**Stand Firm**

Luke 21:5-19

Key Verse 19

 “Stand firm, and you will win life.”

**Introduction**

 Luke, the evangelist and historian, presents Jesus’ prophetic declaration of future events, climaxing in his coming again. Jesus’ coming again is the great event that all of human history is moving toward. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The end comes when Jesus Christ returns in power and great glory as King and Judge. Jesus’ coming again is the great hope of all believers. Compared with other synoptic gospels, Luke focuses more on the destruction of Jerusalem.

 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. **35** Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (13:34-35)

 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it **42** and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. **43** The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. **44** They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.” (19:41-44)

1. Read verses 5-7. What do these remarks reveal about the disciples? (5) What did Jesus teach them? What were their two questions?

1-1, Read verses 5-7.

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, **6** “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.” **7** “Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

1-2, What do these remarks reveal about the disciples? (5)

 ***Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said,***

* After hearing Jesus’ words about the widow, his disciples should have gained spiritual insight to see man and the world from God’s point of view.
* However, they were still impressed by the things of the world. Some of them began remarking about the Jerusalem temple.



* The temple was adorned with beautiful, gold-plated stones, and gifts dedicated to God.
* Solomon’s temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 586 B.C. and reconstructed by Zerubbabel in about 516 B.C.
* The Temple the disciples admired was built by Herod the Great. It took 80 years to complete.
* Herod decorated the Temple with white marble stones, gold-plated gates and doors.
* The historian Josephus commented that the building’s gold plates flashed in the sun.
* The disciples, mostly Galileans, marveled at the magnificent temple building. They opened their mouths with awe and many, “Wows!”

1-3, What did Jesus teach them?

* Jesus understood his disciples. Jesus wanted them to have a spiritual perspective.
* The building was temporary: it looked impressive at the moment, but in time it would become dust.
* Though he was moved by the two small copper coins, he was not moved by the magnificent building. It was because he saw things from God’s point of view.
* Such beautiful buildings were nothing but a den of evildoers when people did not seek, nor worship God in the temple.
* The building was nothing but a pile of stones and soon it would be destroyed. Jesus wanted the disciples to have spiritual perspective to see through the vanity of human culture.
* Thought it looked impressive at the moment, it would spoil and perish.
* Nothing in this world is permanent, but the kingdom of God. We must guard our hearts from a fascination with human culture. Only God is the foundation of our life.
* The disciples should not be overly impressed by the temple’s grandeur.
* Soon it would be destroyed. We will study in verses 20-24 further. Its destruction would be so complete that not one stone would be left on another.
* We understand their respect for the temple because it was a great source of Jewish national pride, and it commanded general international respect.
* The Jerusalem temple had been the focal point of Jewish life and culture. It was thought to be the house of God.
* When Jesus foretold its destruction, the disciples were really surprised. Still, they accepted Jesus’ words.

1-4, What were their two questions?

***“Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”***

* When the disciples heard Jesus’ words, they knew he was speaking the truth.
* They were different from the religious leaders who rejected Jesus and His words.
* They accepted his prophecy. This gave rise to two questions in their hearts: “When will these things happen?” and “What will be the sign?”

2. Read verses 8-11. Why did Jesus warn about being deceived? (8) How can we discern false messiahs? What must happen before the end comes? (9) What are some other signs that the end is coming? (10-11)

2-1, Read verses 8-11.

 He 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. **9** When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.” **10** Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. **11** There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

2-2, Why did Jesus warn about being deceived? (8)

 ***He 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.***

* Jesus did not answer their questions directly. First Jesus warned them about false messiahs.
* The false messiahs will claim that I am the Christ or the end is near. If someone claims these things, he or she is a false messiah.
* There have been a number of false messiahs in our time who claimed the end is near and led many followers to their death.
* Other forms of deception include Mormons and Jehovah’s witnesses who target young Christians with their deception.

* 2-3, How can we discern false messiahs?
* Parties and drunkenness are popular among college students on Friday nights. But afterwards, they feel empty and thirsty.
* Our increasingly high-tech world deceives people with false hope and keeps people from following God by relying on computer-simulated reality.

***“Do not follow them.”***

* We should not follow false messiahs. We should only follow Jesus by listening to his word and obeying his commands daily.
* When people are oppressed and suffering, they are vulnerable. Then false messiahs promise victory, peace and salvation, enticing them to follow.
* But in the end these false messiahs deliver defeat and destruction.
* In our times false messiahs may include money, romantic love, and human glory.
* Those who seem to attain these things become greatly admired, such as rock stars, sports stars and movie stars. But in the end they all disappear.
* Some false messiahs speak in Christian language, promising their followers a free and easy life without suffering.
* Others gain followers by claiming to know the date of Jesus’ coming again. They steal people’s minds by emptying their bank accounts.
* Our only true Messiah is Jesus Christ. Christ died for our sins and rose again from the dead. Jesus forgives us and gives us eternal life in God’s kingdom.
* Jesus taught us to follow him by denying ourselves, taking up our crosses and living for his purpose. We must watch out for false messiahs.
* We must follow our true Messiah Jesus every day by prayerfully listening to his words.

2-4, What must happen before the end comes? (9)

 ***When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.”***

* Jesus tells his disciples that there will be wars and revolutions, and that nations and kingdoms will rise against each other.
* When the disciples hear of wars and chaos, they are not to be alarmed because these things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.

2-5, What are some other signs that the end is coming? (10-11)

 ***Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.***

* Throughout history, there were wars between nations.
* “There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.”
* The picture continues to expand. Beyond false claims about the Messiah and social chaos, more signs are given: earthquakes, famines, pestilences, and other terrors and signs from heaven. We call them natural disasters.
* We have heard about deadly earthquakes under the Pacific Ocean and tsunamis that cause great destruction.
* No matter how awful the world may seem we must not let fear rule our hearts.
* The words “...but the end will not come right away” tell us that all these things are in God’s hands.
* Though the world seems to get out of control, it is not. God is in control. When we put our faith in God, he gives us peace in the times of trouble.
* He enables us to endure hardship patiently.

3. Read verses 12-19. Before any earth shaking events take place, what will happen to those who are faithful to Jesus? (12) What will be the result of this persecution? (13) How can we overcome fear? (14-15; 18-19) How can we be witnesses? (15) Describe other painful sufferings believers will have to endure. (16-17) What must we do? (19a) In what respect do you stand firm now? What is the reward if we continue to stand firm? (19b)

3-1, Read verses 12-19.

“But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. **13** And so you will bear testimony to me. **14** But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. **15** For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. **16** You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. **17** Everyone will hate you because of me. **18** But not a hair of your head will perish. **19** Stand firm, and you will win life.

3-2, Before any earth shaking events take place, what will happen to those who are faithful to Jesus? (12)

 ***“But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name.***

* Jesus did not avoid hard teachings. He clearly told his disciples that persecution was coming and how to deal with it.
* From now on Jesus mentioned that persecution and difficulties would become personal.
* For instance, the Book of Acts mentioned much persecution of the early church.
* The early Christians were persecuted by the Jews who had rejected Jesus as the Messiah and by the Roman government who worshipped the emperor.

3-3, What will be the result of this persecution? (13)

 ***And so you will bear testimony to me.***

* This happened on account of Jesus’ name. But the persecution provides an opportunity “for testimony” and leads to the public proclamation of Jesus
* God uses persecution to spread the gospel. When the Jerusalem church was persecuted, they were forced to scatter and the gospel spread all over the Roman world.
* When Paul was arrested and went to Rome as a prisoner, God gave him an opportunity to preach the gospel to the soldiers in the Imperial Guard.

Philippians 1: 12-14 reads,

 “Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. **13** As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. **14** And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.”

* To God’s people, crisis provides an opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus.

3-4, How can we overcome fear? (14-15; 18-19)

 ***But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.***

* Jesus encourages us not to worry because he will help us with what to say through the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us to make up our mind not to worry beforehand.
* Simply speaking, Jesus wants us to make a decision of faith to entrust our lives and futures into God’s hands. He gives us a great promise.

***18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 Stand firm, and you will win life.***

3-5, How can we be witnesses? (15)

***For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.***

* Jesus promises to give words and wisdom that none of the adversaries can resist or contradict.
* A good example is Stephen. He was a servant in the early church who was full of the Holy Spirit and proclaimed the gospel.
* Hellenistic Jews plotted against him. He had to stand before the hate-filled Sanhedrin all alone.
* Yet, when he spoke, the Spirit gave him words and wisdom, and he delivered a piercing message.
* The Sanhedrin members were so furious that they took him out and stoned him.
* As he was dying, Stephen looked up to heaven, saw Jesus at the right hand of God, and prayed, *“Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit,” and, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them”* (Ac 7:55-60).
* In this way, Stephen witnessed to Christ. The Greek word for witness can also be translated “martyr.”
* Stephen’s martyrdom contributed to the conversion of an enemy Saul, who would later preach the gospel to the world.
* We should not have a victim’s mind in times of persecution. When we depend on Jesus, he gives us words and wisdom.
* Jesus enables us to win the victory over any adversary for his glory and salvation purpose.

3-6, Describe other painful sufferings believers will have to endure. (16-17)

 ***You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.***

* Jesus mentioned the division of family, possible martyrdom, and hatred in this passage.
* Jesus predicted that the disciples would be persecuted by family members, relatives, and friends.
* It is strange that persecutions would come from the inner circle of family members.
* Some parents do not mind when their children live immoral lives and live under the wages of sin.
* But when their children confess Jesus as Christ, the parents become furious.

 ***Everyone will hate you because of me.***

* In the middle of persecutions and hatred, Jesus offers comfort and assurance.

 ***But not a hair of your head will perish.***

3-7, What must we do? (19a)

***Stand firm,***

* Here “stand firm” means endurance. Endurance leads to salvation.
* Saving faith does not renounce Jesus; it holds on to him even in the face of persecution.
* Judas is one who could not stand firm. Peter succeeded in spite of denials.

3-8, In what respect do you stand firm now?

Personal application!

3-9, What is the reward if we continue to stand firm? (19b)

 ***and you will win life.***

* As long as we cling to Jesus, we gain life.
* No matter what happens to our physical life, we will have inheritance in heaven by standing firm in the middle of persecutions.
* However, with the assurance of eternal life in Christ, we are to stand firm in our faith and rely on the Holy Spirit for words and strength.
* This does not mean that we won’t die. But it is a guarantee that we will spend eternity with Christ.

**Conclusion**

 We are very thankful in that Jesus taught His disciples to turn their attention from the outward appearance of the temple to God’s redemptive purpose. We are to follow Jesus’ teaching and to stand firm to the end so that we may win life in Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

**One word: Stand Firm!**