

Hold on! Help Is Near!

Luke 21:5-28 ⁵ Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, ⁶ "These things which you see-- the days will come in which not *one* stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." ⁷ So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign *will there be* when these things are about to take place?" ⁸ And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am *He*,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. ⁹ "But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end *will not come* immediately." ¹⁰ Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ "And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. ¹² "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute *you*, delivering *you* up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. ¹³ "But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. ¹⁴ "Therefore settle *it* in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; ¹⁵ "for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. ¹⁶ "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put *some* of you to death. ¹⁷ "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. ¹⁸ "But not a hair of your head shall be lost. ¹⁹ "By your patience possess your souls. ²⁰ "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. ²¹ "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. ²² "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ²³ "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. ²⁴ "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. ²⁵ "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. ²⁷ "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

The Sunday school kids are going to be learning today about the crossing of the red sea. That account begins with a real problem. Two million Israelites stuck between the red sea and the armies of Pharaoh. No way out. No escape. It's the kind of cliff hanger that what make Hollywood proud. What is going to happen to them?

It is at this point that the scripture for the first time use the expression "wait on the Lord." Standing there on the verge of certain destruction. Moses says, "Stand still and you will see the salvation of the Lord." And of course, that is exactly what they saw. The Lord opened the red sea and delivered his people.

It may be the first time the phrase is used but it certainly isn't the last. Two weeks ago we heard the same expression in Psalm 46 "Be still and know that I am God." Phrases with similar meanings are used again and again throughout scripture. "Wait on the Lord."

We might mistakenly think of this as a command. Like when we were little and our mother told us to "be quiet," because she was sick of all the fighting

But from God it is actually coming to us not as a command, do this, but as a promise and a word of encouragement. Like when as a boy you did something foolish. Perhaps you attempted to climb up the house and ended up dangling from the gutter. So, your mother comes running out and says, "wait, hold on, help is coming."

This was Moses' intention to the Israelites. Don't give up. Trust in the Lord. His salvation is coming. This is the message Jesus would have us hear in our text this morning.

The last verse of our text sums it all up:

Luke 21:28²⁸ "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

When the armies of Pharaoh are coming down upon us, when it looks like things are hopeless, Jesus says to us, "Hold on your salvation is near at hand."

Of course, the difference between Jesus saying it and our mothers is that we know Jesus is holding onto us.

Hold on, your salvation is near.

How long do we hold on? How long do we wait?

In verse eight our text states: **Luke 21:8⁸ And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them.**

Our text specifically not to follow any who say "the time has drawn near"

Now of course the bible itself says "the time is short" and "I am coming quickly." In a general sense we recognize that the time is near and short, and we might even say "It seems as though it is almost the end." This is the attitude that Jesus wants us to have. To look around and realize the truth that this world is very evil. He wants us to live as if Christ is coming tomorrow, because Christ might be coming tomorrow.

What Jesus speaks of here in our text are those who say specific, He is coming at this day or at this hour or this year.

Such men Jesus says do not follow. This word follow means discipleship. Following to learn from them. We are to follow Jesus we are not to follow or become disciples of such as these.

The men in Africa were always asking me, "how do we know who is a false teachers?" The answer is usually you must study God's word. You must know God's word. Then you will know when someone teaches contrary to it. But here is one definite easy sign. Anyone who attempts to predict the return of the Lord. Anyone who says this date or this year, or even definitely within the next five years. Jesus says such are false teachers.

God's word is clear. There is no way to know when Jesus will return.

**Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven,
1 Thessalonians 5:2 the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.**

Jesus explains that coming as a thief in the night means that He will come when no one is expecting. So, the one thing we can say for sure is that if someone predicts His coming, He will not come on that day.

We do not know how long, but we do know we can make it because it is not us who are holding on but rather God who is holding on to us. Jesus assures using verse 18:

Luke 21:18 ¹⁸ "But not a hair of your head shall be lost.

This promise is given to all who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus will hold on to us until the day comes. I use the expression hold on but only as a colloquialism. It is not we who are holding but God who is holding on to us. Ask it and the Lord will hold on to you. Hold on, wait, be patient, trust. Your salvation is near.

Hold On. God is at Work.

We have a very long text today. There is a lot in there. But mostly its just a description of all the bad things that are going to happen. What is important is what comes later in verse 28.

28 "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

Once again, we may be tempted to misread this last verse as though it is telling us that these are signs of when Jesus is coming. As if when these things happen, He is five or ten years away. But that is not the case. We saw in verse eight that anyone who says "the time is near" is one we should not follow. You can see that also in this verse because it says, "these things begin to happen." These signs Jesus talks about are only the beginning.

Rather this verse is really all about is the attitude we should have when we see these things. The attitude that we ought to have is not despair, but rather we ought to have hope. Jesus said these things would happen they are happening just as Jesus said. Our Savior is coming, and He is coming quickly. We do not know when or how long but He is coming.

We are back to what Moses told the Israelites when the Egyptians were descending upon them "Wait and you shall see the salvation of the Lord." When the forces of the enemy are arrayed coming down against us, our attitude ought to be, "well this will be interesting to see what God does to save us."

There is a correlation here between our text and Daniel four that we have been studying in Bible class. In Daniel four Nebuchadnezzar is told that he will live as a beast for seven times. This is often mistaken to mean seven years. But we saw in Bible class that this is not the case. The word for year or day or month is not used but rather a word that means a certain unspecified amount of time. When Daniel interprets the dream for Nebuchadnezzar he says, "till you know that the most high rules." The result is more important not the exact length of time. God would work in Nebuchadnezzar's heart until God's work was done. The point of the word is that God would be at work and the end will come when God's word is complete.

So also, "Kairos" here in our text is an unspecified amount of time. It is a time that will continue until God completes his work. God is at work.

All these things the wars and rumors of wars are a reminder to look up with hope knowing that God is at work in the world. When cold and warm fronts meet you often get storms and tornados. When God is at work in the world through the gospel to bring men to repentance and salvation, the result is wars and fighting and many other evil things as God wrestles with Satan and with men. It can not be any other way unless God were to give up on us and leave us to be. Therefore, these things are not a source of depression to us but a source of hope.

The spirit of the Lord is at work through His word. The Lord reigns and is coming. Lift up your heads in joy and in hope for the He the one for whom we wait is coming.

There are certainly times in our lives when things seem hopeless and we feel like giving up, but the Lord says do not despair, rather lift up your heads in hope for the Lord is coming. Wait and you will see the salvation of the Lord. Wait and you will see something greater than when God opened the Red Sea for the children of Israel. As we wait God promises to hold on to us. As we wait the troubles are a sign that God is at work. We wait with hope. Amen