



DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS

9 & 10 APRIL 2022

“DISCIPLESHIP IN A DYING WORLD”

LUKE 21.5-36

The main study guide material for this sermon series is to be purchased at <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/for-everyone-bible-study-guide-215>.

It is recommended that the e-book be purchased. Nevertheless, individuals or Connect Groups that wish to purchase hardcopies may do so from physical Christian bookstores, or online stores (Amazon, Bookdepository, Blackwells, etc)

The material in this document is intentionally brief. It is intended as a supplement only.

- **Begin by reading the Scripture passage together.**
- **Review the video of the sermon if needed (see <http://www.brmc.org.sg/category/resources/sermons>).**
- **Refer to the [main study guide](#) Chapter 23 as well as this supplementary material.**
- **Feel free to discuss as few or as many questions as best fits your group’s current context and present stage in life.**
- **Remember to allocate some time (15-20 min) to pray with and for one another, before ending your group session.**

Info Sidebox Signs of the End Times

This passage in Luke 21 is known as the Olivet Discourse — named after the Mount of Olives, which Matthew 24-25 and Mark 13 record as the location of this sermon. Jesus prophesies the destruction of the Temple, and addresses his disciples' two questions on the time of its destruction and the signs that will precede it. This takes the form of an apocalyptic prophecy, the Greek word "apocalypse" meaning not "the end of the world" but rather a divine revelation of future events.

As we covered during our study of Isaiah, biblical prophecy is complex and layered. While a certain meaning may have been understood by its original speaker or listeners, subsequent events may reveal an additional, later fulfilment. In this case, one commentary (*Luke*, in the *Pillar New Testament Commentary Series*) suggests that although Jesus' immediate focus was the impending fall of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, an event still in the memory of Luke's first readers, that "near and realized event" was "a preliminary realization of the final goal of history in the distant and imperfectly known future." In other words, the upheaval and desolation represented by the destruction in Jerusalem was itself a symbol of greater upheaval to come at Jesus' return.

Reading this passage, or other apocalyptic prophecies (such as in Daniel or Revelation), you may wonder whether the signs Jesus describes have already passed, or if they are yet to come. As Christians have wrestled with these passages over the millennia, several schools of thought on eschatology — the end times — have been formed describing the period in which these signs have or will be realised.

Preterists, from the Latin *praeter* ("past"), understand the apocalyptic signs as primarily referring to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, and are thus partially fulfilled.

Historicists view the apocalyptic prophecies as referring to human history between AD 70 to the present (and beyond), and that we are still living in the midst of these signs.

Futurists consider that the fulfilment of the prophecies has yet to begin, anticipating a future period known as the Great Tribulation in which these signs will manifest.

Idealists understand the apocalyptic signs as largely symbolic, not referring to any specific world events.

These views are presented to offer a framework of how various Christians have interpreted apocalyptic passages, in case the reader's ability to understand and apply Jesus' warnings is hindered by the ambiguity of the signs described. The following takeaways may be helpful:

- 1) We must always interpret Scripture in light of what it reveals about itself, and avoid leaning too heavily on the views of human — and thus fallible — scholars. Each of these interpretive schemes has its strengths and weaknesses, and they share various degrees of overlaps. This means we need not lose sleep fretting over picking sides. What is important is that our understanding on the key issues is clear, such as the reality of Jesus' return, and our need to remain alert.
- 2) Jesus' prophecy is not presented as a single narrative sequence, but rather multiple overlapping events. It is therefore not clear that Jesus is setting out a single specific timeline for the signs. The 4 eschatological positions are thus not necessarily mutually exclusive.
- 3) As a church who believes in the future coming of the Son of Man, we must reject interpretations that deny a future actual return of Jesus Christ, for these would be inconsistent with what Scripture teaches. Jesus' warning to be "on the watch" reminds us that he indeed is coming, and we are to prepare for our Master's return.

Response, Application, Prayer

1. In Luke 21.12-19, Jesus predicts persecution for his followers, ending with a promise that if they “stand firm, [they] will win life”.

a. Are you prepared to suffer for the sake of Jesus? What might hold you back from standing firm?

b. Jesus promises that when we are questioned by earthly powers, he will give us the right words to testify about himself. How might this empower you to bear witness to Jesus among your own social circles?

2. By the grace of God, modern Christians in Singapore rarely face religious persecution to the point of physical harm. Nevertheless, Jesus cautions us against complacency in vv.34-36.

a. What does it mean to be “always on the watch”? How might you respond to Jesus’ instruction in v36?

b. Reading the passage in its entirety, consider the emotions this text may evoke, both to the original listeners and to modern readers. Some people, even Christians, may view these prophecies with fear and dread. Is this the intent of the Divine Author in giving us these passages of Scripture? Does this in fact reflect our fear of losing earthly comforts and security? What should our emotional response be to Jesus’ promise that he will return?

3. Our world has no shortage of tragedies and injustices, from a global level down to a personal level. Would you allow your heart to be moved by them and pray that God would come soon to set these all right?

a. You may want to consider how the general state of turmoil predicted in v10-11 may be visible today. In your prayer, remember that God is a God who gives grace freely to comfort those who need it.

b. You may also want to bear in mind the sufferings inflicted by the perpetrators of sin and injustice, as described in v12-16 & 24. Remember that our God is a God of justice, who is moved by his people's cries for action and vindication