the Jews returned to Jerusalem after the exile that many nations helped fund its construction. But Jesus has already rebuked that temple because it was not a house for the nations. And now he says it's going to be destroyed. Jesus knew God's goal was a temple that didn't gather gold from the nations—but people from the nations—sons and daughters from afar.

John wrote the book of Revelation after 70 AD and he doesn't hold out hope for a rebuilt physical temple. Instead he says the plan of God culminates in the new temple—the heavenly temple—which God establishes at the end and in which all God's saints dwell forever.

Just as you knock down a wall in your home to extend your living room—the knocking down of the temple was the long term plan to extend God's presence to the whole world.

The disciples responded to Jesus bold prediction here saying (**Luke 21:7-9**), "'Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?' And he said to them, 'See that you are not lead astray. For many will come in my name saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. 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.'"

Note that the disciples ask, "what and when," but Jesus' answer is mostly focuses on "who"?

He assumes that when difficult things start to happen we may question, "Where is Jesus?" What history has shown us is that when such things happen, counterfeits claiming to be the peace of God often abound.

Josephus tells us that when Rome invaded there was a Jewish false-prophet who went to the temple, claimed to be Jesus and said, "Come to the temple and find refuge." Everyone who assembled to him was killed by Rome in the temple courts.

History across nations and eras have shown that when wars and whispers of war abound, so too do cult-leaders and wolves in sheep's clothing who say, "Come to me and I will bring you deliverance." As Americans we need to only look back at the Branch Davidians in Waco of 1993 to see how turmoil often gives us rose colored glasses on those who otherwise would be seen as crazy.

Jesus knows hardship presses hope. And he says, "When this happens in Jerusalem, hold on. I haven't left you. It's going to be ok. Don't fear. Don't panic. These things must take place, the end will not be at once."

When our own lives get a little bumpy—we often run to anything that seems to provide us the hope of heaven. But Jesus says, “That’s only in me—and I’m not coming back yet. Stick at it.”

As the Psalmist says, **Psalms 73:23-24**, “Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me into glory.”

Do you know who your hope is? If it’s in the temple—you’ll be lost. If it’s in anything created—you’ll be duped. But if it’s in Jesus—then you’ll make it.

The end will come. You’ll know it. He says on day (**Luke 21:10-11**) “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.” In other words don’t listen to these smaller tremors and false prophets who say, “I am he.” When Jesus says, “I am he, the time is at hand”—the whole world will announce it. You won’t miss it.

Jesus is using the same language he used in chapter 17 to talk about his second coming, and the same language he uses next week to talk about his second coming. One day, what happens locally in Jerusalem will be global and it will be so profound that no one will miss it. You don’t need to ask “when or what” because it will be obvious. When the end has come, you’ll know.

Have you ever given anyone instructions on how to get to Seeley? What do we tell them? “Turn at the cow.” Do we have to specify which cow? No. They’ll know.

But before the sky itself announces Jesus coming, Jesus says there’s still more to come.

He tells his disciples that the temple that they see will be torn down, but the new temple that God is building in his church—the one that cannot be seen by human eyes—that one will endure despite everything. He says, **Luke 21:12-15**, “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. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth of wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.”

This is our second point this morning: **The Name that Brings us to Witness.**

Before the end comes there will be those who face suffering on all sides—from the Jews in their synagogues, from the jailers in their prisons, from the governors in their councils and from kings their courts. Verse 16 says it will even be within our own home and friend groups.

Why is there such opposition? Because of the name of Jesus. As national Israel will face judgement because they did not know Jesus’ name—Jesus transitions here to those who are persecuted in this age on account of his name.

The New Testament really sketches out the remaining course of human history in four epochs of time. Those are the age of Christ, the church age, the second coming, and the eternal kingdom. While Christians may have different opinions on what happens inside the church age, and what happens in the second coming—we all agree broadly on this pattern. Jesus here is describing the church age—the time after Jesus’ ascension into heaven and prior to his glorious return.

Listen to the similar language Jesus uses in the book of Acts. Right before he ascends into heaven he says, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (**Acts 1:8b**). And again when Jesus calls Paul to ministry in **Acts 9:15**, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."

Acts is Luke's sequel to the age of Christ, but it is the prequel to the age of the church. It picks up after the earthly ministry of Jesus and begins to show the process of the church bearing witness to the world. It starts huddled in fear in Jerusalem and ends being declared even to the heart of Rome.

But let's not bury the lede here again. How does this massive and global witness take off? Not through winsome preachers, not through stellar growth movements, not by social media influencers or powerful converts. But by persecution.

People will lay hands on you, persecute you, deliver you over to the authorities and do even far worse. That's not the best sales pitch. But does our idea of the church look like Jesus'?

Isn't this what Jesus has been preparing the church for all along? "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" (**Luke 9:23-26**)

This is why Jesus affirms Peter's profession of faith saying, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father who is in heaven." We will not follow Jesus unless God opens our eyes to the beauty of Jesus. Following Jesus challenges everything we hold dear, but the beauty of conversion is that we learn to hold Jesus' dearer.

John Owen, writing amidst persecution in 17th century England, put it this way: He says you can take a fish out of the cold darkness of the ocean and place him on a warm beach but it wouldn't accomplish anything. Why? Because the fish can't receive any refreshment from the sun and the air.

We too cannot look at what Jesus calls the church to on account of his name and find anything attractive in it unless we are converted from fish to mammals. But salvation converts us—it gives us lungs for Jesus. Owen says, "Music has no pleasure in it unto them that cannot hear; nor the most beautiful colors unto them that cannot see..." so too the person of Jesus and even the joys of heaven, "would not be more advantageous to the person not renewed by the Spirit of grace in this life."

For Christians, the name of Jesus becomes the sun of their life. He is our snorkel when things get hard. He is our joy when things seem bleak. He is our life, when we sense only death.

The sufficiency of Jesus and the reward of our conversion is seen when Jesus says this: (**Luke 21:14-15**), "Settle it therefore in your minds (*kardia*s) not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict."

There are two imperatives in our text today. The first was "do not be led astray," the second is "settle it therefore in your hearts to not be concerned with what you will say, or how you will answer."

We can only keep those commands when Jesus is distinct from everything else. Why will we not be lead astray in a world that goes crazy? Because we know what Jesus sounds like, and we know he hasn't left us. How will we not be worried about how to respond when we are persecuted? Because Jesus himself fills our mouths with the boldness of the gospel that this world will not be able to withstand or contradict.

When it comes to storming the gates of hell, snatching people from death to life, persecution is often the bridge that gets us there—but the Spirit is the battering ram which tears down the door as we bear witness to Jesus.

Early in the book of Luke Jesus sent out his disciples saying (**Luke 10:3**) "Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." But when Jesus left the church he promised to give those little lambs the heart of lions. Connecting the transition from the church age into the second coming Jesus says (**Acts 1:7-8**): "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

You may not be a bold evangelist. But the Spirit is. You may not be a people person. But the Spirit is. You may not thrive under pressure. But the Spirit does. And he does it in you. This is the joy of the temple being gone. We don't need to go to the presence of God, the presence of God has come to us. We don't need to figure out how to gain worldly power for our endurance because we already have supernatural power in the Holy Spirit. May it be said of us what Luke says in **Acts 4:31**, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and continued to speak the word of God with boldness."

And we are very bold—for the hope we have in Christ is greater than life itself.

And here we see our final point this morning: **The Name that Brings us Enduring Life.**

Luke 21:16-19, "You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair on your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives."

Don't you love how Jesus puts that? Some of you are going to be killed. But not a hair on your head will perish. That's a weird way to put it isn't it? You're going to die, but at least it'll be a good hair day.

It was just moment's ago in Luke's narrative where Jesus proclaimed the reality of the resurrection from the dead--and here this is what Jesus is talking about. Hair is no good on a corpse--and here Jesus is saying that our hope is so locked up in a real resurrection that our restoration will be final and full.

Momma might blot your name out of her will on account of your faith in Jesus. Your brother might turn you into the Muslim or Hindu authorities. Your best friend might forsake you--but Jesus knows every hair on that head. Jesus keeps the receipts and the dead in Christ not only live, but will one day be rejoined with their physical body. You can't keep track of your keys--but dear saint in Christ, your savior will find every hair lost on account of his name.

Death is real. Death is painful. Death is brutal. But death is not the end of the Lord's saints. The same name that rose from the dead will also raise those who have died on account of his name.

It is this rock solid promise of the boldness of the Spirit and affirmation of eternal hope that illumines the pages of church history. One faithful Christian was sentenced to death in the age of the Reformation and one of the officials who was going to put him to death for his faith in Christ alone whispered in his ear, "I know you have great reluctance publicly to abjure your faith. So just whisper your confession in my ear and I will absolve your sin." The man responded loudly, "Trouble me not friar, for I have confessed my sins to God and obtained absolution through the merits of Jesus Christ." He then turned to his executioner and said, "Let me not be pestered with these men. Perform your duty."

In his witness, by his endurance, he gained his life.

One observer commented on the demeanor of one man being walked to his death, "It was if this man was walking to his wedding." When asked why, he said, "God be praised, I've never been better, for now I'm almost at home. I lack but two hills to go over, then I am at my Father's house."

In his witness, by his endurance, he gained his life.

John Bradford turned to his fellow martyr while being burned at the stake and said, "Be of good comfort, brother, for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night."

Though hair in this life may be soiled and singed, all will be accounted for. So says Paul to the church, (**1 Corinthians 15:51-55**), "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed...then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is your victory. O death, where is your sting.'"

This is the good news of our gospel, a gospel that saves us, and a gospel that will save others. This world will crumble and careen, but God's church will endure forever. Just like the widow, we might be overlooked and oppressed, but we have treasure unimaginable.

Two words for us in closing.

First, repent and come to Jesus. This world will challenge, crush and take everything from you. So come to the only one who has given you the one thing that will last—life in his name.

But secondly, let us all be concerned with what Jesus has made clear about the end. Jesus does tell us when he will come back. He does give us a sign. Do you know what it is: (**Matthew 24:14**) "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." When will Jesus come back? When the work is done. When God's souls are saved. And how has he deemed that to happen? By preaching Christ.

And while we do not have a physical temple a sign of strength or place of refuge. We have something better: **1 Peter 1:4-5, 9-10**, "As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up into a spiritual house...But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nations, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Let us then, as humble widows in the flesh, but beautiful stones in the Spirit put all we have to live on into the hope and plan of the name of Jesus.