

The end of the world as we know it

Luke 21.5-19

Jesus predicts a time when things will change – for the worse. The Temple will fall and his followers will face persecution. But they won't need to plan how to defend themselves, for Jesus will equip them for the trials ahead and in death they will gain their eternal reward.

Now read **Luke 21.5-19** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

'When will the world end?' is not a new question! The world as Jesus describes it is as familiar to us as it was to his disciples. That is the world for which we want to see the future. But Jesus, despite his less than optimistic predictions, sees the longer story. Whatever is lost from this world will be more than compensated for in the next.



LISTEN

When everything in life is overwhelming, we often turn to music. When you are sad, do you listen to sad music to suit your mood? Or a cheerful tune to change it? Music triggers a response in the brain that brings pleasure. It provides an escape from too much reality, often by triggering memories of previous experiences. Listen to some music that suits your mood today. Then try different music to see how it changes your mood. Give thanks for the gift of music.



How do you keep going when things get tough? What words might God give us to help people in challenging times?

BUILD a prayer

Build a simple tower using blocks, dominoes or even paperback books! It's easy to start, but as it gets higher you will need to work more carefully. When you reach the point that it falls down, start again. As you place each item, pray for someone you know. As you progress upwards, pray for your community, the country, the world. When it falls down this time, how does that make you feel? Give thanks that God does not call us to do the impossible, unless he is in the situation making it possible.

SECURITY

Sit quietly in a comfortable place. Look around you. Do you feel safe, secure, happy? If so, what aspects of your life and your surroundings create that feeling? If not, is there anything you could change? Our sense of security is affected by our relationships with others as well as our physical space. Are there any uncomfortable situations which may need resolving? Your faith in Jesus can be the most stable, consistent aspect of your life. Read Psalm 98 and be reassured of God's goodness.

GOOD NEWS

Watch the day's news and compare current events to the description Jesus gives of events to come before 'the end'. We shouldn't get tied up with working out 'when' – Jesus says these things will happen, not how long they will last. As usual with his teaching, Jesus is making a different point. We do not need to worry about it – because when bad things happen, that is our opportunity to witness to our faith, and he will give us the words to do that. Each day this week, pick one news item and write down how, if you had the appropriate influence/authority, you might respond to that event in the light of your Christian faith.



Ask friends or family, 'What's the longest ago thing you can remember?' There are many events, national and personal, that are marked each year: does remembering the past make a difference to how you look at the future? Can you see how God was present in what happened, and therefore trust him to be with you in all things to come? Think about this yourself, but also discuss it with friends or members of your family.

Luke 21.5-19

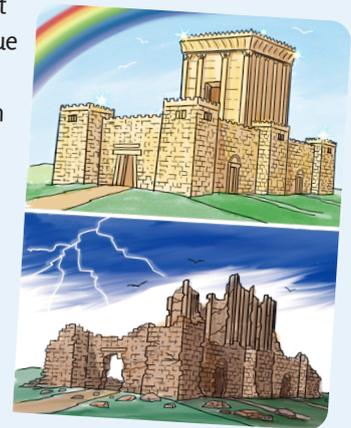
Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

The Temple was huge; the Temple was grand; the Temple was covered in sparkling gemstones and decorated with ornaments. Jesus listened. He listened and heard people talking about the Temple's beauty. 'These things that you see,' he said, 'will all be thrown down one day. Not one stone will be left on top of another.' The disciples couldn't imagine the huge, grand, sparkling Temple being thrown down. 'When will this happen?' they asked. They were sure that Jesus must be talking about the end of the world. 'What signs should we look out for?'

Jesus didn't answer directly. 'Beware that you are not led astray,' he said. 'Many will come in my name, saying, "I am he, the time is near." Don't follow them.' Jesus continued, 'Before the end, there will be wars. Don't be scared. These things must happen, but the end won't follow immediately. Countries will fight one another; there will be earthquakes, starvation and terrible diseases; you will see incredible signs from heaven.'

The disciples tried to imagine all the things Jesus was talking about. But he hadn't finished. 'Before all these things happen, you will be arrested and insulted because you believe in me. You will be brought in front of kings to explain yourselves. This will give you the chance to tell people about me. Don't worry about what to say because I will give you words and wisdom, so that nobody will be able to argue against you. You will be hated because of me; even your families and friends will turn against you, but not a hair of your heads will be harmed. You will be rewarded in heaven if you hang on and endure.'

Luke 21.5-19



Did you know?

- The Temple Jesus is talking about was the second Temple to be built after the previous one was destroyed, it was even more beautiful than the one before.
- To endure means to suffer, to put up with problems.

Luke 21.5-19 (NRSV)

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, 'As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.'

They asked him, 'Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?' And he said, 'Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, "I am he!" and, "The time is near!" Do not go after them.'

'When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.' Then he said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be

great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

'But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defence in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls.'