

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 21:5-12

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. We continue our study of Luke chapter 21, and today we will be reading verses 5 through 12.

Before we read, let us briefly discuss what is commonly referred to as the Olivet Discourse, which is the scripture we are about to examine. This passage poses certain difficulties in interpretation, and different commentators offer varying explanations. Principally, the Olivet Discourse is recorded in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Mark chapter 13, and Luke chapter 21 from verse 5 to the end. The Gospel of Luke uses only 34 verses to cover the entire Olivet Discourse; Mark uses 37 verses; while Matthew devotes two chapters—a total of 97 verses—to recount it. Therefore, Matthew's account is the most comprehensive. To fully understand the Olivet Discourse, one should read Matthew; whereas the authors of Mark and Luke have different emphases based on their specific purposes and audiences. Often, even when you read highly similar phrases, their placement in different contexts means they might not be referring to the exact same event.

Because this concerns prophecy, revelation is required to fully comprehend it. This is especially true among theologians of different stances, whose interpretations often diverge drastically. Therefore, as we approach this passage of scripture, we do so with a humble heart, not assuming that we already know or understand it completely. Instead, what matters more is finding what we can read in these verses that applies to our lives today, receiving those insights as God's speaking to us today. As for how the prophecies themselves will be fulfilled, let us maintain a more flexible attitude. I also invite the saints to bring what they hear from my commentary before God to seek Him for themselves; under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God will personally make you understand the words He wants to say to you.

Prophecy is difficult because its fulfillment usually spans different eras. In this specific passage of the Olivet Discourse, some elements were fulfilled in A.D. 70 during the days of Jerusalem's distress, while others await the occurrences that will take place during the Great Tribulation when Jesus returns. In the Gospel of Matthew, the discourse is specifically divided into a section spoken to the Jews, a section spoken to the church, and a section spoken to the unbelieving nations. As we confront these complexities, we still ask God for His grace to personally lead us so that we may understand what He desires to say to each of us today.

Verse 5: "Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said,"

At that time, Jesus had entered the temple as a prophet on the third day and spoken many words. As they were leaving the temple, the disciples looked at the structure. This was the Second Temple, originally built by Zerubbabel. By the time of King Herod, it was rebuilt upon Zerubbabel's foundation, a project that took 46 years. To curry favor with the Jews, King Herod made this temple magnificent and splendid, far exceeding God's original intent for the temple. When people beheld such a grand temple, their hearts were always filled with admiration, and they even assumed this was exactly what would bring glory to God.

Verse 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."

Jesus' perspective was entirely different from that of His disciples. What the disciples saw was the external adornment, the various beautiful architectures, the grandeur, and the magnificence; what Jesus looked at, however, was God's heart. What is made by human hands and added by human effort is not what God desires. Thus, Jesus began to prophesy that the days were coming when not one stone would be left upon another without being thrown down.

God's intent for building the church today is that it must align with His will. This is just like when Moses built the tabernacle; he had to follow the pattern shown to him on the mountain precisely regarding colors, materials, and construction methods, without contributing any opinions of his own. Similarly, our church today seems very free on one hand, as people can build meeting halls however we like. Yet on the other hand, it is actually the least free; in the house of God, only God reigns and only His will matters. We are all too prone to bringing worldly things, things we think are good, and often even things we assume to be God's will into the church. But the day is coming when God will reveal His true intent. Just like this enlarged temple of King Herod, which people looked at, admired, and praised; what Jesus saw was the day of its destruction, to the point where not a single stone would be left upon another.

Such discourse from Jesus naturally shocked the disciples deeply, and such a discussion was not suitable for a public crowd. Therefore, as recorded in Mark and Matthew, Jesus and His disciples left the temple and went to the Mount of Olives opposite the temple. Sitting on the ground facing the temple, the disciples then began to question Jesus.

Verse 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?'"

As recorded here in Luke, the disciples asked about two things: first, when would this temple be destroyed, and second, what signs would precede this destruction? Therefore, the record in the Gospel of Luke is structured around these two questions. Luke 21:8-18 speaks of the signs that would occur before these events take place, while Luke 21:20-24 addresses the circumstances they would encounter when these events actually happen.

Verse 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."

The same holds true for the end times: false prophets, false teachers, and false Christs will appear first. They come under God's name, claiming to be Christ and declaring that the time has come. Their purpose is to win over crowds to follow them. When Jesus ministered on earth, He never cared about crowds, nor was He willing to lead any mass movements. He cared about individuals—those who truly repented and were truly saved. He was willing to go to the city of Jericho just to find Zacchaeus, and He went to wait by the well just to find the Samaritan woman. Jesus was willing to pay a price for the salvation of a single person, yet He had absolutely no interest in crowds who followed Him out of mere curiosity.

Jesus told His disciples that the first sign would be many people coming in the name of Christ, attracting large followings and starting numerous movements. Though these may sound like grand commissions, the Lord Jesus stated clearly that they come falsely in His name. Jesus explicitly instructed His disciples, "Do not go after them."

Verse 9: "But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must first take place, but the end will not come immediately."

Not only will there be confusion in spiritual matters with people coming in Jesus' name and the appearance of false prophets and false teachers, but the global situation will also begin to unravel with many wars and disturbances. Yet Jesus told them not to be terrified, because these things must happen first, and the end will not arrive so quickly.

Verses 10-11: "Then He said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and

famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.'"

In addition to social unrest and instability, many supernatural phenomena are about to manifest: the earth will shake violently with numerous earthquakes, widespread famines, and various pestilences, and there will even be different omens and great signs appearing in the heavens.

Verse 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."

Jesus knew that He was about to go to the cross; after rising from the dead, He would ascend to heaven. The entire work of preaching on earth, the gospel of God, and the establishment of the church would be entrusted to this group of disciples. Therefore, Jesus took this opportunity to tell them in advance what would happen in order to build their faith, so that when the time comes, they will not be caught in a panic. Before the inevitable events take place, Jesus also forewarned them that they would face persecution—that people would lay hands on them, persecute them, deliver them to synagogues, put them in prisons, and bring them before kings and rulers.

Jesus was not just telling stories when He related these things to His disciples; He was preparing their hearts. Today, God speaks to each of our hearts in the exact same way. While we all naturally hope to live our days in peace and safety, the words Jesus spoke to His disciples apply to us as well. We are already living in the era of the end times. If we are willing to follow the Lord faithfully, we will likewise face unreasonable treatment and encounter persecution. If what we endure is all for the sake of the Lord's name, we ask God to build our faith so that we can pass through all these things without stumbling, standing firm to bear a glorious testimony for Him.

Let us pray together: Lord, what You value is not how magnificent the external church is or how beautifully decorated our meeting halls are. What You value instead is that every saint belonging to You within the church understands Your heart, is willing to follow You, and is even willing to become Your witness amidst persecution and suffering. Lord, help us build our faith and make us a people after Your own heart. Thank You, and bless my life today. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen.