

## Waves of Judgment

[Announce Text] Please Open your Bibles to Luke 21:5-24. [Page 880-81](#)

[Scripture Introduction] Good morning, my name is Brett Sweet and I'm one of the pastors here at Grace Christian Fellowship where we exist to glorify God through gospel-centered worship, evangelism, discipleship, and community. We are continuing our series through the book of Luke.

[Prayer for illumination] Please pray with me...

[Illustration] To me, they're just waves. They look mostly the same. Sure, some might be a bit bigger than others or make it further into the sand than others, but they're just waves. And they come one after another, with regularity. But if you talk to someone who has devoted their lives to surfing, they're not just waves. And they are NOT the same. Each one is unique. They have spent years learning the waves. Most especially, they've learned how to time the big ones. When to paddle, when to turn, when to stand, and sometimes, when to bail off the board.

As we study the most difficult portion of Luke's gospel to interpret- Luke 21, there are two questions asked by the disciples in v. 7. Question 1: "When will these things be?" Question 2: "What will be the signs?" This week we're looking at the first question. And in order to help us I want to think about the timing of Jesus' prophecies and judgment as waves. Waves coming in and going out. So, like a surfer, we need to learn the waves. So that's what I'm after today:

**[Proposition] Learn the waves of judgment.**

We're going to look at five things from the text and let that control us. Five things as we learn the waves of judgment. I will announce them and repeat them as I go.

**[Learn first] A breaker has ended the old system.**

[Illustration] Picture of a breaker- When a wave has enough energy, most simple models of how waves work break down. What happens is that there is so much energy that when a wave gets to it's peak, it breaks and tumbles over. The most powerful and picturesque are the Plunging Breaker. They are very powerful and can be destructive. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breaking\\_wave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breaking_wave)

As we learn about judgment, Jesus, describes a wave of judgment so powerful that it will be a breaker on the old system.

Let's read vv. 5-6

*And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."*

Now this is a radical and crazy thing for a Jew like Jesus to say. This Temple is huge and fancy. It's twice the original size of Solomon's Temple. It was 400 by 500 yards. It was started by Herod in about 20BC and wasn't completed until about 62AD. There is one stone. Just one stone that was 12' high by 18' wide by 67' long. That has the sort of cubic volume of a small house! And it was one stone. And this Temple was a sign of God's favor on the Jews. It represented that God had chosen them. It represented His presence with them. It was the pride of good, Bible-believing Jews. It was how the old sacrificial system, for dealing with sins, worked. It seems necessary. But Jesus prophecies that a wave of judgment is coming that will break this old system and end it. And this has happened in 70AD.

So Jesus is here talking about judgment and destruction of the Temple. Not, primarily, the end of the ages.

[Apologetic] Jesus' prediction is so accurate, that many non-Christians assume that the gospel writers must have written after this occurred with the Roman siege of 70AD. But that just does not add up to the historical evidence in the documents. All the evidence points to Luke writing the book of Acts before 70AD and he wrote this gospel before that. So, learn from Jesus. The Old System has ended.

[Gospel] How could this be? This beautiful, impressive sign of how God cleanses from sin through sacrifice? Because Jesus knows that He is the final, once for all sacrifice. If you are here and you are feeling like you can never do enough to make up for your sins. You are right. You are seeing things more clearly than most! But just because you can't do enough doesn't mean that someone else can't do it for you. And that's what we have hinted at here. Jesus, fully divine, died as a substitutionary sacrifice for His people so the old system, the Temple.

Not needed. The old system, as a sign that God is present with His people. Not necessary. When Jesus rose from the grave, He poured out His Spirit. The Temple now is God's people- listen to 2 Corinthians 6:16

*For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."*

We are living stones. Listen to 1 Peter 2:5

*...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

So as impressive as the Old System was. It's ended! Jesus, referring to Himself, said that something greater than the Temple is here. Anyone can build a building. But only the true and Living God can change hearts to use people to build a Temple. And that means He's present wherever we go.

Jesus, the cornerstone, has been crucified that He might build a Temple. Give up on yourself today. There are waves of judgment. The last wave to fall at final judgment will fall on you. If you aren't a Christian, the wave of God's wrath is against you. Hell is an open eternal pit and you're sledding and sliding toward it. Turn. Turn away from any other system whether Jewish, or Buddhist, or secular, or agnostic or whatever. Turn and trust Jesus. When you believe you will find that He has been your once-for-all sacrifice. In your place. And He will change you to live a life as a living stone. Which means you won't need a Temple to be with and know the Living God.

Learn the waves of judgment. Learn first that a breaker has ended the old system. If that's a breaking wave, a surfer is going to want to ride it. Which brings calls us to

### **[Learn, second] To ride behind the true Teacher**

Local surfers regularly need to protect tourists who take up surfing. Tourists don't know where it's safe to ride until someone teaches them. They don't know where reefs or undercurrents are. They will lead them to safer places. If we're to learn the waves of judgment we need to ride behind the true Teacher.

Let's read vv. 7-8

*And they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" And he said, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them.*

We know that this has come just after Jesus' warnings about the Scribes as well as his correction of the false teaching Sadducees. If you start following the wrong teacher, you will crash into the reef. There were people in the first and second centuries making these claims. There are people today making these claims. Ride behind the true teacher. If someone claims to be the Messiah. Claims to lead you to a different Messiah. Don't ride behind that person. "Do not go after them," Jesus says. That's one way you ride these waves and learn how the waves of judgment work.

[Application] Your best teachers are not ones who use the Bible to step between you and the True Teacher and make themselves look better, but the ones who try to say, "Here, let me just clean this window for you. Let me make the Scripture a bit clearer so that you can look through the window and see Jesus. Then I won't be needed."

Learn the waves of judgment. First, a breaker has ended the old system. Second, ride behind the true teacher- Jesus. Learn the waves of judgment by knowing that a breaker has ended the old system. And learn to ride behind the true teacher. Let's keep going

### **[Learn, third] The waters are never perfectly calm.**

In the centuries prior to the Temple's destruction, Messianic fever was spreading through Israel like a head cold in the neighborhood daycare. They were expecting a warrior king to come in and shake things up. So, everyone was reading into every comet sighting- one occurred in 60AD. Halley's comet appeared in 66AD. Every shooting star. Every earthquake. Every whisper of invading armies. And many were being led astray. But Jesus wants us to learn here that calamities are normal. The waters are never perfectly calm.

Let's look at vv. 9-11

*"And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once." Then he said to them, "Nation*

*will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven."*

Ever since sin entered this world, breaking our relationship with God and our neighbors. Breaking our relationship with Creation. This world has been chaotic. Famines and diseases. Wars. The waters are never perfectly calm. Around the year 70, this was especially the case. There had been wars over the previous decades who had taken around 100,000 Jewish lives. Wars on every border of the Roman Empire. And earthquakes. Earthquakes in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, Samos, Apamea, Campania, and Rome. Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae were devastated by earthquakes.

So, based on the immediate context of the question Jesus is answering- this could all be references to the first century. But regardless of your view of the end times, these events are always meant to be calls for God's people to repent.

[Application] Have you accepted that life in this world will never be the glassy waters of a heated swimming pool? In a fallen world, the waters are never perfectly calm. Some of us spend too much time being informed by what's happening around the world. Disasters occupy too much of our minds. It's good to be informed and to pray. But get off your social media. Turn the 24-hour news channel off. Limit yourself to a few minutes of headlines a day. And remember that God is in control. That the events of the first century and every century- wars, diseases, disasters, could have wiped out God's people. But they never have. Expect difficulties. When you are anxious, remind yourself that you have the only God who predicted this and then went on to defeat death. Memorize Romans 8:31-39, that if God did not spare His own Son, then nothing on this list of chaotic waters can separate us from the love of Christ.

Learn the waves of judgment. First, a breaker has ended the old system. Second, ride behind the true Teacher- Jesus. Third, learn that between the waves, the waters are never perfectly calm. What's next?

**[Learn, fourth] Ride promises through persecution.**

Jesus knows what's coming for His disciples. Persecution. Let's read vv. 12-19

*But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.*

There are so many remarkable things here. During the most dangerous times, Jesus gives special promises to His followers. There is a similar phenomenon with surfing. It's called tube-riding. When there's a big breaking wave, you can actually ride inside the wave. If your timing is off, the wave will crush you. It could drown you. But listen to some interviews I've heard from a film on Surfing:

Surfer 1: "That's the best place in the world to be...in the tube."

Surfer 2: "Tube-riding is the ultimate, ultimate thing in surfing, to ride inside the wave and make it out of it. It's all we want to do every day."

Surfer 3: "It's almost impossible to describe. There's nothing I can compare it to."

Surfer 4: "It's a feeling that you know not too many people will experience. And so it's special, in that sense. And then you just try to remember it. You're like, 'I wish I could remember that. I wish I could get that again. It's just so addicting.'"

[Exposition] Here's Jesus, telling His disciples that a massive breaker of persecution is going to fall on them. But He gives promises that they can ride through persecution. And I think that these promises can apply to us when we're amid persecution. But notice that the persecution is coming for the sake of Jesus' name- vv. 12 and 17. Not for their political opinions. Not because they love the second amendment. And when that persecution comes it's an "opportunity" to bear witness. "To bear witness" is *martyrion* in the Greek. A martyr is a witness who happens to be killed for bearing witness. And how are they likely to get into that situation?

Because the people they thought they could most trust- parents. Siblings. Friends. Have betrayed them. If that's the case. Who can they trust? Jesus. He still cares.

He says *I will give you a wisdom. I will give you words.* Jesus! He still cares! He's still generous! When Jesus was being persecuted and questioned, and we've seen this time and again, He always seems to answer in a way that can't be contradicted. Jesus is saying that in persecution, His disciples will be like Him.

What's even more remarkable is that He's going to do this for His disciples even after He's been betrayed by them. And abandoned by *them* in His hour of greatest need. Christians are never commanded to seek to be persecuted, but persecution comes. And what if you, like the disciples, end up there? In the middle of the tube that might break over the top of you? What will get you through? Promises.

Jesus will be with His disciples when they're being persecuted. But imagine you are James, or Thomas, or Peter, or Andrew. And you're something of a worrier. And you start thinking worst-case scenario. "Jesus, we love you. We want to follow you. We don't want to be hated, but if it's necessary, for the sake of your name, we're okay with that. But what if they kill us for the sake of your name? We don't want to die!" And Jesus says, "That's going to happen. But not a hair of your head will perish. You will be killed, but you'll survive. You'll die, but you'll live."

Here's the Christian life in a nutshell. Here's why Christians have been the ones who stayed to care for the sick when others fled from plagues. Here's why missionaries actively traveled to islands inhabited by cannibals. Here's why Christians confessed that Jesus is Lord even when the Queen had the firewood stacked around the stakes they'd be tied to. Here's why you can talk to your neighbor about Jesus. Here's why you can survive if you get fired for following your informed Christian confidence. In some sense, you'll die, but you'll live. You may be put to death, but not a hair of your head will perish. With all the waves that might crash on you, you can ride them if your feet are planted firmly in God's promises.

[Application] Our application in persecution is the same as the earliest disciples. Endure. Persevere. Face the hard circumstances with hope. Remember what God hasn't promised. He has not promised ease and comfort. He has not promised that you will be loved by the world. Remember that He has promised to be with you. He has promised to give you the grace you need for that specific moment. Remember that His Holy Spirit has united you to Christ so the power of Jesus will

be released in some way through your endurance. And count it as a badge. That it's an honorable thing to endure hardship.

Learn the waves of judgment. First, learn that a breaker has ended the old system. Second learn to ride behind the true Teacher- Jesus. Third, learn that the waters are never perfectly calm. Fourth, ride promises through persecution. And lastly

**[Learn, fifthly] The horrible crash of the breaker.**

Let's read the details of when this wave of judgment strikes Jerusalem and leads to the Temple's destruction. Look at vv. 20-24

*"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all the nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

If you watch the waves grow, there will be signs. It gets taller. And taller. And then a bit of white is seen at the crest above the blue. Then the white starts tumbling and breaking over the front. Jesus is saying, if you want to know the time when the Temple is going to be destroyed, watch.

Throughout most of Israel's history, the safest place to go was to Jerusalem. It was on a hill, it was a fortress with massive walls on the high ground. When there was an invasion, people from the surrounding countryside would flee into Jerusalem to be safe. But not this time, when the breaker to destroy the Temple comes, the crash will destroy all of Jerusalem. So, get out, and anything that slows you down, like a child in the womb or in your arms. A precious child. You'll begin to see them as obstacles.

Most of us don't really know this, but the destruction of Jerusalem in the late 60's and 70AD, was a horrible siege. Maybe the worst in recorded history. While under siege, the city divided into warring factions and took turns attacking one another.



In one incident alone, 12,000 nobles and leading citizens were tortured and killed by the Zealots. Why can I say that? Because literally every person left in Jerusalem suffered. One million people died. 100,000 people were taken into slavery. And the Gentile Romans invaded Jerusalem.

What does Jesus mean by “the times of the Gentiles?” It could mean the reality that Jerusalem will be overrun by Gentile soldiers. It could be that He’s emphasizing that the gospel is about to flourish among Gentile nations in a way unheard of in the Old Covenant. It might be giving us hope for more Jewish conversions- which are happening too! Nobody knows with precision, but I think it could be all these things.

[Conclusion] In the Wild West there was a place in Wyoming called Hole-in-the-Wall Pass. Numerous outlaws would hideout there because they could keep the long arm of judgment away. It was a den of thieves that thrived for half a century. It was a hideout for bandits. And that’s what Jesus called the Temple when He came into Jerusalem. It was corrupt. So He drove out the corrupt money lenders. And He denounced the corrupt teachers. And He’s about to pay the once-for-all sacrifice. No more sacrifices will be needed. So the wave of Judgment is falling on the Temple. It will be gone. It will be hard, but He says these things to detach our hopes from a building and our circumstances so that we can attach our hopes to Him. And only Him.

Jesus referred to these events as days of vengeance. The waves of judgment are destroying the Temple so that it is not needed anymore. But there’s something else here, that I want you to know. There had been a Temple in Jerusalem that had been destroyed before. But before that happened, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision that you can read about in chapters 10-11. Now keep this in mind: the place where God’s glory was to be found was in the Holy of Holies. A sort of sacred room that had the exact same measurements for height and width and length. But in Ezekiel’s vision, what happened is this: the people of Israel and the Temple system had become so corrupt, that in his vision, he sees the glory of the Lord depart from the holy of holies and move east past all these corrupt people. And the glory sort of pauses at the threshold of the Temple, like God is taking one last look. And then the glory of God departs and goes to the mountain east of Jerusalem and it sort of hovered there. Before departing forever. Leaving the door

open for the Babylonians to come and bring a destructive wave of judgment onto this corrupt system.

And here's Jesus talking about a wave of destruction coming. And when you read Matthew and Luke together you notice something remarkable. In Luke, Jesus prophesies that these things are going to happen in such a way that it's like Jesus is just lingering on the threshold looking around at the corruption. Before he departs. And Matthew notes more specifically where Jesus said this. On the Mount of Olives, the mountain east of Jerusalem. Where Jesus is going to stay for a very short time. You see the glory of God was wrapped up in Jesus. And when He left the Temple for the last time, the glory of the Lord departed the Temple. Opening the doors to a wave of judgment.

And to the Israelites in Ezekiel's time and in Jesus' time saw this as a bad thing. I've already noted why it's not quite so bad as we think. But this is so amazing I feel like I must speak these truths to you. The holy of holies was lost. The place where God seemed to dwell. That perfect cube. Lost. But in the New Heavens and New Earth there is no temple. But there is a new place that is massive- like the size of a small moon. But guess what, Revelation 21:15-16 tells us that that place is not round. It's a cube. Like the Holy of Holies. And verses earlier tell us that the glory of God is radiant there. So God doesn't need a Temple because the whole earth will be a Temple. The loss of this old temple makes way for a better Temple with a better presence. Where we can all live forever in the holy of holies because Jesus has ushered us in by His blood. The waves of judgment crashed and destroyed the temple. But something greater than the Temple was here- Jesus. And something greater than the Temple is here- a church of living stones- filled by the Holy Spirit. And something greater than the Temple is coming. The waves can crash, but God's people will prove to be safe on shore.