

Hang in Christ

Luke 21:5-19

Let us pray: Father God, in this very moment, through Your eternal Word, carry out within us the work of new creation—by which You brought the old to an end at the cross and make all things new. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the source of all being. Amen.

When I was young, we had homework over school breaks. I loved playing so much that I'd often forget about the assignments until the last few days before school started. The hardest one was the diary assignment—I couldn't remember what had happened over the month, so I mostly made things up. I remember wishing time would just stop.

We live within the framework of time. Time itself is a creation of God. But God is not bound by time—He is eternal.

What's truly amazing and gracious is that this eternal God has gifted us eternity through Christ. How? Through the work of the cross.

There is no chapter in Scripture where the cross is absent. The more deeply we understand the Word, the more clearly we see the cross. Even today's passage—Luke 21, which speaks of the end times—contains the cross.

As Christians, we believe that Jesus will return and that there will be a final judgment. But if we think of Luke 21 only as a distant future event, what benefit does it bring to us today? Of course, prophecy helps us prepare for the future. But we must remember that Scripture is multi-dimensional—it is the Word of the eternal present. It applies here and now.

Though Christ's work on the cross happened 2,000 years ago in our timeline, it must be understood as an eternal present. Only then does it have power for us today and for the faithful who looked forward to the Messiah before His coming.

Let's look for the cross in today's passage.

In Luke 21, Jesus speaks of three kinds of destruction: the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the world. All three belong to the old creation, and they met their end when Jesus died on the cross. But wait—Jerusalem and the world still exist, don't they? Yes, in chronological time, the end will come later. Think of it like this: a prisoner sentenced to death hasn't died yet, but the sentence has been declared. Its execution will come in time.

So what is our purpose in a world already under judgment? Colossians 1:16 says we were created for Christ. Our purpose is to reflect Christ and share Him with others.

In today's passage, Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple. Historically, this happened in AD 70 when Rome destroyed it. Spiritually, it points to what will happen in chapter 22—Jesus' crucifixion. When He says "the days will come," He's referring to the day of the cross. The temple is a model of Jesus' body. In John 2:19, Jesus says, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days," equating His body with the temple.

The destruction of the temple is the death of Jesus' body. To build the new temple, Jesus took the old temple into Himself and destroyed it on the cross.

Why did the old temple have to be destroyed? Because Israel rejected Christ and lost its purpose of revealing God to the nations. They were trapped in their own religion. They were unable to fulfill their purpose, so Christ came and took their sin into His body. Romans 8:3 says God made Christ's body a sin offering for us. He united Himself with the old temple and was judged on the cross. "Not one stone will be left on another" means nothing from the old temple will be reused by the Lord—it's a complete judgment.

What is the new temple built through His resurrection? It is us—those who believe and receive the Son of God. We are living stones, built into a temple with Christ as the cornerstone (Luke 20:17, 1 Peter 2:4-5).

The destruction of the temple was decreed in the death of Christ and occurred in eternity. In time, it was later manifested in AD 70.

To say we already exist as the new temple means that through the cross, the old world has ended and the new heaven and earth have begun. Jesus said in Luke 17:21, “The kingdom of God is in your midst.” His words and actions must be understood as eternal present.

But we live in time, so eternal realities unfold gradually. Colossians 1:13 says we’ve already been transferred into the kingdom of the Son He loves. Christians live by faith from the perspective of eternity. Yet in time, we still await the end—sometimes it feels like we’re living in darkness. Our old selves, supposedly crucified, still seem very much alive.

That’s because what Christ accomplished in eternity is applied to us gradually in time. Think of it like this: we’ve signed the contract for a new house—it’s already ours. But until we move in, we still live in the old house, preparing to leave. We get rid of old furniture and clean out the clutter.

Even when your old self resurfaces, remember that it died eternally on the cross. Believe that you live in Christ’s kingdom now. I bless you to live with that faith.

Let’s briefly look at the signs of the temple’s destruction. Jesus mentions wars, uprisings, earthquakes, famines, plagues, terrifying events, and great signs from heaven. These things have happened throughout history and will continue. Spiritually speaking, since the cross, conflict between God’s kingdom and the world is inevitable. The gospel shakes the world. Spiritual earthquakes stir people to seek truth. The world suffers from a spiritual plague—without Christ, there is no hope.

The Old Testament is full of such images. Joseph saved people from famine as Egypt’s prime minister. When Israel approached Jericho, Rahab said the people’s hearts melted in fear. Before Jesus died, darkness covered the land for three hours, and when He died, there was an earthquake. The cross shook the universe eternally. The gospel causes upheaval. Martyrs arise in many nations.

When Jesus says, “Not a hair of your head will perish,” it means that though we suffer and die in time, God preserves us from the perspective of eternity. Christ is our head, and we are His hair—His glory.

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Jesus says in verse 10, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” In the original language, this phrase actually reads as “a nation will be over a nation, and a kingdom over a kingdom.” This suggests that new nations and kingdoms are being established over the old ones. It means that Christ’s nation—His kingdom—is being laid over the old nations and kingdoms of this world. Christians are people who exist on this earth as a new nation and a new kingdom.

Jesus encourages us: “By your endurance you will gain your souls.” Christian endurance is not human grit. It comes from Christ within us—under His wings, drawing strength, hope, and faith from Him.

So let us remember that and whatever happens, may we not merely “hang in there,” but rather “hang in Christ.” Amen.

Let us pray: Lord, we thank You for bringing all our old selves to an end at the cross and, through the resurrection, transferring us into the new heaven, the new earth, and the kingdom of the Son You love. Though the end was already accomplished at the cross, this world—still trembling and not yet fully ended—awaits the final redemption of all things. In the midst of it, may we live as a new people of Your kingdom, rooted in Christ, and proclaim and partake of the wondrous work He accomplished on the cross as the eternal present. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.