

Center UMC/October 2, 2011/Psalm 25:1-5/Isaiah 48:9-20/Luke 21:18-25
Startled by the Truth of the Gospel: Discipleship & Its Demands
Rev. Daniel D. Rasmussen

The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Walter Liefeld on Luke 21, pp. 1018-23.

- 1) Do not follow false leaders.
- 2) Do not be frightened by the awesome events associated with the end times in apocalyptic literature. ("The reason [for Christians not to be terrified or frightened] is that wars, revolutions, natural calamities are not a signal that the end of history is to come immediately, as is commonly supposed even today.")
- 3) Do not worry about your legal defense when you are persecuted and face legal charges because of your Christian witness.
- 4) When all turn against you, persevere and take a firm stand.
- 5) Flee Jerusalem when it is besieged.
- 6) When the final apocalyptic events (the signs in heaven and on earth) do take place, take heart at your coming redemption when the Son of Man returns.
- 7) Recognize that also these things point to the approach of the kingdom of God.
- 8) Be assured that throughout the apocalyptic period the Lord's words endure.
- 9) Be watchful and pray so that you will come through all these things in a way the Son of Man will approve of.

"It is certainly possible to assume that Jesus' predictions incorporated two phases: (1) the events of 70 A.D. involving the temple and (2) those in the distant future described in more apocalyptic terms" (Liefeld, 1022)

Scriptural prophecy often includes three aspects:

_____ events → the _____ future → the apocalyptic _____.

William Barclay: "It is only when a man sees things through the eyes of God that he sees them clearly." ...As Jesus was describing the way of life which comes from following Him, Barclay writes, "This is what you must expect if you choose to follow Me." *The Gospel of Luke, Revised Edition, 259*

He goes on to say: "Once in the middle of a great struggle for righteousness, an heroic leader wrote to a friend, 'Heads are rolling in the sand; come and add yours.' Jesus believed in men enough to offer them, not an easy way, but a way for heroes." Barclay, 259

“Jesus promised that His disciples would never meet their tribulations alone. It is the sheer evidence of history that the great Christians have written over and over again, when their bodies were in torture and when they were awaiting death, of sweet times with Christ. A prison can be like a palace, a scaffold like a throne, the storms of life like summer weather, when Christ is with us.” Barclay, 259.

Francis Chan, in his book *Forgotten God*, writes: “I recently had dinner in Seoul, Korea, with an amazing man. He was one of the twenty-three missionaries who were held hostage by the Taliban in Afghanistan in July 2007. For those who don’t recall the story, the Taliban executed two of the missionaries before a deal was reached with the government of South Korea and the missionaries were released. This man told me about the horrors of being locked up in a cell, knowing that martyrdom was a strong possibility... There was even an argument over who would get to die first... Now that they have been back in Seoul for a while, several team members have asked him, “Don’t you wish we were still there?” He tells me that several of them experienced a deep kind of intimacy with God in the prison cell that they haven’t been able to recapture in their comfort.” pp. 107-08

Over 100 years ago, Rev. J. Willcock, BD, wrote in *A Homiletic Commentary on the Gospel According To St. Luke*, the following: “Anything short of the gift of our all to God is unacceptable to Him.

So, as Jesus prophesied about wars and rumors of wars, and earthquakes and famines and storms, do we think that none of them that we experience today have anything to do with His prophecy? Or, are we aware, that for every day that passes, every famine and plague and war that transpires, it takes us that much closer to His return? Do we think that we get to dodge that time of refining and purifying and testing?