



- Prediction versus prophecy.

A lot of people want to know about the future. Some people are obsessed with the future. We love to predict interest rates and property prices. We love to know the weather predictions for the day and the week ahead. Some people love to listen to their astrological signs, seeing if the alignment of the planets will tell them anything about whether or not next Tuesday they will have a good haircut.

And of course there are the predictions of the end of the world.

Warren Jeffs of the Fundamental Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints said the world would end on Dec 31 2012. The Mayans predicted December 21 2012. Harold Camping said May 21 2011. When it didn't happen, he then predicted October 21 2011. It didn't happen then either.

You can listen to Luke 21 and think: "Here are Jesus' predictions!"

But because he is God on earth, these are not predictions. They are **statements**. They are what we call **prophecy**.

And it starts when he's walking past the beautiful Jewish temple with his disciples. This building was amazing. Made of white marble and gold. The stones were massive – the size of cars.

And as they walk past, the disciples are going on about how amazing it is. You see, the temple was the place where God came and met with his people. The temple signified the relationship between God and his people. This is where you literally met with God. And so when Jesus says: "This is going to be destroyed", he's saying something about the relationship between God's people and God. Every time the temple was destroyed in the past, it was because of God's judgment against his people.

So when Jesus says that the massive stones are going to be turned over and the temple destroyed, the disciples are worried. "When is this going to happen?!" When is God's judgement coming?

- But this had to happen.

Because **Jesus** is the **new** temple. Jesus is the new place where we meet with God. Jesus is the new way to a relationship with God. When Jesus said "destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days" in John 2:19, he was talking about his own body. The **temple**.

And now as he looks at the physical temple building, he says: It will be destroyed. Because Jesus is about to become the new temple himself.

And so we turn to verse 8. And instead of saying exactly "when" it will happen, he tells them the signs – what it will **look** like.

- *8He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them.*

There will be false prophets. Don't follow them. There will be wars and uprisings. Don't be afraid.

**The end will not come right away.**

There will be earthquakes, and famines, and fearful events. And there were!

But, verse 12, before all this...

They will seize you and persecute you.

So before all these other signs happen, you will face persecution. Trials. Betrayals, even from your own family. So there's THAT to look forward to! Before the earthquakes and pestilence...

- **The beginning (verses 12-19)**
- **The following years (verse 8-11)**
- **The destruction of Jerusalem (verses 20-24)**

So FIRST, verses 12-19, Jesus says they will be persecuted. Some of them will die. THEN, verses 8-11, in the following years, there will be wars and earthquakes and pestilence. THEN, down to verses 20-24, the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now THIS event, the destruction of Jerusalem, we have the date for: August, 70AD. An uprising started in Jerusalem around 66AD. The Christians remembered the prophecy of Jesus about the enemies surrounding Jerusalem, and they left the city as Jesus suggested in verse 21! And finally in 70AD, the Romans, (under Emperor Vespasian and his son Titus) completely destroyed Jerusalem. The historical record of the historian Josephus says that around 1 million people died and around 100,000 prisoners were taken away.

Jesus also said this in chapter 19:43 to the Pharisees in Jerusalem: (from last week)  
*"The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and hem you in on every side."*

So Jesus warns his disciples of the coming days, then the coming years, and then this particular event in 70AD.

- **The very end (verses 25-36)**

So THEN, we move on to verse 25-36 – and Jesus starts to talk about the VERY end. The events that we are still waiting for. A time of anguish. Perplexity. People fainting from terror. Heavenly bodies shaken. And, the big climax: **Jesus coming in a cloud with power and great glory**. This is the end times. This is the end of the end. This is the second coming of Jesus. Final judgment day. Again, he tells us what it will look like. But he doesn't tell us WHEN.

So why **does** Jesus talk about ALL these events in the one passage?

- **Preparing his disciples**
- **Building trust**

Two reasons. He's preparing them for what is **immediately** about to happen. But he's also building trust with his disciples so they'll understand and accept the long-term prophecy as well.

For example: Imagine I told you it would reach a high of 38 degrees tomorrow. Big deal. Then I tell you that on Tuesday it will snow. Then next Sunday there will be a massive flood. And in 5 years, a volcano will erupt and cover Eastwood! Now, you probably wouldn't believe me. But if it was 38 degrees tomorrow, you start to think. Then it snows on Tuesday and you think "Oh my goodness! He was right!" Then on Sunday, there's a massive flood – and you think – the Volcano is next! So I tell you the first few little things to prepare you for the weeks ahead. BUT ALSO so you'll trust me about the volcano!

This is what Jesus does. He's preparing them for the immediate future – the next few days and weeks, but also wants them to trust him when it comes to the destruction of Jerusalem. But most of all, he wants them to trust him and be ready for the BIG prophecy – the BIG event – the return of Jesus.

Because the whole purpose of finding out about the future is **so we can be prepared**. Why do we look up the weather before we go to the beach? To prepare. Why do we check the train timetable before we go to the station? To prepare. To be ready.

- **Things that sneak up on you...**

But here's the thing: Jesus tells us WHAT will happen. He tells us WHAT it will look like. So we can prepare. But he doesn't tell us WHEN. **Because he wants us to be ready ALWAYS.**

Listen to how he wants us to respond - verse 34:

*34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap."*

"Be careful" – a helpful translation I have of this is "Be aware towards yourselves".

In other words – look at yourselves. Watch what you're doing.

Carousing. Drunkenness. Anxiety. These are examples of things can all **sneak up on you**, just like the last day and the return of Jesus. The way of the world sneaks up on us. It can distract us. It can weigh us down.

Let me finish by telling you a story about a girl named Demi Lee Brennan. This happened in 2008. Demi was 15 years old. From Gerroa on the south coast of Sydney.

She caught a virus. And that virus destroyed her liver. She needed a liver transplant. She had no other hope. So she had the liver transplant.

After the transplant, doctors gave her immuno-suppressant drugs to stop the body rejecting the new liver. After 9 months, she was getting worse.

The doctors did a full work up and found out something very strange had happened. Her blood type had changed from O-negative to O-positive.

Never happened before. They had to stop the immuno-suppressants because her body had now rejected her old blood type and changed to the blood type of the new liver.

They checked again. Her parents' blood types were both O-negative. So she HAD to be O-Negative. But her blood type had CHANGED to O-Positive. The blood of the new liver had overtaken her whole body.

When we become a Christian our spiritual blood type changes... We are a **new creation** in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:1 – *If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!*"

We now belong to Jesus, and he has overtaken us. We do not belong to the world any more.

But we often keep taking the immuno-suppressants! We keep pumping the blood of the world into us – the world's ideas and beliefs and values. In our sinfulness, we keep trying to change our blood type back to the old! Injecting ourselves with worldly thinking and worldly values and worldly worry.

But Jesus says this: lift your heads above that way. You are a new creation. You have a new spiritual blood type. Listen to these verses as we finish:

*27At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.28When these things begin to take place, **stand up and lift up your heads**, because your redemption is drawing near."*

Lift up your head. You belong to Jesus. Lift up your head, above the world. Do not be distracted by the persecution, or by worldly anxiety. No longer will we inject the world's values into us. Lift up your head, each day, so you can stand, each day, before the son of Man, until he returns in all his glory.

You belong to him. So lift up your head. And be ready.

## **Prediction versus Prophecy.**

### **The temple destroyed**

*8He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them.*

### **The 4 prophecies:**

The beginning (verses 12-19)

The following years (verse 8-11)

The destruction of Jerusalem (verses 20-24)

The very end (verses 25-36)

### **Why?**

Preparing his disciples

Building trust

### **Things that sneak up on you...**

*v34 "Be careful...*

*2 Corinthians 5:1 – If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!"*

*v28When these things begin to take place, **stand up and lift up your heads**, because your redemption is drawing near."*