

The Gospel According to Luke

Luke 21:5-24

Reading: Luke 21:5-24

Parallel Passages: Matthew 24:1-22 and Mark 13:1-20

Sermon #89

August 23, 2020

The Destruction Of The Temple and The End Of The Age

(Part 1)

Introduction

Here we are in summer and higher than normal heat. Each season has things that makes is different and special. God is amazing to give us seasons, for He knew this would be best. I thought of when Joyce and I lived in Papua New Guinea where there were only 2 seasons; wet (8 months) and dry (4 months). The dry season meant it rained less than the wet. There was very little difference between the 2 seasons. Here we have 4 seasons and maybe because of the heat I was thinking this week of snow or maybe because of the writings of Josephus or maybe because I enjoy the first snow of the fall. To wake up on that first snowy morning and look out at the trees, everything looks different. Suddenly the browns, dull oranges and reds are gone and white is everywhere – it is beautiful.

In our text today, Jesus and His followers are walking through the temple and then down the steps of the entrance, the disciples pointed out to Jesus just how beautiful the temple was. The key word *was* - it is no longer standing complete. In fact, the temple has not been complete for almost 2,000 years. In our passage we find Luke's third prediction of Jerusalem's fall and it is by far the most detailed. The first 2 are found in chapters 13 and 19 (3:34-35; 19:41-44).

Josephus the Jewish historian, wrote on many aspects of Jewish history. In his writings called *The Wars of the Jews* written in 73 AD, he gives a detailed description of the temple as if was when completed in 66 A.D., in all its splendor,

reading from Book V, Chapter 5, Section 6 he writes, *“Now the outward face of the temple in its front wanted nothing that was likely to surprise either men’s minds or their eyes; for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendor, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun’s own rays. But this temple appeared to strangers, when they were coming to it at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow; for as to those parts of it that were not gilt, they were exceeding white.”* The temple was over 150 feet tall sitting on the temple mount and from a distance it appeared like a mountain of white marble or snow crowned in gold.

The marble stones were truly impressive for some were over 40 feet long, and weighed hundreds of tons. I thought of what it took to cut such massive stones and move them into place. Not only was this massive structure impressive to see but it had much history surrounding it. Some of the names associated with the Temple were none other than King David, King Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra and Nehemiah just to mention some. It was the Temple that a traveling Jew or one in captivity would face to pray daily.

It should be noted that King Herod had begun remodeling and rebuilding the temple in 20 BC and the rebuilding continued during the time of Jesus and was not finished until 66 A.D. over 30 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection and just 4 years before the Roman army utterly destroyed it.

In our passage today, Jesus predicts for the third time, the destruction of the Temple. There is, however, something else Jesus does in this text that we should understand. While teaching about the destruction of the Temple in the near future, He leaps ahead through the centuries to also teach about His Second Coming and the destruction of this Age. Therefore, we must keep in mind that Jesus is speaking of

two events not one. I believe there are clear indicators that these are two separate events and not just one. However, there is great debate among the theologians over this. All I can do is my best to discern what God, through His Word, and prayer wants us to understand from this passage.

In this passage we discover the disciples were confused, they thought that the destruction of the Temple was the end of the age so Jesus does some Eschatological clarification for them and us as well. I want us to take notice that Jesus is clarifying few things. **First**, the destruction of the Temple will happen within one generation, but the end of the age is in the distant future. **Second**, since there are signs that the Temple is about to be destroyed, He tells those listening what to do when they see the signs. **Third**, since the signs to alert the worshipper of the end of the age are general, we may know the season, but we do not know the day and time of Christ's return; Jesus instructs the disciples and us to be ready at all times. A world of wars, rumors of wars, plagues, sickness and evil is the state of natural world and these conflicts have been present since the fall and have receded and increased throughout the centuries. Even though Jesus calls these end times events signs, they are not signs, in the sense, as the signs telling of the Romans destruction of the Temple; they are not specific signs one can clearly observe and say, "This is it!", and then spend time getting ready. There will be specific signs that accompany His return. The world is corrupt and evil will continue as such until Jesus' return.

I am often asked why God allows evil; like wars and plagues and famines. The state of the world grows worse because we are seeing evil taking place in every corner. Let me answer this question concerning evil briefly; God is perfect and absent of evil. However, evil exists in the fallen world because of sin, further evil and sin is never to be considered as good. The fact is that evil exists as part of God's design for salvation and shows people their desperate need for Christ. Therefore,

evil serves a purpose. Evil then serves God's plan for salvation and therefore it is good that evil exists, but to call evil good or good as evil - is sin. James Montgomery Boice, a wise man of God I greatly admire said this most profound statement, *"God's judgment in the end will be so absolutely perfect that the damned will agree with the rightness of their damnation."* It is not easy but we need to strive to see God from His perspective and not man's. This is why we do not want to adjust the Word of God; for it will end up God's watered-down Word to please the human perspective. We must hold fast to God's Word as He has given it.

Foundational Assertion

As we begin our study of God's Word, we must approach this passage with this foundational understanding; **the time of the Old Testament Temple and Priesthood came to an end when the Perfect Temple and Prefect Priesthood came to earth in the form of Jesus Christ.** Secondly, we must acknowledge we are sinners that God saves by His grace through belief in Jesus Christ as one's Savior and Lord. When we believe in Christ, we are given the gift of God the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and when we surrender to the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to endure various trails and challenges thrown at us by this fallen world. As we surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit, we gain the power of God and our faith increases. Just as Peter was able to get out of the boat and walked on the water towards Jesus, all was well until he took his eyes off of Jesus and his faith faltered. We must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Understanding everything needed to strengthen our faith, everything for our good and everything for God's glory is found in Jesus. The Temple came crashing down in 70 A.D. just as Jesus said it would and so also this present age will come crashing down when our Lord Jesus returns. Christ's call to each and every person is to find salvation in Him before the day of His return. For

those who believe in Christ we are to be ready every day as we wait for our Lord's glorious return.

Pray

Please stand as Brother Ivan reads the Word of God, for God's Word is holy.
Luke 21:5-24.

The Destruction of the Temple

Rather than admiring the Temple for much of it had been rebuilt, like the rest of Jerusalem, Jesus knew the time of the Temple was about over. Those who controlled the Temple had become corrupt and twice Jesus had run-off those practicing the corrupt selling in the Temple courts. Now as Jesus is walking with the disciples and others, we read in verse 5, “while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, ⁶ ‘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.’ ” Jesus alludes to a time, in the near future, when true worshippers will not worship God in the Temple, but in spirit and truth they will worship wherever they are. Man had corrupted God's Temple and God would see to it that it was destroyed and He replaced the Temple with believers who are the temple of God. The end of the Temple as the center piece of worshipping God is dramatically demonstrated at Jesus' crucifixion; at the moment Jesus gives up His human mortal life, the veil in the Temple is torn in two. From Josephus and Scripture we know this about the veil; *When the Temple was rebuilt after the Babylonian captivity, the Ark was no longer present in the Holy of Holies; instead, a portion of the floor was raised slightly to indicate the place where it had stood. In Jewish tradition, two curtains separated the Holy of Holies from the lesser Holy place during the period of the Second Temple. These curtains were woven with*

motifs directly from the loom, rather than embroidered, the veil of the Holy of Holies had the thickness of 4 inches and was 60 feet tall by 30 feet wide and weighed over a ton. To tear this veil was an act of God, as we read in Luke chapter 23, ⁴⁴“It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵while the sun’s light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!**’ ” (Luke 23:44-46) God saw to that the Temple was destroyed because after Jesus’ death on the cross the Temple was rendered ineffectual for covering the sins of mankind. Sin would no longer need to be covered by sacrifices but through the resurrection of Christ sins are removed. As we read in Romans, “ ‘*The Deliverer or Redeemer will come from Zion. He will banish ungodliness from Jacob*’; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” (Romans 11:26-27) The old Temple system covered sin; Christ removes or takes away our sin. The need for the Temple has ended and the dawn of God’s redemption of mankind through the Savior, God the Son had begun. The disciples believed Jesus when He said the Temple would be destroyed, but they also had questions about the timing of its destruction.

In verse 7 they ask Jesus, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” Matthew gives us more detail, “Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. ² But he answered them, ‘**You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.**’ ³ As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’ ” (Matthew 24:1-3)

Let's examine Luke and we will see Jesus' words have both a near and far foretelling. In verse 8 Jesus says to the disciples, "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." Jesus concern is for His followers; the Temple had been exploited by men and now the new "Way" had arrived with the Christ. Unfortunately, there would also be the temptation by many to exploit this new "Way" of Christ and capitalize on it for their own gain. Men would come and twist Jesus' words for their gain while others would simply make up new teachings. For example, within a few decades, history show us there was the rise of *Gnosticism* ('nästə,sizəm) that taught there was superior spiritual knowledge for the special and true believers and Christ was an emissary of the remote supreme divine being. *Docetism* (dō'sē,tizəm) was soon on the scene that taught Jesus was truly a spiritual being, and therefore, could not have possessed a physical body. These false practices continue until this day and will continue until Jesus' return. Jesus knew what was coming and He was concerned His disciples remain true to God's Word and His teachings, which are God's Words. False teachers would abound, as they have all through history and this is just one reason God's inspired the writers of the New Testament.

Jesus wants to clarify to His disciples the Temple and "the end of the age" (Mt. 24:3) are two different events. The disciples wrongly connected the destruction of the Temple with the end of the age. They had to be thinking that the destruction of the Temple was such a large event it had to also be the end of the age as is seen more clearly in both Matthew and Mark's accounts. So, Jesus explains that some will see the destruction of the Temple, but this is not the end of the age.

Jesus begins to explain in verse 9, "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."

There will be signs prior to the destruction of the Temple and Jesus wants the disciples to be aware and recognize the signs and when you see them, they will know the destruction of the Temple will happen soon. First you will “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.” This will be followed by these actions, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.” Jesus wants His followers prepared for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and for them not to be afraid for they will have opportunity to witness. At the time of the Temple’s destruction in 70 A.D., Matthew, John and Philip were alive and possibly; Judas, son of James and Simon the Zealot. Titus’ Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem and laid siege and after famine had killed many the army marched into the holy city and leveled both the city and Temple. Most of the people in Jerusalem were first, starved to death during the long siege and then when the soldiers entered the rest were killed with the sword.

Since we have the advantage of history we can look back and see some of the signs Jesus was speaking about for the near future. In 61 A.D. there was a severe earth quake in Phrygia (p^hrygía) northwest of Israel in present day Turkey and it was felt all the way down to Jerusalem. In 62 the earthquake and first eruption of Mount Vesuvius that heralded the coming destruction of Pompeii would be known of in Israel. The Roman-Parthian war lasted from 58 to 63. The revolt of the Batavi (ba'ta.wi) against Rome 69 to 70. A bright and large comet appeared in 69 and night after night it appeared in the shape of a drawn sword. In 66 A.D. the war began between the Jews and Rome that led to famine and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The signs Jesus spoke of and the destruction of the Temple happened within a generation. Jesus told them these things would happen in the near future

and not to be afraid. Fear leads to confusion and that would lead to men taking advantage of the church and that would lead to people not holding on to their relationship God through Christ. Jesus does not want them to fear persecution for this will come from within and from outside of Israel before the Temple is destroyed. Jesus wants the first century church to prepare; to not be led astray, to remain faithful and to not be afraid, but trust in Christ. The signs will warn believers of the coming Roman wrath so that they may escape Jerusalem.

Jesus replaces the Old Testament Temple as the perfect Temple, for He is God and He gives believers the gift of the Holy Spirit and they become living temples with God living within.

The Destruction of the Priesthood

Remember I started with the foundational assertion that; **the time of the Old Testament Temple and Priesthood came to an end when the Perfect Temple and Prefect Priesthood came to earth in the form of Jesus Christ.** It is my assertion that after Jesus' death and resurrection the Temple no longer served its former purpose; it was now obsolete and ineffective. The day after Jesus' resurrection and for another 30+ years the Temple still stood and the Jewish leaders were still doing all their Temple business, but their sacrifices and offering no longer covered their sins; they had no meaning to God, they were just killing animals without result. The priests still performed their services, but they were obsolete and had lost any value. The day of the priests was over and the purpose of the Temple was over and it would come tumbling down.

For believers in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior a new day had dawned. They were saved by God's only begotten Son, the final sacrifice, the one true Priest and believers were living temples of God. There was no longer a reason to go to the

Temple and make a sacrifice. Believers sought God everywhere and found Him everywhere. Believer now had a High Priest who is Eternal and Sinless!

Let me read to you from the 7th chapter of Hebrews where it confirms Jesus is eternal and sinless. Beginning at verse 22, “Jesus *is* the guarantor of a better covenant.”²³ The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office,²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.²⁶ For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.” Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, is eternal and has entered into the eternal Holy of Holies, not one made by man in the earthly Temple of Jerusalem. Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father in the Holy of Holies of eternal heaven. Let me read from chapter 9 of Hebrews beginning in verse 24, “For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Jesus, as the High Perfect Holy Priest, work is final and eternal. Taking us now to chapter 10 of Hebrews at verse 11, “Every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.¹⁴ For by a single offering

he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” The Word of God testifies that; **the time of the Old Testament Temple and Priesthood came to an end when the Perfect Temple and Prefect Priesthood came to earth in the form of Jesus Christ.**

We, my beloved, see everything we need and hope for in Christ, Jesus who became the final Priest and final Sacrifice. Jesus is sinless; therefore, He did not offer a sacrifice for Himself, but for those who come to God the Father through Him. Jesus is immortal; He will never need to be replaced. Jesus is human; He alone was qualified to bear the human sins of the world. Jesus is perfect and as the only Perfect One, the One Holy Priest, He is the one Mediator between believers and God the Father. My beloved, because of Christ, we possess a joy and peace the world does not understand. Here is Jesus’ gift to us, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”** (John 14:27) We have this peace by **“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.”** (2 Peter 1:3)

As surly as the Temple fell our Lord will return. Next week we will look at what Jesus teaches us in this passage concerning His second coming and the end of this age. Until then live in Christ and for His glory with a peace and hope that is eternal. Amen!