

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon January 24, 2021  
Luke 21: 5 – 9 - “The First Century Destruction of Herod’s Temple”

1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4 for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

5 Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 6 "These things which you see--the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." 7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" 8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them. 9 But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately."

10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

12 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. 13 But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. 14 Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. 17 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. 18 But not a hair of your head shall be lost. 19 By your patience possess your souls.

20 "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. 22 For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. 24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven 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 happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

29 Then He spoke to them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. 30 When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. 31 So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Assuredly, I

say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

37 And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. 38 Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.

## I. Introduction

- a. Christ our Lord has completed His denunciation of the wicked system of abusive religion promoted by the apostate religious leaders of Israel. These hypocrites walk about as if they are the most righteous, the most deserving of respect and honor, and yet, in reality, they are ravenous wolves deserving God's wrath. They have no mercy on any of their prey. They even deceive and mislead and devour poor widows. It's no wonder Luke turns from the widow's two mites to the theme of the coming destruction of Herod's Temple. The scene of verses 1-4 stirs deep compassion for the devoured widow and deep outrage toward her abusers. What kind of people/system would abuse such a needy woman? Yet, always holding out the glory of faith, the indestructibility of hope, the Lord Jesus Christ commends her faith, even though she was consumed by a wicked system. Not even a wicked system can undo the great power of faith in God. This combination of outrage and hope set the stage for Christ's description of the coming 1<sup>st</sup> century destruction of Herod's Temple, the coming wrath of God upon apostate Israel.
  - i. Lange & Schaff "The narrative of the Widow's Mite makes in this connection a similar impression to that of a friendly sunbeam on a dark tempestuous heaven, or a single rose upon a heath full of thistles and thorns. Just in this appears the Divine in our Lord, that He, in a moment when the fate of Jerusalem, and with this the coming of the kingdom of God into the whole world, so completely fills His mind, has yet eyes and heart for the most insignificant individual, and is disposed to adorn even so lowly a head with the crown of honor. We need no other proof for the celestially pure temper in which He left the accursed temple after such words of wrath. It is as if He cannot so part, as if at least His last word must be a word of blessing and of peace, so that we scarcely know in what character in this hour of sundering we shall most admire the King of the kingdom of God, whether more as Punisher of hidden evil, or as Rewarder of hidden good."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lange, J. P., & van Oosterzee, J. J. (2008). *A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Luke*. (P. Schaff & C. C. Starbuck, Trans.) (p. 316). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

- b. In his unrivaled sermon series on the book of Revelation, Pastor Phil Kayser states, “I counted up 15 major wars between 300 AD and 1400 AD that theologians had at that time dogmatically said were the devastations listed in the book of Revelation. Gumerlock shows hundreds and hundreds of examples of Christians who thought the end was near in the 300s AD, 400s AD, 500s AD, and in every century. In 1572 even some Reformed people (who generally tend to be hermeneutically savvy) were ridiculously duped into thinking that 1572 would be the fall of Rome. In 1593 John Napier was absolutely sure that the rise of the Ottoman Turks was the rise of Gog and Magog. In 1597 there were many who thought that was the end of history because it was 1000 years from the birth of Mohammad. And of course Islam played heavily into many Historicist interpretations of Revelation. In 1599 Christians were sure that the Antichrist had appeared. In 1666 many were absolutely certain that the Russian Tsar Alexis and the Russian Church Patriarch Nikon were the two beasts of Revelation 11. The Puritan writers, Cotton and Increase Mather (much as I like them in other areas), calculated that the fall of Antichrist would occur in 1716. And there are literally thousands of such misjudgments.”
  - c. Luke 21: 5 – 9 - “The First Century Destruction of Herod’s Temple”
    - i. Admiration of the Temple v5
    - ii. The Lord’s Prophecy of Total Destruction v6
    - iii. The Disciples ask two questions v7
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    - vii. Questions to know, love and obey God
- II. Admiration of the Temple v5
- a. Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations
  - b. So, Luke uses the power of contrast to emphasize the deep ugliness of this opulent, beautiful temple. Much of the temple’s grandeur was obtained via corruption offensive to God. From the broken widow to adornments and stones of the temple, are we struck by the offense?
  - c. Bock “The setting of Jesus’ great eschatological discourse is the disciples’ expressed admiration for the Second Temple, the religious center of the nation, which Herod the Great refurbished as part of a large national reconstruction program ... Herod built new foundation walls and enlarged the temple area to 400 yards by 500 yards, about twice its original size... The refurbishing started in 19 b.c. and continued for over eighty years, not being completed until a.d. 63–64, just a few years before the city and the temple fell.”<sup>2</sup>
  - d. Josephus “in the fifteenth year of his reign, Herod rebuilt the temple, and encompassed a piece of land about it with a wall; which land was twice as large as that before enclosed. The expenses he laid out upon it were vastly large also,

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<sup>2</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1660). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

and the riches about it were unspeakable. A sign of which you have in the great cloisters that were erected about the temple, and the citadel which was on its north side. The cloisters he built from the foundation, but the citadel he repaired at a vast expense; nor was it other than a royal palace, which he called Antonia, in honor of Antony.”<sup>3</sup>

- e. “Beautiful stones”
  - i. Bock “According to Josephus, Herod used white marble stones up to forty-five cubits (sixty-seven feet) long, eight cubits (twelve feet) high, and twelve cubits (eighteen feet) wide.”<sup>4</sup> (67L x18W x12H) (14,472 cubic foot)
  - ii. Think about this. A large train boxcar is about 60 feet long, 10 feet wide, and 12 feet high. (60L x 10W x 12H) Somehow, Herod’s builders obtained marble stones larger than modern boxcars and transported them and arranged them.
  - iii. Marble weighs 160 pounds per cubic foot. So, Herod’s stones would have weighed about 1158 tons, or about 2.32 million pounds. Let that sink in.
- f. “Donations” – this Greek word used only here in the NT
  - i. Bock “... describes offerings or gifts that decorated the temple, including gold- and silver-plated gates and gold-plated doors... Josephus notes that the building’s gold plates flashed in the sun as a “snow-clad mountain”. ...may also describe the grapevine clusters and the Babylonian tapestries of fine linen, colored with blue, scarlet, and purple, that hung as a veil at the entrance to the temple ... Roman historian Tacitus called the temple “immensely opulent”.<sup>5</sup>
- g. Consider the apparent power, the seeming invincibility of a system that can create such a structure. The disciples are marveling.

### III. The Lord’s Prophecy of Total Destruction v6

- a. He said, 6 "These things which you see--the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down."
- b. Into this astonishing human majesty and power, this moment of wonder and awe, the Lord Jesus Christ brings the shattering reality. All these things the disciples see, the immensity of power and glory displayed in the Temple, all of it will be utterly destroyed. The eyes of the flesh mistake transience for permanence, and Jesus awakens them to reality with this prophecy. They gazed upon dust in the wind, not an unshakeable kingdom.
  - i. Bock “Jesus makes clear that the disciples should not be overly impressed by the temple’s grandeur. The building is temporary: it looks impressive now, but in time it will be dust. The things that they see are not

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<sup>3</sup> Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). [\*The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged\*](#) (p. 575). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>4</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1661). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>5</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1661). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

permanent, nor is God's blessing eternally upon this building. Jesus makes his point by stating that "one stone will not be left on another."<sup>6</sup>

- c. The disciples are being called up to the unshakeable Kingdom: Hebrews 12:22-29
  - i. "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. 25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, 26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." 27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire."

#### IV. The Disciples ask two questions v7

- a. So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"
- b. The disciples understand their Lord's prophecy. They do not question Him. They believe Him. This is great faith. 2.32 million pound stones will be thrown down. OK, Lord, we believe You. Please tell us when this will happen. And please tell us what signs we can look for to know this destruction is approaching.
- c. Hence, we can know with certainty that our Lord is answering these two questions in Luke 21: 8 – 36. So, everything contained in these verses answers the question of when that very temple will be destroyed, and how they will know the judgment is approaching, so they will know when to flee.
- d. Henry "It is natural to us to covet to know future things and the time of them, which *it is not for us to know*, when we are more concerned to ask what is our duty in the prospect of these things, and how we may prepare for them, which it is for us to know. They enquire *what sign there shall be when these things shall come to pass*. They ask not for a *present* sign, to confirm the prediction itself, and to induce them to believe it (Christ's word was enough for that), but what the future signs will be of the approaching accomplishment of the prediction, by which they may be put in mind of it. These *signs of the times* Christ had taught them to observe."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1662). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>7</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume](#) (p. 1898). Peabody: Hendrickson.

- e. It's important to point out here that if you read dispensational, futurist interpretations of this text, they will claim these two questions are not both related to that very Temple. They claim the "when" question is about when that Temple will be destroyed, and that the "signs" question is about the far future return of Christ. The simple reading of this text does not lead to that conclusion. One must insert previous views into this text to claim the two questions are so radically unrelated.
  - f. In addition, Luke solves this for us in 21:32 "32 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place." So, all the signs of the times described in the prior verses will take place during the disciples' generation. (And, "this generation" can only mean the very generation to which Jesus was speaking in Luke 21)
  - g. So, as we go through Luke 21: 8-36, it is critical, absolutely essential we embrace this foundational truth: the descriptions in these verses, every single one, are all about when the first century Temple of Herod will be destroyed, and the signs the disciples will see to announce the approaching judgment upon Israel. Hence, nothing in these verses is about some other timeframe. Don't try to apply the verses to any time after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. (Of course, there are principles present that are always true, but the actual events already happened, prior to AD 70.)
- V. Christ warns against deceivers v8
- a. And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them.
  - b. Instead of diving into their specific questions, first our Lord gives a warning. This is very important. Within the context of prophecy, Jesus gives a stern warning against deception.
    - i. Point: Deception is a GREAT danger to the human heart and mind untrained in accurate views about the future.
  - c. Bock "Jesus' comments raise the specter of false claims made in his name... Discernment will be needed by disciples not to be drawn into false eschatological claims made in Jesus' name, for these claims will have nothing to do with God's plan. This remark shows that Jesus assumed an interval between his departure and his return. In fact, the interval is long enough that some could be deceived; for example, many such false prophets came in the first century, some in association with Jerusalem's destruction. It may also represent Luke's making clear by his citation that the disciples have nothing to do with any emerging messianic movements of his time..."<sup>8</sup>
  - d. Josephus "A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous

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<sup>8</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 1664–1665). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

signs of their deliverance. (286) Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God: and this was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. (287) Now, a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such deliverance. Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit, to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them.”<sup>9</sup>

- e. So, our Lord, before answering their questions, first, and thus with strong emphasis, warns His disciples against being deceived by false Christs and by false claims that the time has drawn near.
  - i. Again, from Pastor Kayser, ““I counted up 15 major wars between 300 AD and 1400 AD that theologians had at that time dogmatically said were the devastations listed in the book of Revelation. Gumerlock shows hundreds and hundreds of examples of Christians who thought the end was near in the 300s AD, 400s AD, 500s AD, and in every century. In 1572 even some Reformed people (who generally tend to be hermeneutically savvy) were ridiculously duped into thinking that 1572 would be the fall of Rome. In 1593 John Napier was absolutely sure that the rise of the Ottoman Turks was the rise of Gog and Magog. In 1597 there were many who thought that was the end of history because it was 1000 years from the birth of Mohammad. And of course Islam played heavily into many Historicist interpretations of Revelation. In 1599 Christians were sure that the Antichrist had appeared. In 1666 many were absolutely certain that the Russian Tsar Alexis and the Russian Church Patriarch Nikon were the two beasts of Revelation 11. The Puritan writers, Cotton and Increase Mather (much as I like them in other areas), calculated that the fall of Antichrist would occur in 1716. And there are literally thousands of such misjudgments.”
  - ii. Do you get the point? If you do not embrace a Biblical view of God’s plan for this world, from beginning to end, you will be easy, easy prey for the lies of the devil and his charlatans who claim the time is near.
  - iii. Application: reject pre-mil, reject amil, reject futurist, reject pan-mil, reject the notion that eschatology is unimportant to your sanctification and the mission of your family, the Church and the Kingdom of God. Embrace the truth of God’s Word regarding Christ and His Kingdom.

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<sup>9</sup> Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). [\*The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged\*](#) (pp. 741–742). Peabody: Hendrickson.

- VI. Christ warns against fear v9
- a. But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first,
  - b. Our Lord, even as He begins to answer their two questions, adds another warning. DO NOT BE TERRIFIED. Christ knows that His disciples will be very tempted to fear, despair and cowardice as the cosmos-shaking calamities and persecutions and commotions unfold.
  - c. So, Jesus gives the general description of what is to come: wars and commotions. Everything we will read about as Jesus answers their questions will be in these two categories: wars and commotions.
    - i. Commotions: instability, a state of disorder, disturbance, confusion
  - d. Next, Jesus describes this process of unfolding wars and commotions that must occur before the destruction of the Temple. “these things must come to pass first”
    - i. The disciples are told to expect a time of unfolding, accelerating warfare, instability, disorder and confusion. They are not to fear, but to know that their deliverance is drawing close.
  - e. Bock “The unusual term for fear, *πτοέω* (*ptoeō*), describes a deep sense of terror or emotional distress. Luke is the only NT writer to use the term (elsewhere Luke 24:37; BAGD 727; BAA 1456), which comes from the LXX (Deut. 31:6; 2 Chron. 32:7; Jer. 1:17; Ezek. 3:9; Fitzmyer 1985: 1336). The disciples are not to be disturbed or surprised by such world events. The end, with all its terror of judgment, is not yet near, so they need not fear. The world will be in great chaos, as many disturbances (the terms for wars and calamities are plural) are present in this “pre-end” period.”<sup>10</sup>
- VII. Christ reassures His Disciples v9
- a. but the end will not come immediately.
  - b. Christ reassures His disciples that they will have time to observe the signs of the times. They will not be suddenly consumed without warning. “The end”, that is the destruction of apostate Israel, will not come upon them very soon so as not to give them time to spot the signs of the time.
  - c. Bock “Jesus says that there is a necessity to these events...They “must” come first, as the use of *δεῖ* (*dei*, it is necessary) indicates. Only Luke among the Synoptics uses *πρῶτον* (*prōton*, first), thus making the time sequence clear. There may be chaos, but God is not surprised. There may be chaos, but the end is not near. Jesus says that even with these events present, the end does not follow immediately.”<sup>11</sup>
  - d. For the disciples who will simply listen to the Words of Christ and believe exactly what He says, a great confidence and peace arises. We can be delivered from deception and fear, the twin offspring of ignorance and unbelief.

<sup>10</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 1665–1666). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>11</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [Luke: 9:51–24:53](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1666). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

VIII. Questions to know, love and obey God