

Living in Light of Christ's Return

Luke 21:24

September 22, 2024

Well, we come to the Word of God today, and we get to return to Luke's Gospel. I have been most eager to get back into the flow, and I hope that you're anticipating it, too. We are right in the middle of Luke chapter 21, so you can turn there in your Bibles, and right where we are in the text, it's kind of the hinge point in the Olivet Discourse. It's kind of a fulcrum point, where the whole passage in its orientation from judgment to restoration or blessing turns.

It's after a day of teaching in the temple that Jesus has retired with his disciples across the Kidron Valley. They've left the Temple Mount with its beautiful buildings and massive stones. And as the sun sets and as the temple's shadow extends over Mount Olivet on the eastern side, the sight evokes the admiration of his disciples, as we have seen early in Luke 21.

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But in Mark 13.1 one he records the disciples as saying, "Teacher, behold, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings." In our text as well, the emphasis is on the beautiful stones, on the aesthetic that was provided for by votive gifts and offerings. I mean, the rocks, really, right? But we as mankind can really dress up rocks pretty well.

So they are like we, aren't they, prone to esteem all the wrong things, prone to look on the outward appearance rather than the internal reality. And as usual, Jesus has a very different perception than they do of the sight that's before them.

Take a look at Luke 21 verse 5. "While some were talking about the temple, that it had been adorned with beautiful stones and dedicated gifts, he said, 'As for these things which you are looking at, days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.' So they questioned him saying, 'Teacher, when therefore will these

things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?'"

Jesus is gonna answer their question. He's gonna elaborate on Jerusalem's destruction that he just hinted at here, but he'll elaborate on that in verses 20-24. That's where we've been most, most recently in the, in our study of Luke's Gospel, is verses 20-24.

But before he gets there and elaborates on the destruction of Jerusalem, he really takes what I would call a shepherding approach to his men. He's framing what's about to happen to Jerusalem and putting its peril in a broader perspective. He starts in verses 8-11, he says, "'See to it that you're not deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he,' and 'The time is at hand.'" Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified, for these things must take place first. The end does not follow immediately.'

"And he continued saying to them, 'Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great

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earthquakes in various places, famines and plagues, and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.'" But he's telling them, "'Don't be afraid, do not fear.'" He's putting any future trouble that they would see in the perspective of divine omniscience. He's telling them well before anything ever happens, I know it already.

He gives assurance to their hearts. He's saying, Men, I already know what's going to happen. Don't let your hearts be troubled. He prepares them to spot the deception of false Christs. He knows that his, his own ministry as the Christ is going to be reproduced in a false way, mimicked so that others stumble and are deceived. He knows that ahead of time, and he's not concerned. It's all part of the plan.

So he strengthens their hearts. He's, he doesn't want them to fear the conflicts, the catastrophes, the calamities that are going to be coming upon the earth, puts into their hearts a sense of assurance from the very start even though things will look bad.

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And having done that, Jesus prepares them for the inevitable persecution that's gonna come to them because they identify with him, because they take upon themselves his name. Look at verse 12. He says, "'But before all these things.'" There's a lot that's going to happen in the future: false Christs, conflicts, catastrophes, calamities, those are all going to be coming.

"Yes, but before all of that, they're going to go after you guys. They will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you over to the synagogues and the prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for my name's sake. It will result in an opportunity for your testimony.

"So set it in your hearts not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends. They will put some of you to death, and you'll be hated by all because of my name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your perseverance you will gain your lives."

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This is kind of what Paul said. Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. And if the godliest man ever was persecuted and despised and hanged on a cross to be ridiculed, publicly, put to shame, then killed; well, it stands to reason that the more we speak what he spoke, the more we walk as he walked, the more we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness as he did, the more we, too, will be persecuted.

Jesus tells them in verse 13 the purpose of persecution. He says, "It results for an opportunity for your testimony, and the power that you're going to need to stand when you're challenged, when you're dragged before tribunals." Verse 15, "I'm going to give you a mouth. I'm going to give you words to speak. I'm going to give you irrefutable wisdom. Don't you worry about that I said all."

And yes, along the way there will be great sadness, betrayed by close relations, betrayed by those in your family, betrayed by your friends. Those you've opened yourself up to

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will stab you, verse 16. He said there will also be some physical pain associated with the persecution at times, for some. There will be relational pain as well, the hatred of others, verse 17.

None of that is fun, but as with all trials, these things will strengthen your resolve. They'll deepen your conviction. They will further separate you from the world and make you heavenly-minded. They'll teach you to turn from the world in all its acclaim as you await, verses 18-19, divine deliverance, to see him rescue you in order that you may gain your very lives. And the word, there, is souls.

Now that Jesus has prepared them to be comforted in sorrow, he previews the world events for his men from a Jewish perspective. He tells them in verses 20-24 about the coming judgment upon Jerusalem and the domination of Gentile nations over the Jews which will follow, a setting aside of the Jews during the times of the Gentiles, as he puts it, there.

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But then Jesus gives them hope. He gives them a turning point, when God will deliver the Jews by judging the nations and redeeming them as his people. Take a look at verse 20; we'll read through verse 28.

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the countryside must not enter into the city, because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

"Woe to those who are pregnant and those who are nursing babies in those days. For there will be great distress upon the land and wrath against this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword and will be led captive into all the nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

Look back at verse 22. "These are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled," and that



corresponds to "Jerusalem trampled under foot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And then there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear, and the expectations of the things which are coming upon the world.

"For the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near."

For our time this morning, I want us to focus our attention on the second half of verse 24, which is the hinge point in Jesus' prophecy. As I said earlier, this is the fulcrum. This is what shifts the emphasis from judgment to blessing, from Israel's devastation to Israel's restoration.

End of verse 24, "Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." The

word in the original for Gentiles is *ethnos*, also translated nations, which is, that's how it's translated in verse 25, where Jesus says that "there will be anguish among the nations," among the *ethnos*, among the Gentiles. So in all three places, two times in verse 24, once in verse 29, it's using that word *ethnos*, same declination, too, of the original.

So he says, "There will be anguish among the nations, and," when these things are, "when these things begin to take place," in verse 28, he says, "Straighten up, lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing near."

Notice the shift, there, from judgment on Israel in verses 20-24. And by the way, it's been two millennia so far, 2,000 years under Gentile domination. But in the end, when the time of the Gentiles has been fulfilled, blessing will come to Israel at the second coming of Christ, spoken here as redemption.

It's deliverance, it's the restoration promises of all the Scripture being fulfilled for Israel at this time. And after that time, there will be another millennia, 1,000 years of

Jewish rule under the lordship of Jesus Christ physically present on the earth.

Now the reason that I want to focus this morning on this shift in emphasis, it's partly to understand the flow of the text. We need to understand that; it's helpful in our exposition as we move through Luke's Gospel. We need to understand in Jesus' prophecy about the judgment and the restoration of Israel. And that's important for sure.

But it's also so that we can see maybe a little bit more clearly, maybe think a little bit more carefully about our own role in this story. Because beloved, you and I need to understand that we're right here in the middle of this. Whether you're aware of it or not, you're in the middle of this.

We are a predominantly Gentile church, as most Christian churches around the world are. We live in one of the many Gentile nations of the world, and during this time that Jesus designates the times of the Gentiles, that's the times in which we live.

So if this is our time, and it's worth asking, how are we supposed to use it? No matter where we live among the nations, no matter what time we live in, no matter what times we live through, as Gentiles, we play one of two roles. We are either persecutors and tormentors of the Jews, or we are friends of the Jews through our prayer and evangelism and testimony.

We play one of two roles, either as persecutors, tormentors, or those who are indifferent to that; or we are friends of the Jews, intentional friends, through prayer and evangelism and testimony.

Ever since Jesus ascended into heaven, I believe that I could take you to any century in history, and I could show you how the Jewish people have survived by the mercy and the providence of God, but nonetheless, through great travail and sorrow. It's been a trail of tears for this people. You don't see any other ancient peoples really surviving to today, but you do see the Jews remaining, but remaining through great pain and suffering.

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Even today, as many Jews are living back in the land, they're still not in complete control. What is it? Some 40%, maybe, of the world's Jews are living in Israel. The rest are scattered around the world. But still, they're not in complete control. They're still not at peace. The Jews are constantly attacked, bombed, raped, held hostage, killed. They're constantly defending their borders, constantly at war. We're watching this in the headlines today.

Well, surprisingly few seem to be sympathetic to the Jewish plight. Many keep talking as if the Jews, they're the ones who keep bringing all this violence upon themselves, as if they should do more to quell the hostility of their angry neighbors, as if they brought this upon themselves.

That's how this is being cast on university campuses across our country, across the Western world, really, with that oppressed-oppressor narrative, the woke narrative that's taken over our colleges and universities, that's been happening across Europe.

It's interesting that those people who are saying the Jews, they have brought this upon themselves, they're actually speaking far better than they know, because the Jews have brought this upon themselves by rejecting their Messiah.

I don't say that like those college students say that. You understand me. I say that with sorrow in my heart, a sorrow like the Apostle Paul expresses in Romans 9-11. He even says that he wishes that he himself could be accursed, damned to hell, not a participant in his own individual salvation, in order that his own people would come to Christ.

That's the same spirit that I say this in, that the Jews are undergoing the suffering that they're going through right now because they have turned from their Messiah. They rejected him and put him on a cross.

So even as we go to work, come home, raise families; even as we engage in business, commerce, buying, selling, going here

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and there; even as we follow social, cultural, political trends; even as we participate in the worship of Jesus Christ, rarely do we consider the impact of our little lives, our little churches, and this church in particular in our Gentile nations, rarely do we consider the impact upon the Jewish situation.

We do worship their Messiah as our own Messiah, do we not? Do we care about their salvation? Do we care about their restoration? As the Scripture says, do we "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," that they would recognize the Prince of Peace, come before him and bow the knee?

Or are we so caught up in our own lives and thoughts and problems and feelings and pursuits that we neglect to consider the purpose of this life that we've been given, that we neglect to recognize and live out what this life is really for?

So what I hope to do in the time we have together this morning, as we anticipate the Lord's Table before us, is to give you two rather brief points of exposition, brief for me, brief, and then I'm going to give you a bunch of reasons why we should

live in the light of Christ's return. Two brief points of exposition and a bunch of reasons why we should live in light of Christ's return.

So two points, starting with this one, number one, the time of Gentile domination, the time of Gentile domination. End of verse 24, "Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Jesus prophesies the judgment of the Jews because when he came as Messiah, they despised and rejected him and betrayed him into the hands of the Romans. Instead of bowing down and worshipping him as their own Messiah, they killed him.

This rejection of Christ started very early on in his ministry, by the way, almost from its inception. In John 4:1, we, we find the Pharisees, there, were provoked to jealousy that Jesus was of all things making and baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist. They were angry about that. They were filled with jealousy and envy, saying, How do they steal the limelight from us?



So already there's conflict brewing right from the very beginning. Almost after exiting the waters of baptism, he enters right into controversy as he's challenged, even there on the day, he's challenged in front of John the Baptist at his preaching. The, the leaders in Jerusalem send agents to go and challenge this movement.

Because of this early conflict and controversy already brewing, Jesus had to pass through Samaria, John chapter 4. He met the woman at the well, taught her the Gospel, and by the end of that chapter, we see many Samaritans believed. Not Jews, Samaritans, the enemies of the Jews, they believed.

They went back to Galilee, Luke 4. In his own hometown of Nazareth, in the synagogue where he was raised, the Jews rejected him. They were offended at him. They heard gracious things, and they wondered at the gracious things. Then all of a sudden, he starts turning to convict them. What did they want to do? They wanted to take him to the edge of the town and throw him off the edge of a cliff. They wanted to murder their hometown boy.

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The religious Jews of his day, yes, they dressed up well on the outside. They looked good going to synagogue. The dads talked business, politics, religion. Moms talked home life, raising kids, prices of the market.

But when pressed, when called to account for the Gospel, turns out they loved their lives more than him. They loved their ways. They wanted to hold on to the respectable, comfortable religion and not be troubled by his demands.

The people make no biblical argument against Jesus. They can bring no legitimate charge against his character, but still they're inclined to find fault. They can't stand up to his teaching, can't stand up to his character, so they come up with silly tests, making petty complaints and stupid accusations against him, like it says in, if you look back at (John) Luke chapter 7, verse 31, Jesus says,

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"To what then shall I compare the men of this generation? What are they like? They're like a bunch of children sitting in the marketplace calling to one another, who say, "'We played the flute for you and you didn't dance; we sang a dirge and you didn't cry.'" You did not dance to our tune. We wanted to blow the notes and have you do the tap dancing. I don't like you.

"'John the Baptist has come eating no bread, drinking no wine, and you say, "He has a demon!" The Son of Man," opposite, "has come eating and drinking. You say, "Behold, a gluttonous man, a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"'" And yet Jesus says, "Wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

Wisdom requires you to wait and see. Time and truth go hand in hand. But these people, this generation, they're like children who just stir up a bunch of trouble and then run home to hide behind their parents. Common people were hiding beneath the skirts of the religious leaders, men who were already full of envy, envy being the most subtle form of hatred and the most silent assassin.

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These scribes and Pharisees, they're also like the people, unable to catch Jesus in any biblical error, any theological error. They can't impugn his character at all because he's, after all, perfect. They try to, to no avail. So they resort to slandering his motives and sully his reputation by associating him with the devil and the devil's work.

If you're following along and have been in John, or Luke 7, go ahead and turn over to Luke 11. You can see in Luke 11:29 and following, starting in verse 15, actually, the, I beg, religious leaders attributed Jesus' miraculous healing power to Satan. They were unafraid in that moment of even blaspheming the Holy Spirit, and they kept demanding from him a sign. Show us power. Dance to our tune.

Jesus refused to give it. In verse 29 in chapter 11, "The crowds were increasing, and he began to say, 'This generation is a wicked generation. It seeks for a sign, yet no sign will be given it but the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

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"The Queen of the South is going to rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh are going to stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah."

Very little content in Jonah's preaching. They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and "behold, something greater than Jonah is here." This phenomenon of Jesus the Christ showing up in their land, in their villages, in their homes, is nothing to despise, nothing to take for granted.

And yet they did. At the end of his journey, as he did, moving from Galilee to Jerusalem, when he, he ought to have been hailed coming into Jerusalem, hailed as the Christ of God, he ought to have been worshipped by his people, instead, Luke 19:41, "When Jesus approached Jerusalem, he saw the city, and he wept over it." Why? Because he could foresee the impending doom

and destruction coming. Because the Jews, Luke 19:41, because "they did not recognize the time of their visitation."

And now we come back to Luke 21:24. Jesus reveals that the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, that's only the beginning. They'd already endured in their history a 70-year Babylonian captivity, and by God's grace they were allowed to return to the land. Though under the Greek domination, they still were allowed to return. He let them witness Messiah's coming. He prepared them with sending John the Baptist, the forerunner.

And when they failed to see him, when they refused to repent of their sins, when they refused to let go of their self-centered, man-centered religion, when they didn't see, receive him, when they refused to follow him and obey him as their Lord, God took their city and their temple, the very heart of their culture and religion, all that they took pride in, he trampled it under Gentile feet and sent them into centuries, now two millennia of dispersion and Gentile oppression.

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Ever since, the Jews have been hated, suspected wherever they live, maligned, persecuted, chased from place to place. Some Gentile nations have tried to exterminate them all together, starting with Pharaoh in Egypt. But since AD 70, as one older commentator puts it, so did the Romans, Saracens, Persians, and Turks. They have all trampled upon her in turn.

And this will continue until the midpoint of the tribulation. Very soon after the Church is raptured, the world enters into tribulation. This is a time when the Christian church and the witness is no longer present. Obviously, preaching, recorded preaching, sermons, Bibles, will be still existent on the earth, but the Christian witness and testimony of their presence there will no longer be there.

And then the Gentiles will be without Christian influence and voice. They'll be under the leadership of the Antichrist, who will return to Jerusalem and attempt the final solution of his own to rid the earth of the Jews once and for all.

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As Jesus tells John in Revelation 11:2, the outer court of the temple, the rebuilt temple, it has been given to the nations, that is, the Gentiles. And those nations, those Gentiles, will tread underfoot the holy city for 42 months. That's 3 1/2 years. The end of that 42 months marks the end of Gentile domination, as, just as Jesus predicts here in Luke 21:24.

What is it that ends Gentile domination? What stops the nations from trampling Jerusalem and the Jews underfoot? Verse 25, it begins with cosmic signs, signs in the sun and the moon and the stars, which causes great dismay among the Gentile nations as they're perplexed at this unprecedented level of, well, I guess in our modern terms we call it climate change. Greta Thunburg is not going to be happy if she's alive to see this and not converted yet.

But the Jews will rejoice, for Antichrist's betrayal and the persecution that follows, the threat of death, all that is going to be used of God to drive the Jewish people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ their Messiah. Read Zechariah 12-14.



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You see this so clearly, but Zechariah 13:8 says of the Jews living in the land in those days that there will be there two-thirds will be cut off and die, but a third will be left in it.

And then this, God says, "I will put this third through the fire. I'll refine them as silver is refined and test them as gold is tested, and they will call upon my name and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'Yahweh is our God.'"

God's going to act to protect his people. Zechariah, four, 14:2, he says, "I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured" And then this in verse 3, "And then Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle, and that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east."

Isn't that interesting? This is the very place, in fact, where he's sitting at this moment in Luke 21. He's there with his disciples, looking west to Jerusalem as he sees into the

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future. He peers in the future, sees in his mind's eye exactly what's going to take place.

And Jesus then says this in Luke 20:21, 25-26, "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth anguish among the nations that are in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves. Men will be fainting from fear in the expectations of the things which are coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

His mind perhaps went back to Zechariah 14:6, that says, "On that day there will be no light. Sunlight and moonlight will diminish." Or in Joel 3:15, "The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars lose their brightness."

Perhaps he recalls Isaiah 13:9-10, "Behold, the day of Yahweh is coming, cruel with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation, and he will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light. The sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light."

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Then into that darkness, like a ray of bright light, just like the Shekinah glory of God illuminated Goshen under the darkness of Egypt, the Son of Man will return to protect his people, now a believing Israel. Verse 27, They will, "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near'"

What encouragement for these disciples to receive! What we need to understand is that this time of Gentile domination, during this time, God uses the cruelty of the nations to drive the Jews to repentance in faith. He removes what they trust in, which currently is their genius and their ingenuity and their prowess and their Mossad intelligence and their operations and their alliances and their pride. He removes all those supports, and he drives them to faith in Christ.

That's one way the Gentiles will be used. Another way God uses the Gentiles, God gives believing Gentiles to the Jews as humble and grateful friends, faithful intercessors, active

evangelists, living testimonies of Christ's power and the Spirit's transforming work.

So back in Luke 21:24, the times of the Gentiles that Jesus speaks of, it's not only a time of Gentile domination, but it's also a time of Gentile salvation, which is manifest in and through the church, his bride, the bride of Jesus Christ.

It's the second point in our outline, number 2: The time of Gentile salvation, the time of Gentile salvation. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 11, which kind of gives us the other side of this, the positive side of the times of the Gentiles, as we see recorded for us in the book of Acts, the transition period between the times of the Jews and the times of the Gentiles, the days of the Lord's Apostles.

Their evangelistic strategy was to preach the Gospel first to the Jews in the synagogues and then to the Gentiles in the marketplaces. There was one time when Paul and Barnabas were in Pisidian Antioch, modern-day Turkey, and they were following this strategy.

They were in a synagogue on a couple of Sabbaths. Paul was preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the synagogue people there and to the God-fearers and the people who had gathered and to such great effect that many Jews and God-fearers were following them. And of course, that did stir up, as it always does, it stirred up the jealousy of the Jews, the unbelieving Jews, just as it did during the time of Christ.

The Jews began opposing the two evangelists, confronting them, arguing with them, blaspheming. And so Paul and Barnabas said in verse 46 of Acts 13, you don't need turn there, just listen, "Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first. But since you reject it, and since you judge yourselves," worthy of, "unworthy of eternal life, behold, we're turning to the Gentiles.

"For so the Lord has commanded us, "I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth.'" And when the Gentiles heard this, they began

rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

Well, God has chosen Gentiles, too. Amen? The Jews had been appointed to be a light to the Gentiles. Paul is quoting from Isaiah 42 verse 6. He says, “I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.” Again, in Isaiah 49:6, “I’ll make you a light to the, light of the nation so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” That’s his intent.

When Israel failed, Christ fulfilled. And now, among the Gentile nations, by the Spirit, by the Word, through the message of the Gospel, through us, his people, he is saving, sanctifying, and then deploying those who will bear that very light, not only to the nations and to the ends of the earth to fulfill his saving purpose, but back to the Jews, whose light it was from the very beginning.

Look at Romans Chapter 11. The plan, according to Paul in Romans 11, is that while evangelizing the Gentiles in his own ministry, he at the same time can provoke the Jews to jealousy. Romans 11:11, "I say, then, did they," Israel, "stumble so as to fall?" He means fall permanently. "May it never be! But by their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to, to make them jealous.

"Now, if their transgression is riches for the world, and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness be? I'm speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch, then, as I am an Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what would their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

That's the time we live in. That's our role in these times of the Gentiles. And so during these times, beloved, we dare not be indifferent toward the plight of Israel. We dare not assent to the satanic plot to persecute and annihilate them, of course.

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But as believers in Jesus, who is the Jewish Messiah, no matter what theol, theology we may hold to, wa, what, what we may espouse, oh, we're to never despise the Jews.

During the times of the Gentiles, we recognize salvation has come to the Gentiles. The transgression of the Jews has meant riches for the world, riches for Gentiles, riches for you personally, and me, beloved. Dear Christian, we're grafted into their vine. We know their Messiah. We worship their God. We call him with a Hebrew name, Yahweh.

So let us not blithely and rather stupidly move through our days and weeks, going to work, going to the store, talking on our phones, searching for stuff on the web, all the while ignoring the fact that some of these people, some of these Jewish image-bearers, are cut off from their own vines so that you, beloved, would be grafted in. There was a cut made and someone excluded that you would be grafted in.

Verse 16, Romans 11, "And if the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches



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are, too. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them, and made a partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches.

“But if you boast against them, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. You'll say, then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’” Oh, quite right. “They were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches,” who do you think you are, wild olive shoot? That’s my translation. “If God didn't spare the natural branches, he will not spare you, either.”

Let us never take our salvation for granted. Let us recognize that we are, by God's grace, partakers of Christ, the one whom God chose and sent to the Jews first and then to us. Look at Romans 11:25, skip ahead, “I do not want you, brothers, to be uninformed of this mystery so that you will not be wise in your own estimation.”

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Don't be wise in your own eyes. Don't be arrogant. Don't be proud. Understand "that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." There's that same language. "And so all Israel will be saved, just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove unrighteousness from Jacob. This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'"

It's during these times, which Jesus called the times of the Gentiles, that God will gather every last Gentile whom he has chosen for salvation and for participation in his kingdom. And once that number is reached, once the full number of the Gentiles has come into his church, God will direct all attention to the Jews so that all Israel will be saved.

So during these times in which we live, these are our times, these are the times of the Gentiles, beloved, what should we be doing? As Francis Schaeffer asked so poignantly, "How then shall we live?"

We should be praying. We should be evangelizing. We should be testifying to Christ's power in transforming our own lives. We should be manifesting a changed life, fruit of the Spirit, changed words, changed thinking, changed priority, change the way we live. Everything. Because all that matters is this plan, to the glory of God.

We're to live lives of deep gratitude, profound humility, sobered by the reality of God's plan. The Jewish rejection of the Messiah has opened the door of salvation to us. It's a big, big deal. Could there be any bigger deal?

So during the time of Gentile domination, we have been saved, we who have been saved by God's grace through faith, we're fully aware that this is also a time of Gentile salvation. We're so grateful for that.

As I said earlier, now that I've made my two brief points, the time of Gentile domination, the time of Gentile salvation, I now want to give you some reasons to live in light of this reality, in light of the times that we live in, in light of,

living in light of Christ's return, you might say. And I'm just going to list them and read them to you.

Number one: Christ is coming, so don't be haughty, Romans 11:20. Be humble and fear. Live your life that way. If God did not spare the Jews, he's not going to spare you either. "What is written about the Jews," 1 Corinthians 10:11, "was written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." So let the Jewish history inform your present and inform your future. Live accordingly. It's for your warning and instruction and encouragement and hope.

Number two: Christ is coming, so examine yourself, confess your sins, and renew your commitment to Christ and his kingdom and his righteousness. Let nothing else matter to you. Christ is coming, so examine yourself.

Number three: Christ is coming, so don't be slack, but give yourself wholly to his work. Christ loves his church, died to save the church, lives to sanctify his church. So love the people he loves, pray for the people he prays for, and then work

to see them sanctified. There's a Latin phrase, *ora et labora*. It means, Pray and work.

That's how, that's how the medieval scholars lived their, Christian scholars lived their lives, praying and working, praying and working. They prayed, which drove them to work, and their work drove them to prayer. And that is the constant cycle in which we live. Christ is coming. Don't be slack. Give yourself to his work.

Number four: Christ is coming, so "seek the things above, Colossians 3:1, "where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you've died." Your life isn't here, it's "hidden with Christ in God." So stop living mundane, material, temporal lives, as if these things matter. Beloved, they don't. They do not.

Can you imagine walking with your Savior Jesus Christ, strolling across the new earth that he's ruling over, talking with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords about football games you used to watch, the model train set you put together,

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your hobbies, crafts. I mean, it's like the John Piper thing. Picking up seashells. Really? Is that how I want to use my retirement? Gathering the carcasses of dead things and putting them in my house?

Wouldn't you be ashamed of having to explain why you thought it was more important to do that than giving yourself to his kingdom and his righteousness? Wouldn't you be ashamed trying to explain to him why you thought it was more important to work on Sundays and use the money he gave you to buy toys, stuff, travel across this, this sin-cursed world?

When the faithful and the obedient, they're the ones who keep investing in this, this new land in which you live and walk, new horizons, new vistas, new views, new places to see. We're always working to build that, not this, that.

Number five: Christ is coming, so walk worthy of the calling to which you've been called. Your Savior died so that you do not go to eternal Hell. He made you a participant in the New Covenant, gave you eternal life, a new kind of life, a new

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nature, eyes to see and ears to hear. So beloved, blessed people, use those eyes, use those ears. Let that new nature take full form in your life.

Number six: Christ is coming, so forsake all your old ways, your old sins, your old habits, your old priorities, your old ambitions. Listen, I, I know you've been fed, many of you have been fed a really bad gospel. Jesus didn't cut a deal with you. If you use God-talk now and then, if you go to church on weekends, your sins are forgiven, you're good to go, that's not the deal.

Jesus said, "Deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow me." Mortify your sins. Be zealous for repentance. Die to self that you may learn to live, to really live for God. Can it be said of you that "you've been crucified with Christ, it's no longer you who live, but Christ who lives in you?" Can it be said of you that "the life you now live in the flesh is by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave himself up for you?"

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Do your priorities show that? Does your spouse see it? Do your parents see that in you? What about your children? Do they see it? Do your grandchildren see it in you? And what does God see? Because his judgment is what really matters, doesn't it?

Number seven: Christ is coming, so "you should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk," Ephesians 4:17. You should no longer live like your neighbors live. You should be so markedly different that your former friends and neighbors are either converted by your conversation and your witness, or they cut you out of their lives.

That's what happened to Christ. It's what happened to the New Testament Apostles and prophets. It's exactly what's happened to believers down through the centuries. You should be, you should be counting it an honor to be persecuted along with them, stand with them, and be cast to the, relegated to the external extremities of society. Do you count the opinion of men to be more important than the opinion of God?



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Number eight: Christ is coming, so rejoice in the stewardship that he's given you, and live your life and invest your time and money and energy for his kingdom, for his name, for the glory of God. Give yourself to Christ's church for the beauty of the bride. Disciple others. Teach them to practice the truth that Christ has taught us. Give yourself to that good, glorious, wonderful work.

Christ is coming, number nine: so keep looking upward, keep searching the skies for the appearance of his coming. We know, 1 John 3:2, for all true children of God, that "when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is. And everyone who has his hope fixed on him purifies himself just as he is pure." Everyone who has this hope prays for his return, crying out, "Maranatha! Our Lord, come." Don't be in love with this world. Love him. Love is coming.

Number ten, beloved: Christ is coming, so go to him. Go to him with all your sorrows, all your disappointments, all your unmet expectations and unfulfilled desires. Pour out your heart to your Savior and your Friend. He loved you by dying for your

sins. He loves you still by interceding for you personally before the throne of his Father.

Realize that whatever is left unfulfilled, whatever hurt you've felt, your Savior has experienced far worse than you. But for you, dear Christian, any of your suffering, just like for him, is according to the perfect will, the good will of God, will sum up all perfectly in Christ. Your suffering counts. It matters. It's not wasted.

Number eleven: Christ is coming, so foster in your heart a longing for his return by studying about his return. First, in the rapture of the church. That's our next stop. And second, to rescue believing Israel from the unbelieving nations. Because when we rehearse the reality of Christ's return for his church, and we do that verbally with one another, 1 Thessalonians 4:18 says, we comfort one another, not with these thoughts, but with these words.

When we remind one another about the coming Day of the Lord, about his justice, known in retribution and judgment upon

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the ungodly, 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says we comfort one another. We build one another up in the faith. We're sober-minded, intentional, and faithful. Study these.

And every single New Testament book talks about the return of Christ. It is a cardinal doctrine of the Christian Church of the Second Coming. You should know it. You should rehearse it. It comforts you; it encourages you, it reminds you of what's important and what's not.

Number twelve: Christ is coming, so let your speech "always be with grace," Colossians 4:6, "seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person." Don't let your speech be worldly, of this world, of its kind, chit-chatting about inane, stupid, trivial things. Who cares about the cost of tea in China, right?

God has given you the gift of his eternal truth, so read it, study it, know it deeply. Let it saturate your soul. If you have an aversion to the Word of God, if you don't want to get into it deeply, honestly, you should question your salvation.

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The Word should saturate your heart, your life, because if the Word of Christ dwells richly in you, you can't help but be different. When you open your mouth, you'll be otherworldly. You'll be pointing all the dying of this world to the source of life. You become a vessel of life to those who are dying.

Number thirteen: Christ is coming, so gird your minds for action. Keep sober in spirit. Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. There's such power in the hope of Christ.

The assurance of things hoped for helps you to remain joyful in trials, steadfast in disappointments, steady in conflict and controversy, confident in God's sovereign purposes, flexible with the unfolding of his perfect providence, and joyful in the outworking of his hidden will. Christ is coming, so gird your minds for action.

Number fourteen: Christ is coming, so use your wealth, American, use your wealth. You think, I'm not wealthy? Okay, travel a little bit, and you'll see that whatever income

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brackets you're in, oh, you're wealthy. Use your wealth, as the Apostle Paul commands, 1 Timothy chapter 6, "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, not to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

"Command them," that is, the rich, that is you, Americans, and I'm included in this, "command them to, to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed."

Don't waste your life on that which turns to ash and dust, that which will be burned up in the fire, because "we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen," 2 Corinthians 4:18. "But the things which are seen are temporal," passing, fading. "The things which are not seen are eternal," immutable, always present for eternity.

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I told you I'd give you a bunch of those. Fourteen is a bunch, I guess. Let's pray now, prepare our hearts to take the Lord's Table.

Our Father, thank you for your kindness to us in Christ, and looking back, we see his broken body and his blood shed for us, to forgive us our sins and cause us to be justified by faith, and to make us participants in a new covenant by his blood, anticipate the coming of the Lord. We pray that you would help us, Father, to live in light of his return, rejoice in the truth of the Gospel and share it with others in Jesus' name. Amen.