

## Many Shall Come In My Name

The Lord, we are told, went out of the temple. He would never again return. It is a solemn thought that the Lord should leave a place of worship never to return. Sacrifices continued to be made but the Lord was not present. Psalms, hymns and prayers continued to be offered but the Lord did not hear. The glory had departed. There is nothing more useless than Christless religion. It is good for nothing but to be cast down and trampled upon. This is what would happen to the temple. Amazing as it might seem to the disciples who admired the grandeur of the edifice, not one stone would be left upon another. The destruction of all false religion and vain, empty worship will be just as complete, be its structures and cathedrals ever so grand.

### **Lessons then and now**

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the Lord's words and it is certain the disciples gave attention to the warnings. They would live through and experience personally the matters spoken of here by the Lord. These lessons were important instructions for the Lord's apostles concerning times ahead and events that would quickly overtake them. However, there are also lessons for us all, enduring lessons for every age concerning the need to be alert to false and deceptive Christs, to take heed to recognise and avoid false doctrine, and the imperative of the Lord's preserving care for His church.

### **Signs of the times**

The question the disciples asked, and the Lord answered, was what signs would precede the destruction of the temple. Three distinct signs are revealed by the Lord; the coming of false Christs, the occurrence of wars and rumours of wars, and widespread natural disasters such as famine, earthquakes and disease. Such things did occur during the period of the Acts of the Apostles. However, the Lord's direction in verse 7 to be not troubled was His way of saying do not leave Jerusalem and Judea just yet, but continue preaching, for the end, or destruction of Jerusalem, is not yet.

### **Beginnings of sorrows**

Ironically, the Jews also anticipated these 'signs' but expected them as heralds of the coming of the Messiah, who of course had already come and had been rejected by them. The very signs that foretold their rout as a nation and the destruction of their temple were wrongly embraced by them as ushering in their hoped for golden age. The Lord says these troubles were just the 'beginnings of sorrows', because the destruction of Jerusalem would be far worse.

### **The Apostles' personal experience**

The Lord then speaks of what will happen personally to the apostles during this period. They would be subject to persecution and their ministry would run afoul of the Jewish authorities who would imprison, beat and even kill them. What a jarring message that must have been for men who still expected the coming of a glorious earthly kingdom with Christ at its head and them in support.

### **A worldwide calling**

For the apostles there would be harassment from without and disappointment from within. There would be physical suffering, deception and false professions even in the early church. Family members would betray each other to the authorities and the disciples would be hated. Forewarned was forearmed, the apostles were to stay strong, hold fast and not falter. Their great task lay ahead. They would preach the gospel to all nations, and consequently as this is a promise, be out of Jerusalem and Judea before the destruction of the nation and temple.

### **Fulfilment**

Christ's words are seen to be fulfilled when, for example, Peter and John were beaten at the command of the Sanhedrin, and when James was put to death at the hand of Herod. Yet, in all this the apostolic ministry would be preserved and divinely equipped; the Holy Spirit moving upon their minds giving them wisdom to witness, and supplying unknown and unlearned languages with which to speak the gospel and testify of Christ. All these signs and prophecies were fulfilled in the life of the early church.

### **Enduring lessons**

We shall take for our Lord's day subject the Saviour's warnings to the Apostles concerning the coming of false Christs, the importance of maintaining purity of doctrine, and the Lord's promise to safeguard and preserve His people even in times of great distress. The Lord's kindness to His disciples on this matter, as they sat together on the Mount of Olives in a moment of peace and calmness surveying the temple and city, would strengthen them in the coming days and years. His words were not to frighten them but to assure them of His safeguarding and preserving power. What He did for them He does for all who hear His words in faith.

Amen

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