



Sunday School Lesson
Luke 21:25-36
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Signs of the End



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This first lesson in the Smyth-Helwys Formations unit “The New Day” begins a five part study seeking to link Old Testament prophecy to New Testament fulfillment around this common theme of a new day. Primary emphasis in our studies will be placed on the New Testament passage with minimal emphasis on the OT passage. Where there is a clear connection between the two sets, some emphasis will be given; otherwise, the OT passage will not be treated. Seeking to link up OT and NT passages creates an interpretative mine field, often with very questionable results. Where the NT writer has specifically quoted or alluded to an OT passage, the Bible student can proceed with confidence and examine how the NT writer has treated the OT passage. But to launch out without such foundation in the NT text represents something I consider very murky waters and am very hesitant to do. Playing word association games between OT and NT texts with somewhat similar themes has been done down through the centuries and has often served as a basis for creating very screwballish interpretation and theological conclusions. Hence, my great hesitation to venture into this muddy pond.



The verses included in this study, [Luke 21:25-36](#), comprise a portion of the material known as the [Little Apocalypse](#). All three synoptic gospels contain this material. The contents are very similar but do have individual distinctives. Thus, where Matthew and Mark intersect Luke, consideration to the parallel texts will be given.

I. Context

Relevant background material from [previous studies](#) on the gospel of Luke will be incorporated into this section of the study.

a. Historical

External History. Regarding the compositional history of the Gospel of Luke, let me summarize a lot of Lukan scholarship by the following. William Beard in the *Interpreter's One Volume Com-*

mentary on the Bible (iPreach online) summarizes the basic issue this way: “According to tradition this gospel was written by Luke, ‘the beloved physician’ and travel companion of Paul (Col. 4:14; Philemon 1:24; 2 Tim. 4:11). Actually the tradition is not very old. It appears first

in the writings of Irenaeus, who was a theologian living in Gaul during the latter part of the 2nd cent. The Muratorian fragment (ca. A.D. 200), a document which presents an official list of Christian scriptures, supports the same conclusion.” With the acceptance of this early church tradition -- although not all do and since the gospel itself makes no effort internally to identify its author -- then the issue becomes trying to locate a setting for the writing of this gospel. Again Bill Beard summarizes quite effectively these questions:

“The exact date and place of the writing of this gospel cannot be ascertained. Since the author uses Mark as a source and since he seems to have accurate knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (19:41-44; 21:20-24; see pp. 1029-31) he evidently wrote after A.D. 70. He must have written before 140, when his gospel was included in the canon of the heretic Marcion. Since the situation of the church reflected in the gospel fits well the political situation of the reign of the Emperor Domitian (81-96), a date from about 85 to 95 is most likely.

According to one tradition Luke wrote his histories in Rome. Another locates his writing in Greece. Since there is a correlative tradition that the evangelist died in one of the Greek provinces, this latter tradition has better support. Any of these locations assumes the traditional authorship and bears the same burdens. Perhaps all we can say is that the gospel was written from some locale where Greek was the primary language and where cultured readers like Theophilus (1:3) would be at home.”

According to [Luke 1:1-4](#), this gospel -- and subsequently the book of Acts (cf. Acts 1:1) -- were dedicated to a Theophilus who as a patron supported the cost of producing these documents as well as the making of copies of them for distribution to various Christian communities in the late first century world. Evidently [Theophil](#) was a wealthy Roman who had become a Christian and wanted to contribute to the spread of Christianity by supporting Luke’s



writing of these two documents. The gospel preface ([Lk 1:4](#)) suggests the purpose of the document was “so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.”

The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts together stand as a two volume testimony of the beginning of the Christian religion with its founder, Jesus Christ, and the first three decades of the beginning of this movement in its spread from Jerusalem to Rome from AD 30 to AD 61. The author was closely associated with the apostle Paul. For the gospel account Luke made use of a variety of sources, as he indicated in [Lk 1:1-3](#), since he was not personally present with Jesus during his earthly ministry. Modern scholarship generally concludes that among these

turies of the history of interpretation many different viewpoints about this have developed. Since our passage picks up after the prediction of the temple's destruction, little attention will be given to this. But most detailed commentaries will explore this at length.

Literary Setting. As was mentioned in the [Internal History](#) section, this material comes on Tuesday evening of the Passion Week material. It is a part of the depiction of Jesus' final activities in a public setting. Our passage, 21:35-36, comprises only a part of that discourse material given to the Twelve as they were heading back to Bethany where they were staying at night in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus during this final week.

Inside the discourse of Lk. 21:5-36, verses 25-36 come at the end of that material. The [chart](#) in the larger internet version of this study illustrates in detail the literary context of our passage:

- 131. Temple destruction predicted 21:5-6
- 132. Signs of the times 21:7-28
 - a. Signs & Persecutions (7-19)
 - b. Destruction of Jerusalem (20-24)
 - c. **Coming of the Son of Man (25-28)**
- 133. **Lesson of the fig tree 21:29-33**
- 134. **Be ready 21:34-36**

The pattern of these verses shifts to the end times aspect while the preceding pericope, vv. 20-24, has predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in 70 AD.

II. Message

Literary Structure. The internal structure of verses 25-36 is easy to detect, as is illustrated by the [Block Diagram](#) and the [Semantic Diagram](#) in the larger internet version of this study. The first emphasis is on the coming of the Son of Man (vv. 25-28). This is followed by a transitional section applying the analogy of the harvest of a fig tree to end times (vv. 29-33). The climax is the admonitions to watchfulness (vv. 34-36).

a. Coming of the Son of Man, vv. 25-28

Greek NT

21:25 Καὶ ἔσονται σημεῖα ἐν ἡλίῳ καὶ σελήνῃ καὶ ἄστροις, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς συνοχή ἔθνῶν ἐν ἀπορίᾳ ἤχους θαλάσσης καὶ σάλου, 21:26 ἀποψυχόντων ἀνθρώπων ἀπὸ φόβου καὶ προσδοκίας τῶν ἐπερχομένων τῆ οἰκουμένη, αἱ γὰρ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλευθήσονται. 21:27 καὶ τότε ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλῃ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς. 21:28 ἀρχομένων δὲ τούτων γίνεσθαι ἀνακύψατε καὶ ἐπάρατε τὰς κεφαλὰς ὑμῶν, διότι ἐγγίζει ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις ὑμῶν.

NASB

25 There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. 28 But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

NRSV

25 There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

NLT

25 And there will be strange events in the skies – signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And down here on earth the nations will be in turmoil, perplexed by the roaring seas and strange tides. 26 The courage of many people will falter because of the fearful fate they see coming upon the earth, because the stability of the very heavens will be broken up. 27 Then everyone will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds with power and great glory. 28 So when all these things begin to happen, stand straight and look up, for your salvation is near!"

Notes:

The internal structure is threefold. A couple of eschatological predictions begin (vv. 25-26a). These are followed by two justifying eschatological asser-

tions (vv. 26b-27). Growing out of these two sets of declarations come two admonitions intended to instill hope and courage in the Twelve and subsequent

readers of Luke's account.

Of importance is the parallel depictions in Matthew and Mark, especially, since Mark served as one of Luke's sources.

Mt. 24:29-31 (NRSV)

29 Immediately after the suffering of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

From this comparison, one can readily detect both the commonality of Luke with Mark and Matthew. But equally clear is the distinctly Lukan description of this segment. The dramatic events in the sky are common to all three. Also the drastic human reaction on earth is common. The coming of the Son of Man is common. Matthew follows Mark with the next emphasis on the gathering up of humanity by angels. Luke, however, shifts to a focus on encouragement as the climatic emphasis.

Eschatological Predictions:

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world," (vv. 25-26a). The signs are visible skyward, and create dramatic response from the people on earth. As Alan Culpepper (*Luke, New Interpreter's Bible*, iPreach) notes:

21:25. Although the apocalyptic discourse in Luke generally follows the order of the discourse in Mark 13, Luke has omitted the Markan assurance that the Lord has cut short the days (Mark 13:20), and the repetition of the warning about the false prophets (Mark

Mk. 13:24-27 (NRSV)

24 But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. 27 Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

13:21-23; cf. Luke 21:8). Instead, the reference to the fulfillment of "the times of the Gentiles" (v. 24) leads directly to the forecast of the signs that will mark the coming of the Son of Man. Here we may detect an escalation of the signs that precede earlier events (cf. vv. 10-11). No longer is it a question of the meaning of wars, earthquakes, famines, or persecutions. The "great signs from heaven" (v. 11) are now specified. Note the repetition of the word for "signs" (σημεία semeia) in vv. 11 and 25, which links these turning points in the discourse with the initial question in v. 7, where the singular "sign" occurs (σημεῖον semeion).

These cosmic signs will be unmistakable: "signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars" and distress among the nations on earth (v. 25). Luke omits Mark's introductory phrase, "But in those days, after that suffering" (Mark 13:24 NRSV), but it is not clear that by doing so he is distinguishing or separating the time of the coming of the Son of Man from the destruction of Jerusalem.²⁶⁷ One follows after the other.

The cosmic signs that will precede the coming of the Son of Man echo and fulfill the oracles of the prophets (see Isa 13:10; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:30-31). Similarly, the terrors on land and sea were described by the prophets (see Ps 46:2-3; Hag 2:6; Wis 5:22; cf. Isa 24:19 LXX, where the term "distress" [ἀπορία aporia] occurs, as in Luke 21:25).²⁶⁸

The signs that will precede the coming of the Son of Man, therefore, are not only unmistakable, cosmic signs but signs that fulfill the Scriptures as well. The reference to "the nations" (τὸ ἔθνος to ethnos), a term that does not appear in this selection of verses most closely related to the signs in Luke 21:25, ties the warning of the signs of the coming of the Son of Man to the references to "the nations" in the preceding verses (see vv. 10, 24).

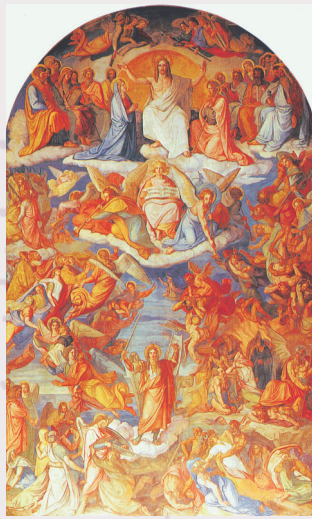
21:26-27. Verse 26a has no parallel in Mark. Neither is it drawn from an OT reference. The description of people fainting from fear and foreboding serves effectively, however, to heighten suspense and curiosity while the

reader waits to hear what is coming. To what are these terrible portents a prelude? What is "coming upon the world" (v. 26)? The final clause of v. 26, "the powers of the heavens will be shaken," reflects the language of Hag 2:6, 21 and Isa 34:4.

Once all of these signs have come to pass, signaling "the end" that is at hand (cf. v. 9), then those who have been terrified, fainting "from fear and foreboding" (v. 26) will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" (v. 27). This description of the coming of the Son of Man is drawn from Dan 7:13: "I looked, and



there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven" (NIV). Jesus has referred earlier to the future, coming Son of Man, but this is the first time that the Son of Man has been described in the language of Daniel, "in a cloud."²⁶⁹ The reference to the cloud also sets up the link between the ascension of the risen Lord and the coming of the Son of Man (Acts 1:9-11). References to the coming of the Son of Man earlier in Luke have warned that he will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of Jesus now (9:26), but will confess those who confess him now (12:8). The Son of Man will come at an unexpected hour (12:40). His coming is compared to flashes of lightning that light up the whole sky (17:24), and there will be cataclysmic destruction, as in the days of Noah and Lot (17:26-30), but will he find faith on earth (18:8)?



When the Son of Man returns, the events signaling it will be dramatic both in the sky and on earth. The human fearfulness, although triggered by the dramatic events in the sky, is focused on the reality of final judgment. Luke paints this picture in broad strokes, while his source Mark paints the picture with angels spreading out to gather up all humanity for final judgment.

For Luke, believers should stand up in the midst of these things happening. Secondly, they are lift up their heads. Both postures are those of welcoming the Son of Man. The reason: "because your redemption is drawing near" (NRSV; *διότι ἐγγίζει ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις ὑμῶν*). The liberation of the disciples of

Christ will take place at our Lord's return.

The connection of all this to us? In spite of the difficulty of unpacking Luke's prediction of the temple's destruction and the Lord's return, we can anticipate an overwhelming experience globally when Christ does return at the close of the age. For the unbelieving world this will be a dreadful moment of accountability. But for believers it will be the most wonderful day in history. Paul expressed a similar view when he wrote to the believers at Thessalonica ([1 Thess. 4:13-18](#); NRSV):

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. 15 For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.

We can find great comfort from this blessed hope of our Lord's coming: *παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις*.

b. Lessons from the Fig Tree, vv. 29-33

Greek NT

21:29 Καὶ εἶπεν παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς· Ἴδετε τὴν συκῆν καὶ πάντα τὰ δένδρα· 21:30 ὅταν προβάλωσιν ἤδη, βλέποντες ἀφ' ἐαυτῶν γινώσκετε ὅτι ἤδη ἐγγὺς τὸ θέρος ἐστίν· 21:31 οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὅταν ἴδητε ταῦτα γινόμενα, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγὺς ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. 21:32 ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη ἕως ἂν πάντα

NASB

29 Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. 32 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.

NRSV

29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33

NLT

29 Then he gave them this illustration: "Notice the fig tree, or any other tree. 30 When the leaves come out, you know without being told that summer is near. 31 Just so, when you see the events I've described taking place, you can be sure that the Kingdom of God is near. 32 I assure you, this generation F99 will not pass from the scene until all these

γένηται. 21:33 ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρελεύσονται.

33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

events have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever.

Notes:

This second pericope becomes a transition from the first to the third segments. In playing this literary role, it contributes significant meaning in that it builds off the foundation of the first segment (vv. 25-28) and lays the foundation for the third (vv. 34-36).

This pivotal role is most likely one of the reasons Luke added the unusual narrative introductory statement at the beginning of v. 29: "Then he told them a parable" (Καὶ εἶπεν παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς). In this discourse, Luke interrupts the

speech material with narrative intros in three places after the initial one (8, 10, 29). The two in v. 10 and v. 29 serve to heighten attention on the statements immediately following.

Additionally, the parallels in Matthew and Mark are important to note, since Luke closely follows his Markan source:

Mt. 24:32-35 (NRSV)

32 From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 34 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Mk. 13:28-31 (NRSV)

28 From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Lk. 21:29-33 (NRSV)

29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις ὑμῶν.) with the nearness of the Kingdom of God (v. 31; ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ). The future aspect of God's Kingdom emphasized here relates to final deliverance from this sinful world. These are tied into the return of Jesus as the Son of Man, the promised Messiah.

Verses 32 and 33 are introduced by solemn oath, "Truly I tell you"

Luke follows Mark closely, but with his own distinctive writing style, and not as closely as does Matthew. Luke introduces the material as a parable, i.e., a comparative saying. Thus the readers are signaled that a comparison is coming. That is, the fig tree stands for something spiritual.

Luke especially points to the greening up of the



fig tree in its leaves during spring time. This signals the coming of summer when figs can be harvested from the tree. The fig tree in Palestine was one of the first trees to sprout leaves in the spring and held a particularly barren appearance through the winter months. Luke's addition "and all the trees" is possibly an addition to his Markan source for the benefit of readers elsewhere in the Mediterranean world who were unfamiliar with the fig tree. The point of the comparison is clear: Just as

green leaves on a fig tree signal the coming of the summer harvest, these signs of the coming of the Son of Man signal eschatological blessing for believers. The nearness of the Kingdom of God is Luke's emphasis, while Mark focuses on the coming of the Son of Man; and Matthew follows Mark. Luke equates the nearness of our redemption (v. 28; διότι ἐγγίζει

(ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν), thus heightening the assurances offered by the following declarations.

First the declaration is made that ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη absolutely will not die before all these predictions have happened. Here is the hard knot to untie accurately. It seems to be saying that the present generation of people alive when Jesus made this state-

ment would still be living when the Son of Man returned ushering in the end of time. "Generation" is one of the meanings of the Greek word ἡ γενεὰ (*genea*). Was Jesus referring just to the destruction of the temple by the reference πάντα (all things)? Then the return of the Son of Man is projected into a distant future afterwards. If so, then one can say that this came true, since the temple was destroyed about 40 years after this statement was made. But the biblical text won't allow such a neat unpacking of terms. Another approach is to simply link the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 with the expectation that the Son of Man's return was intended to be a part of that series of events. Some signals exist suggesting that many Christians, including the apostle Paul, in the first Christian century expected Jesus to return during their lifetime. J. Nolland (*Luke, vol. 3, Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) provides a helpful perspective:

Despite the series of attempts to apply ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη, "this generation," to something other than the generation of Jesus' contemporaries, all the alternatives (the Jewish People; humanity; the generation of the end-time signs) are finally artificial and represent imposition based upon some supposition brought to the text (Luke uses "this generation" also in 7:31; 11:29, 30, 31, 32, 50, 51; Acts 2:40). This verse is a standing embarrassment to all attempts to see the delay of the Parousia as a major Lukan preoccupation. There is, by contrast, no suggestion that the verse is an embarrassment to Luke.

As the prophets before him had regularly done, the Gospel Jesus presents as part of a single development things that belong together in principle but turn out to be separated chronologically in a manner that he did not anticipate. (Caird [*Language and Imagery*, 243–71] has argued forcefully that, at least in part, this involved a deliberate use in a metaphorical manner of end-of-the-world language in connection with what the prophets well knew was not the end of the world. The present and immediately future events were to be seen in the light of and somehow as participating in the reality of what would one day be fully true eschatologically. His insights are pertinent to the present discussion but are not capable in themselves of eliminating the difficulty over timing.) The fundamental driving force for the sentiment expressed in this verse is the conviction that Jesus' Jewish contemporaries in Palestine ("this generation") were to find themselves at a climax point in the purposes of God in judgment (cf. esp. 11:49–51), just as they had been experiencing a climax point of God's saving purposes in the ministry of Jesus. As with the earlier prophets the anticipation of the future was first and foremost an interpretation, in the light of a knowledge

of God, of the significance of the present and of the nature of its development out of the past.

The major point surfaces in the contrast between the temporality of heaven and earth to the permanence of Jesus' words: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (v. 33; ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρελεύσονται).

For the Twelve who first heard these words, such



declarations had to have provided enormous encouragement. It had been a day of vigorous confrontation of Jesus with powerful enemies in Jerusalem.

What on Palm Sunday had begun as bright promise of the coming of the Messiah had now begun to turn into uncertainty since Jesus had repeatedly defined his mission away from political deliverance. Over the preceding months, he had spoken often of his impending death in Jerusalem. Dark clouds of apprehension were beginning to form. Now he had declared that the precious city of Jerusalem, along with its temple -- the center of Jewish religious life world wide -- was going to be destroyed. Yet, in the midst of this gloom was the promise of the return of the Son of Man, a bright ray of hope piercing through these dark clouds. Did he know what he was talking about? Could this really happen?

Jesus promised solemnly that what he had declared could be counted on more than everything else in this world. They could bank on this being accurate. This would provide the foundation for the two admonitions in the following pericope (vv. 34-36).

How does this apply to us today? Various understandings will be found in commentaries. One firm conclusion, in my estimation, is the certainty of God's program for human history, and its coming to pass. Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem, and it did happen. He predicted that he would return again as the Son of Man -- and he will. Although we can't know the precise time or circumstances of that, we can be absolutely certain that it will happen in God's own timing. And that's the bottom line issue. I don't want to know all the details personally. I just know that our Lord is coming again, and that we need to be ready for it to happen. Speculative prediction of when it's going to take place is wasted time and energy. A demand to know precisely "the signs of the time" pushes one both outside the bounds of scripture and

into a focus that misses the far more important point: preparing for his return by faithful living and serving. The demands of that should keep believers fully occupied all through their lives. According to Paul's word

in [1 Thess. 4](#), all of us who are genuine believers are going to participate in that return in one way or another. That's all I need to know!

c. Watchfulness, vv. 34-36

Greek NT

21:34 Προσέχετε δὲ ἑαυτοῖς μήποτε βαρηθῶσιν ὑμῶν αἱ καρδίαι ἐν κραιπάλῃ καὶ μέθῃ καὶ μερίμναις βιωτικαῖς καὶ ἐπιστῇ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς αἰφνίδιος ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη 21:35 ὡς παγίς· ἐπισελεύσεται γὰρ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς καθημένους ἐπὶ πρόσωπον πάσης τῆς γῆς. 21:36 ἀγρυπνεῖτε δὲ ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ δεόμενοι ἵνα κατισχύσητε ἐκφυγεῖν ταῦτα πάντα τὰ μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι καὶ σταθῆναι ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

NASB

34 Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. 36 But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

NRSV

34 Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

NLT

34 Watch out! Don't let me find you living in careless ease and drunkenness, and filled with the worries of this life. Don't let that day catch you unaware, 35 as in a trap. For that day will come upon everyone living on the earth. 36 Keep a constant watch. And pray that, if possible, you may escape these horrors and stand before the Son of Man.

Notes:

Most likely, Luke has substituted [Mk. 13:33-37](#) with vv. 34-36. Perhaps through using a different source here, or, perhaps just as a matter of stylistic variance for the sake of communicating to his readers. Mark declares:

33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. 35 Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.

The internal structure of these two Greek sentences in vv. 34-36 is rather simple. The core expressions are two admonitions essentially synonymous in their thrust: "Be on guard" (Προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς) and "Be alert" (ἀγρυπνεῖτε). Mark's twin terms for watchfulness are ἀγρυπνεῖτε (*agrypneite*) and γρηγορεῖτε (*gregoreite*), the first of which is Luke's term. Matthew picks up on the Markan emphasis and expands Mark's four verses into Mt.

24:45-25:30. Clearly all three gospel writers recognized the importance of proper preparation for the return of the Lord.

Both Mark's and Luke's sets of terms stress a mental alertness and defensiveness against danger.

The first admonition, "be on guard," is cast against two dangers found in the non-believing world: 1) a pagan lifestyle ("dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life") that leads (2) to unpreparedness for the day of the Lord's return ("that day does not catch you unexpectedly"). The believer can be enticed to drift into a pagan life-style that leaves him completely unprepared for the Lord's return. One implication of this depiction is that watchfulness means disciplined commitment to live and serve Christ faithfully until His return.

The second admonition, "be alert," pushes the emphasis in a more positive direction. This alertness is (1) to be at all times. We must never let our guard down. And (2) it is coupled with the prayer that we "may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." The

these things refers to the catastrophic events mentioned above in connection to the coming of the Son of Man. This is to be the first part of our prayer. To escape is not some exemption from a supposed “tribulation period.” Rather, it is to escape the destruction and condemnation facing those who are horrified at the Lord’s return. The second part, which grows out of the first part, is “to stand before the Son of Man.” Again, the final judgment aspect of the Lord’s return surfaces. We face as believers a scrutiny from the Lord in judgment. Paul described it this way in [2 Cor. 5:10-11](#) (NRSV):

10 For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.
11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences.

And in [1 Cor 3:10-15](#) he described the experience of final judgment for the believer as God’s servant in these terms:

10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done. 14 If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.

Thus we must prepare for Christ’s return. We must be ready for it to happen at any moment. This preparation demands disciplined avoidance of actions contradictory to our Christian commitment. It necessitates continual prayer for God’s help to be prepared for that day.

Here is the biblical focus on watchfulness. To engage in speculation about when it’s going to happen is worse than useless. It seriously risks a drift into pagan living because of having missed the point of biblical watchfulness. Tons of paper have been wasted in speculative writing about “how to read the signs of the time.” Countless numbers of sincere believers have been duped into buying this trash.

To be sure, Mark 13 mentions more “signs” than is contained in Luke. But one misses the point by understanding these as a sort of “check list” so that

when the last one can be checked off, the second coming is going to take place. This same gospel writer also said ([Mk. 13:32-33](#)):

32 But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.
33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.

What does Christ’s return mean for believers? For Luke, it means to stand up with open arms and lifted head welcoming Jesus’ return. It means the coming of the Kingdom of God which in turn means deliverance from the corruption of this world. But it also means facing God in judgment. Thus, we must be prepared for that day. In so getting ready, we can face that judgment with confidence that we will stand the test well as a faithful servant of our Lord.

Thus we can shout with the apostle Paul in [1 Cor. 16:22](#), *Μαρινα θα* (*marana tha*): “Lord, come.”

Greek NT

21:25 Καὶ ἔσονται σημεῖα ἐν ἡλίῳ καὶ σελήνῃ καὶ ἀστροῖς, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς συνοχὴ ἔθνῶν ἐν ἀπορίᾳ ἤχους θαλάσσης καὶ σάλου, 21:26 ἀποψυχόντων ἀνθρώπων ἀπὸ φόβου καὶ προσδοκίας τῶν ἐπερχομένων τῆ οἰκουμένη, αἱ γὰρ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλευθήσονται. 21:27 καὶ τότε ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλῃ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς. 21:28 ἀρχομένων δὲ τούτων γίνεσθαι ἀνακύψατε καὶ ἐπάρατε τὰς κεφαλὰς ὑμῶν, διότι ἐγγίζει ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις ὑμῶν.

21:29 Καὶ εἶπεν παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς: Ἴδετε τὴν συκῆν καὶ πάντα τὰ δένδρα· 21:30 ὅταν προβάλωσιν ἤδη, βλέποντες ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν γινώσκετε ὅτι ἤδη ἐγγὺς τὸ θέρος ἐστίν· 21:31 οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὅταν ἴδητε ταῦτα γινόμενα, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγὺς ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. 21:32 ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται. 21:33 ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρελεύσονται.

21:34 Προσέχετε δὲ ἑαυτοῖς μήποτε βαρηθῶσιν ὑμῶν αἱ καρδίαι ἐν κραιπάλῃ καὶ μέθῃ καὶ μερίμναις βιωτικαῖς καὶ ἐπιστῇ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς αἰφνίδιος ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη 21:35 ὡς παγίς· ἐπεισελεύσεται γὰρ ἐπὶ

NASB

25 There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. 28 But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

29 Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. 32 "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

34 Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all

NRSV

25 There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.

29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34 "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that

NLT

25 And there will be strange events in the skies – signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And down here on earth the nations will be in turmoil, perplexed by the roaring seas and strange tides. 26 The courage of many people will falter because of the fearful fate they see coming upon the earth, because the stability of the very heavens will be broken up. 27 Then everyone will see the Son of Man arrive on the clouds with power and great glory. 28 So when all these things begin to happen, stand straight and look up, for your salvation is near!"

29 Then he gave them this illustration: "Notice the fig tree, or any other tree. 30 When the leaves come out, you know without being told that summer is near. 31 Just so, when you see the events I've described taking place, you can be sure that the Kingdom of God is near. 32 I assure you, this generation will not pass from the scene until all these events have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever.

34 "Watch out! Don't let me find you living in careless ease and drunkenness, and filled with the worries of this life. Don't let that day catch you unaware, 35 as in a trap. For that day will come upon everyone liv-

πάντας τοὺς καθημένους ἐπὶ πρόσωπον πάσης τῆς γῆς. 21:36 ἀγρυπνεῖτε δὲ ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ δεόμενοι ἵνα κατισχύσητε ἐκφυγεῖν ταῦτα πάντα τὰ μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι καὶ σταθῆναι ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

the earth. 36 But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

ing on the earth. 36 Keep a constant watch. And pray that, if possible, you may escape these horrors and stand before the Son of Man."



Greek NT

21:25

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two paragraphs together - and
ἔσονται : Fut (Pred) - xxx - Ind - 3 - P - εἰμί - signs will be
σημεῖα : 2 - Nom (Subj) - N - P - σημεῖον, τὸ - signs
ἐν ἡλίῳ : 2 - Loc (Place) - M - S - ἥλιος, ὁ - in the sun
καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two nouns together - and
σελήνῃ : 1 - Loc (Place) - F - S - σελήνη, ἡ - in the moon
καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two nouns together - and
ἄστροις : 2 - Loc (Place) - N - P - ἄστρον, τό - in the stars
καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two prepositional main clauses together - and
ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς : 1 - Gen (Place) - F - S - γῆ, ἡ - upon the earth
συνοχῇ : 1 - Nom (Subj) - F - S - συνοχή - distress (implicit ἔσται)
ἐθνῶν : 3 - Gen (Ref) - N - P - ἔθνος, - ους, τὸ - of the nations, Gentiles
ἐν ἀπορίᾳ : 1 - Inst (Manner) - F - S - ἀπορία, ἡ - in/with perplexity
ἤχους : 3 - Gen (Ref) - N - S - ἤχος, - ους, τό - at the roaring
θαλάσσης : 1 - Gen (Identity) - F - S - θάλασσα, ἡ - of the sea
καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two nouns together - and
σάλου : 2 - Gen (Identity) - M - S - - of the surging (waves)

21:26

ἀποψυχόντων : Pres (Desc) - Act - Part (Adv: Temp) - Gen Abs - M - P - ἀποψύχω - as men faint (stop breathing)
ἀνθρώπων : 2 - Gen Abs - M - P - ἄνθρωπος, ὁ - men
ἀπὸ φόβου : 2 - Abl (Sep) - M - S - φόβος, ὁ - from fear
καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two nouns together - and
προσδοκίας : 1 - Abl (Sep) - F - S - προσδοκία, ἡ - from expectation
τῶν ἐπερχομένων : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Ptc (Adj: Subst) - Gen (Obj) - N - P - ἐπερχομαι - for the things coming on
τῇ οἰκουμένῃ : 1 - Loc (Place) - F - S - οἰκουμένη, ἡ - on the earth (inhabited world)
γὰρ : Postpositive coordinate conjunction introducing causal statement - for
αἱ δυνάμεις : 3 - Nom (Subj) - F - P - δύναμις, -εως, ἡ - the powers
τῶν οὐρανῶν : 2 - Gen (Identity) - M - P - οὐρανός, ὁ - of the heavens, Heaven
σαλευθήσονται : Fut (Pred) - Pass (NAE) - Ind - 3 - P - - the powers will be shaken

21:27

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two main clauses together - and
τότε : correlative temporal adverb - then
ὄψονται : Fut (Pred) - Dep - Ind - 3 - P - βλέπω - they will see
τὸν υἱὸν : 2 - Acc (Dir. Obj) - M - S - υἱός, ὁ - the Son
τοῦ ἀνθρώπου : 2 - Gen (Identity) - M - S - ἄνθρωπος, ὁ - of Man
ἐρχόμενον : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Ptc (Adj: Pred) - Acc - M - S - ἔρχομαι - coming
ἐν νεφέλῃ : 1 - Loc (Place) - F - S - νεφέλη, ἡ - in the cloud
μετὰ δυνάμεως : 3 - Gen (Manner) - F - S - δύναμις, -εως, ἡ - with power
καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two nouns together - and
δόξης : 1 - Gen (Manner) - F - S - δόξα, ἡ - with glory
πολλῆς : Adj (Attrib) - Gen - F - S - πολὺς, πολλή, πολὺ - with much (glory)

21:28

ἀρχομένων : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Ptc (Adv: Temp) - Gen Abs - N - P - ἄρχομαι - when these things begin...
δὲ : Post positive coordinate conjunction linking the following sentence with the preceding in mild contrast - but, and
τούτων : Dem Pron - Gen Abs - N - P - οὗτος, αὕτη, τούτο - these things
γίνεσθαι : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Infin (S: Obj) - γίνομαι - to occur, take place

ἀνακύψατε : 1 Aor (Const) - Act - Imper (Com) - 2 - P - ἀνακύπτω - stand up, straighten up

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two verbs together - and

ἐπάρατε : 1 Aor (Const) - Act - Imper (Com) - 2 - P - ἐπαίρω - lift up, raise up

τὰς κεφαλὰς : 1 - Acc (Dir Obj) - F - P - κεφαλή, ἡ - your heads

ὑμῶν : Pers Pron - Gen (Poss) - xx - P - σύ - your

διότι : Subordinate conjunction introducing adverbial causal clause - because

ἐγγίζει : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ind - 3 - S - ἐγγίζω - redemption is drawing near, coming close

ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις : 3 - Nom (Subj) - F - S - ἀπολύτρωσις, -εως, ἡ - your redemption, liberation

ὑμῶν : Pers Pron - Gen (Poss) - xx - P - σύ - your

21:29

Καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two paragraphs together - and

εἶπεν : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Ind - 3 - S - λέγω - he spoke

παραβολὴν : 1 - Acc (Dir Obj) - F - S - παραβολή, ἡ - a parable

αὐτοῖς : Pers Pron - Dat (Indir Obj) - M - P - αὐτός, -ή, -ό - to them

Ἴδετε : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Imper (Com) - 2 - P - βλέπω - see, take note of

τὴν συκῆν : 1 - Acc (Dir Obj) - F - S - συκῆ, ἡ - the fig tree

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction linking two nouns together - and

πάντα : Adj (Pred) - Acc - N - P - πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν - all

τὰ δένδρα : 2 - Acc (Dir Obj) - N - P - δένδρον, τό - the trees

21:30

ὅταν : Subordinate conjunction introducing an adverbial indefinite temporal clause - whenever

προβάλλωσιν : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Subjunctive (Potential) - 3 - P - προβάλλω - whenever they put out (their leaves)

ἤδη : Adverb of time - by now, at this point, at once

βλέποντες : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ptc (Adv: Temp) - Nom - M - P - βλέπω - while (you are) seeing, noticing

ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν : Reflex Pron - Abl (Advantage) - M - P - ἑαυτοῦ, -ῆς, -οῦ - for yourselves

γινώσκετε : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ind - 2 - P - - you know

ὅτι : Subordinate conjunction introducing a substantival object clause - that

ἤδη : Adverb of time - by now, at this point, already

ἐγγύς : Adv of space - near

τὸ θέρος : 3 - Nom (Subj) - N - S - θέρος, -ους, τό - summer

ἐστίν : Pres (Desc) - xxx - Ind - 3 - S - εἰμί - summer is

21:31

οὕτως : Correlative adverb of degree / manner - thus, in the same way

καὶ : Coordinate conjunction functioning as correlative adverb of degree - even, also

ὑμεῖς : Pers Pron - Nom (Subj) - xx - P - σύ - you

ὅταν : Subordinate conjunction introducing an adverbial indefinite temporal clause - whenever

ἴδητε : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Subjunctive (Potential) - 2 - P - βλέπω - you may see, take note of

ταῦτα : Dem Pron - Acc (Dir Obj) - N - P - οὗτος, αὕτη, τοῦτο - these things

γινόμενα : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Ptc (Adj: Pred) - Acc - N - P - γίνομαι - happening

γινώσκετε : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ind - 2 - P - - you know

ὅτι : Subordinate conjunction introducing a substantival object clause - that

ἐγγύς : Adv of space - near

ἐστίν : Pres (Desc) - xxx - Ind - 3 - S - εἰμί - the kingdom

ἡ βασιλεία : 1 - Nom (Subj) - F - S - βασιλεία, ἡ - the kingdom

τοῦ θεοῦ : 2 - Gen (Poss) - M - S - θεός, ὁ - God's, of God

21:32

ἀμὴν : Adverbial particle of affirmation - indeed, truly

λέγω : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ind - 1 - S - λέγω - I declare

ὑμῖν : Pers Pron - Dat. (Indir Obj) - xx - P - σύ - to you

ὅτι : Subordinate conjunction introducing substantival object clause in indirect discourse - that

οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Subj (Emphatic Negation) - 3 - S - παρέρχομαι - this generation

absolutely will not pass away

ἡ γενεά : 1 - Nom (Subj) - F - S - γενεά, ἡ - this generation (G-D, p. 154: “Jesus look upon the whole contemp. generation of Jews as a uniform mass confronting him [cf. Gen. 7:1; Ps 11:8] Mt 11:16; 12:41f; 23:36; 24:34; Mk 13:30; Lk 7:31; 11:29-32; 50f; 17:25; 21:32 (EGraesser, ZNW Beih. 22, 260)

αὕτη : Dem Pron - Nom - F - S - οὗτος, αὕτη, τοῦτο - this

ἕως ἄν : Subordinate conjunction introducing indefinite temporal dependent clause - until

πάντα : Adj (Subst) - Nom (Subj) - N - P - πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν - all things

γένηται : 2 Aor (Const) - Dep - Subjunctive (Potential) - 3 - S - γίνομαι - may come about, happen 21:33

ὁ οὐρανός : 2 - Nom (Subj) - M - S - οὐρανός, ὁ - Heaven, the sky

καὶ : coordinate conjunction linking two nouns - and

ἡ γῆ : 1 - Nom (Subj) - F - S - γῆ, ἡ - earth

παρελεύσονται : Fut (Pred) - Dep - Ind (Pot) - 3 - P - παρέρχομαι - they will pass away

δὲ : Post positive coordinate conjunction denoting mild contrast - but

οἱ λόγοι : 2 - Nom (Subj) - M - P - λόγος - my words

μου : Pers Pron - Gen (Poss) - xxx - S - ἐγώ - my

οὐ μὴ παρελεύσονται. : Fut (Emphatic Negation) - Dep - Ind (Pot) - 3 - P - παρέρχομαι - they absolutely will pass never away

21:34

δὲ : Post positive coordinate conjunction denoting mild contrast - but

Προσέχετε : Pres (Desc) - Act - Imp (Com) - 2 - P - προσέχω - be careful, take care, heed

ἑαυτοῖς : Reflex Pron - Dat (Ref) - M - P - ἑαυτοῦ, -ῆς - for yourselves, to yourselves

μήποτε : Subordinate conjunction introducing negative purpose clause - lest, if not

βαρηθῶσιν : 1 Aor (Const) - Pass (NAE / Impers Agency) - Subj (Potent) - 3 - P - - your hearts become heavy (D-G, 133: “Of hearts that become *heavy*, i.e., lose their sensitiveness [cf. Ex 7:14] in drunkenness.)

ὑμῶν : Pers Pron - Gen (Poss) - xxx - P - συ - your

αἱ καρδίαι : 1 - Nom (Subj) - F - P - καρδία, ἡ - your hearts

ἐν κραιπάλῃ : 1 - Loc (Sphere) / Ins (Assoc / Means) - F - S - κραιπάλῃ, ἡ - intoxication (D-G, 448: “both *carousing, intoxication*, and its result *drunken headache, hangover*, since it means *dizziness, staggering*, when the head refuses to function”)

καὶ : coordinate conjunction linking two nouns - and

μέθῃ : 1 - Loc (Sphere) / Ins (Assoc / Means) - F - S - μέθῃ, ἡ - drunkenness (D-G, 498: “ἐν κραιπάλῃ καὶ μ. *with dissipation and drunkenness* Lk 21:34”)

καὶ : coordinate conjunction linking two nouns - and

μερίμναις : 1 - Loc (Sphere) / Ins (Assoc / Means) - F - P - μέριμνα, ἡ - with anxieties, worries, cares

βιωτικαῖς : Adj (Attrib) - Loc / Ins - F - P - βιωτικός, -ή, -όν - with daily (D-G, 142: “*belonging to [daily] life*”)

καὶ : coordinate conjunction linking two nouns - and

ἐπιστῆ : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Subj (Potent) - 3 - S - ἐφίστημι - that day come upon you

ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς : Pers Pron - Acc (Ref) - xxx - P - συ - on / upon you

αἰφνίδιος : Adj (Pred) - Nom - F - S - αἰφνίδιος, -ον - sudden

ἡ ἡμέρα : 1 - Nom (Subj) - F - S - ἡμέρα, ἡ - that sudden day

ἐκείνη : Dem Pron - Nom - F - S - ἐκεῖνος, ἐκείνη, ἐκεῖνο - that

21:35

ὡς : Adverbial particle of comparison; Subordinate conjunction introducing adverbial comparative clause - like, as

παγίς : 3 - Nom (Subj) - F - S - παγίς, -ιδος, ἡ - a trap, snare

ἐπεισελεύσεται : Fut (Pred) - Dep - Ind - 3 - S - ἐπεισέρχομαι - it will rush in suddenly and forcibly (D-G, p. 284; 1x)

γὰρ : Postpositive coordinate conjunction introducing adverbial causal dependent clause - for

ἐπὶ πάντας : Adj (Pred) - Acc - M - P - πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν - upon all

τοὺς καθημένους : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Ptc (Adj: Subst) - Acc (Ref) - M - P - καθίημι - upon all those sitting

ἐπὶ πρόσωπον : 2 - Acc (Ref) - N - S - πρόσωπον, τό - on the face

πάσης : Adj (Pred) - Gen - F - S - πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν - upon all

τῆς γῆς. : 1 - Gen (Ref / Poss) - F - S - γῆ, ἡ - on all the earth

21:36

ἀγρυπνεῖτε : Pres (Desc) - Act - Imper (Com) - 2 - P - ἀγρυπνέω - keep watch, stay alert

δὲ : Postpositive coordinate conjunction introducing independent clause with mild contrast - and, but

ἐν παντὶ : Adj (Attrib) - Loc - M - S - πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν - at all (time), in every (moment)

καιρῷ : 2 - Loc (Time) - M - S - καιρός, ὁ - in every moment, at all time(s)

δεόμενοι : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Ptc (Adv: modal) - Nom - M - P - δεόμαι - asking

ἵνα : Subordinate conjunction introducing substantial object dependent clause - that

κατισχύσητε : 1 Aor (Const) - Act - Subjunct (Potent) - 2 - P - κατισχύω - you may be strong enough to

ἐκφυγεῖν : 2 Aor (Const) - Act - Infin (S: Obj) - ἐκφύγω - to run away, escape

ταῦτα : Dem Pron - Acc - N - P - οὗτος, αὕτη, τοῦτο - all

πάντα : Adj (Subst) - Acc (Dir Obj) - N - P - πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν - all

τὰ μέλλοντα : Pres (Desc) - Act - Ptc (Adj: Attrib) - Acc - N - P - μέλλω - that are going to

γίνεσθαι : Pres (Desc) - Dep - Infin (S: Obj) - γίνομαι - to happen, be happening

καὶ : coordinate conjunction linking two infinitives - and

σταθῆναι : 1 Aor (Const) - Pass (Causative) - Infin (S: Obj) - ἵστημι - to be caused to stand

ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ υἱοῦ : 2 - Abl (Sep) - M - S - υἱός, ὁ - before the Son

τοῦ ἀνθρώπου : 2 - Gen (Identity) - M - S - ἄνθρωπος, ὁ - of man

Greek Text Diagram

- 21:25 Καὶ
1 **ἔσονται σημεῖα**
ἐν ἡλίῳ
καὶ
σελήνῃ
καὶ
ἄστροις,
καὶ
ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς
2 **(ἔσται) συνοχὴ ἐθνῶν**
ἐν ἀπορίᾳ
ἤχους θαλάσσης
καὶ
σάλου,
21:26 ἀποψυχόντων ἀνθρώπων
ἀπὸ φόβου
καὶ
προσδοκίας
τῶν ἐπερχομένων
τῇ οἰκουμένῃ,
γάρ
3 **αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλευθήσονται.**
21:27 καὶ
τότε
4 **ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου**
ἐρχόμενον
ἐν νεφέλῃ
μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς.
21:28 δὲ
ἀρχομένων τούτων γίνεσθαι
5 **ἀνακύψατε**
καὶ
6 **ἐπάρατε τὰς κεφαλὰς ὑμῶν,**
διότι ἐγγίζει ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις ὑμῶν.
21:29 Καὶ
A **εἶπεν παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς·**
7 **Ἴδετε τὴν συκὴν**
καὶ
πάντα τὰ δένδρα·
21:30 ὅταν προβάλωσιν
ἤδη,
βλέποντες
ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν
8 **γινώσκετε**
ὅτι ἤδη ἐγγὺς τὸ θέρος ἐστίν·

21:31 οὕτως
καὶ
ὅταν ἴδητε ταῦτα γινόμενα,
9 **ὕμεις...γινώσκετε**
ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

21:32 ἀμήν
10 **λέγω ὑμῖν**
ὅτι οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη
ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται.

21:33 **ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται,**
δὲ
12 **οἱ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρελεύσονται.**

21:34 δὲ
13 **Προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς**
μήποτε βαρηθῶσιν ὑμῶν αἱ καρδίαι
ἐν κραιπάλῃ
καὶ
μέθῃ
καὶ
μερίμναις βιωτικαῖς
καὶ
ἐπιστῆ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς αἰφνίδιος ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη
21:35 ὡς παγίς.*
γὰρ
14 **ἐπεισελεύσεται**
ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς καθημένους
ἐπὶ πρόσωπον πάσης τῆς γῆς.

21:36 δὲ
15 **ἀγρυπνεῖτε**
ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ
δεόμενοι
ἵνα κατισχύσητε ἐκφυγεῖν ταῦτα πάντα
τὰ μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι
καὶ
σταθῆναι
/-----|
ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

*Punctuation variation creating alternative: (1) ὡς παγίς· γὰρ ἐπεισελεύσεται κτλ. is understood as adverbial comparative clause with παγίς as the subject of ἐπεισελεύσεται; or (2) ὡς παγίς is adverbial comparative prepositional phrase and αἰφνίδιος ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη is the subject of ἐπεισελεύσεται . The UBS 3rd rev. follows option (2)

Semantic Diagram

		Καὶ								
I	a-----	1	Fut	---	Ind	3	P	ἔσονται	σημεῖα	
	1--		καὶ							
		b-----	2	(Fut)	---	Ind	3	S	ἔσται)	συνοχή
	A--			γὰρ						
		a-----	3	Fut	Pass	Ind	3	P	σαλευθήσονται	δυνάμεις
		2--		καὶ						
	b-----	4	Fut	---	Ind	3	P	ὄψονται	(αὐτοί)	
			δὲ							
	1-----	5	1Aor	Act	Imp	2	P	ἀνακύψατε	(ὕμεις)	
B--			καὶ							
	2-----	6	2Aor	Act	Imp	2	P	ἐπάρατε	(ὕμεις)	
		Καὶ								
II	1-----	7	2Aor	Act	Imp	2	P	Ἴδετε	(ὕμεις)	
	A--		---							
		2-----	8	Pres	Act	Ind	2	P	γινώσκετε	(ὕμεις)
				οὕτως	καὶ					
		1-----	9	Pres	Act	Ind	2	P	γινώσκετε	(ὕμεις)
	B--			---						
		a-----	10	Pres	Act	Ind	1	S	λέγω	(ἐγώ)
		2--		---						
		b--	11	Fut	Pass	Ind	3	P	παρελεύσονται	(ο.κ.ε.)
				δὲ						
		-----	12	Fut	Pass	Ind	3	P	παρελεύσονται	λόγοι
			δὲ							
III	1-----	13	Pres	Act	Imp	2	P	Προσέχετε	(ὕμεις)	
	A--		γὰρ							
		2-----	14	Fut	Pass	Ind	3	S	ἐπεισελεύσεται	(ἡμέρα)
				δὲ						
	B-----	15	Pres	Act	Imp	2	P	ἀγρυπνεῖτε	(ὕμεις)	

Summation:

These verses naturally fall into three pericopes: statements 1-6 (vv. 25-28); statements 7-12 (vv. 29-33); and statements 13-15 (vv. 34-36). The return of the Son of Man is the key theme of the first pericope. The implication of the fig tree is the point of the second, and exhortations to watchfulness in the third pericope.

The structure of the first pericope is very clear. A prediction of events connected to end time events begins (1-2) and is backed up by a second set (3-4). Growing out of this is a set of admonitions (5-6). The combination of predictions of eschatological events with Aorist imperative verbs heightens the intensity of the content.

The second pericope has a different but a very clear internal structure. The comparison to the fig tree and harvest time for figs sets up the analogy to the end times events in the first pericope (statement 9). The thrust of the eschatological application (statements 9-12) is on the certainty of the occurrence of these events. The repetitive verb expression of "pass away" (παρέρχομαι) links statements 10-12 together. The climatic declaration comes in statement 12 where Jesus' words will not "pass away", i.e., fail to come to pass. This pericope, with its emphasis on certainty of occurrence, transitions from the prediction of end time events to the theme of watchfulness in the third pericope.

The third pericope (statements 13-15) contain two admonitions demanding watchfulness (13 & 15). Statement 14 becomes a justifying basis for statement 13. Watchfulness is defined in two ways: προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς and ἀγρυπνεῖτε - - an inward and an outward focus. The objective of the watchfulness is contained in the substantival object ἵνα clause stressing the ability to escape the horrible events that will take place in that end time occurrence.

Little Apocalypse Parallels:

Matthew 23:37-25:46

- 139. Lament over Jerusalem 23:37-39
- 140. Temple destruction predicted 24:1-2
- 141. Signs of the Times 24:3-31
 - a. Beginning of woes (3-15)
 - b. Great Tribulation (16-28)
 - c. *Coming of Son of Man (29-31)*
- 142. *Lesson of the fig tree 24:32-35*
- 143. The unknown day and hour 24:36-44
- 144. Parable of the unfaithful servant 24:45-51
- 145. Parable of the ten virgins 25:1-12
- 146. Parable of the talents 25:13-30
- 147. Judgment of the sheep and goats 25:31-46

Mt. 24:29-35 (NRSV)

29 Immediately after the suffering of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 34 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Observations:

A quick comparison of the above list reveals that Matthew followed his Markan source much more closely than did Luke. But, Luke deviates mainly with the last pericope (vv. 34-36) on watchfulness. This emphasis on watchfulness, however, is to some extent parallel to Mt. 25 but in much more condensed fashion.

This closeness of pericope sequence is typical of the passion narratives of the synoptic gospels. The distinctive Lukan style inside even parallel pericopes is also very common.

Mark 13:1-37

- 74. Temple destruction predicted 13:1-2
- 75. Signs of the times 13:3-27
 - a. Beginning of woes (3-13)
 - b. Great Tribulation (14-23)
 - c. *Coming of the Son of Man (24-27)*
- 76. *Lesson of the fig tree 13:28-31*
- 77. The unknown day and hour 13:32-37

Mk. 13:24-31 (NRSV)

24 But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. 27 Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28 From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Luke 21:25-36

- 131. Temple destruction predicted 21:5-6
- 132. Signs of the times 21:7-28
 - a. Signs & Persecutions (7-19)
 - b. Destruction of Jerusalem (20-24)
 - c. *Coming of the Son of Man (25-28)*
- 133. *Lesson of the fig tree 21:29-33*
- 134. *Be ready 21:34-36*

Lk. 21:25-36 (NRSV)

25 There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. 26 People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

29 Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

34 Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, 35 like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."