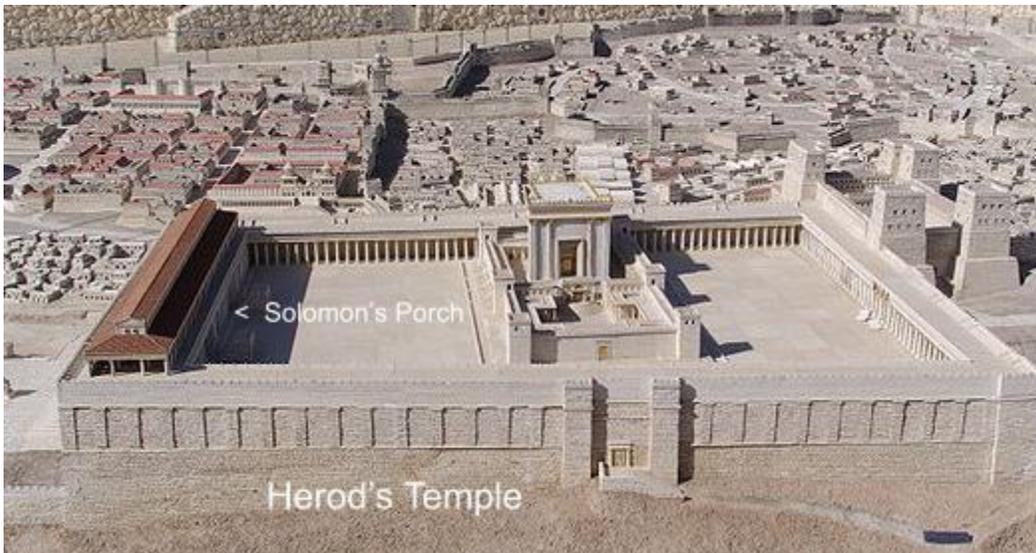


Lesson 45

Time –4/1/30 AD, 12 Nisan Monday

Our last lesson concerned the Monday two days before Jesus' crucifixion. It took place in Solomon's Porch, the vast columned portico which encircled the edge of the Temple Mount (see picture below). It was there where Jesus always taught when He was on the Temple Mount. In the previous lesson we saw how Jesus had put down the Sadducees about their failure to believe in a resurrection from death. He had then had an exchange with one of the Pharisees to whom Jesus had finally said "You are not far from the kingdom of God." The large group of Pharisees present must have been smiling to themselves at that time. However, Jesus wasn't going to let that continue. As we closed the last lesson, Jesus proved that the Pharisees were wrong in their understanding from Scripture about the Messiah. He proved from Psalms 110 that the Messiah was not only the Son of David, but also God incarnate. As we begin in this lesson, Jesus wasn't close to being through with them.



A Model of the Temple, with Solomon's Porch (built by Herod)

The Arrogance of the Pharisees

The Gospels of Mark and Luke were written to Gentile Churches. Unlike the Jews, the Gentiles hadn't been exposed to the corrupt behavior and teaching of the Pharisees. Consequently, although the accounts of Mark and Luke did condemn the self-righteous Pharisees, their condemnation was mild compared to the account in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew had been written about twenty years before Mark and Luke which were written in Greek. Matthew was written in Aramaic, to the Jews who were under the religious heel of the Pharisees. Matthew therefore gave a much fuller account (39 verses) of Jesus' scorching description of the Pharisees than Mark and Luke (3 verses each). The Gospel of John, written about 95 AD, a quarter of a century after the destruction of the order of the Pharisees in 70 AD, left out this description altogether.

Mark 12:38a **As he taught, Jesus said,**

Luke 20:45a-46 **While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples,**

Matthew 23:1 **Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:**

As we saw in the last lesson, the term “the teachers of the Law” referred to the Pharisees.

Mark 12:38b-40 **“Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.”**

Luke 20:45b-47 **“Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.”**

Matthew 23:2-3 **“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.**

This was addressed to the ordinary Jews who made up the bulk of Jesus audience on that day in the Temple. First, Jesus acknowledged that the Pharisees were held up in Jewish society as the true “teachers of the Law.” Because of this, the ordinary Jews were expected to obey their teaching as if it was the truth. Jesus pointed out that the error of the Pharisees’ teaching about salvation by personal works of righteousness was exposed as untenable by the Pharisees themselves. Their lives were full of unrighteous deeds and thoughts. They were mainly motivated by a need to affirm their self-importance. Having challenged the Pharisees way of life Jesus then went on to challenge the Pharisees’ understanding of Scripture.

Matthew 23:4 **They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to ~~move~~ *alleviate* them.¹**

According to Edersheim the Hebrew word translated “move” by the NIV would be better understood as “alleviate.” It was a general principal in the later Talmud ² that it never made the

¹ Also Luke 11:46.

² *The Talmud has two components; the Mishnah (Hebrew: משנה, c. year 200 AD), a written compendium of Rabbinic Judaism's Oral Torah; and the Gemara (circa year 500 AD), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible. There are two versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian Talmud (which dates from the 5th century AD but includes earlier material) and the*

burdens of the Mosaic Law lighter, but ever heavier. This should not be taken to mean that the Pharisees did not attempt to meet the burdens of their Rabbinic traditions. In fact, they were motivated to make the burdens ever heavier in the arrogant supposition that they and they alone could carry the heavy burden and that it would separate them from the “common herd.”

Matthew 23:5-7 “Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries ³ wide and the tassels on their garments long;⁴ they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’

Jesus was saying that what the Pharisees did, they did to impress men, rather than God. They were arrogant, not humble.

earlier Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud. The Talmud doesn't include the Law and the Prophets of Holy Scripture but is commentary on them. The term “Talmud” means “instruction, learning”, from a root meaning “teach, study.” It is the central text of Rabbinic Judaism and the primary source of Jewish religious law and theology.

There is an sad parallel between the leaders of Judaism and the later leaders of Catholicism. The Jewish teachers of that time diminished the authority of Holy Scripture and elevated the commentaries of their Rabbis. The Catholic Church later diminished the authority of Holy Scripture and elevated the commentary of the “so-called” Greek and Latin fathers and the Popes.

³ *Phylacteries – from the Greek φυλακτήριον {fü-läk-tā'-rē-on} which means “defenses” or “protections,” They consisted of strips of parchment on which were inscribed four texts which were enclosed in a square leather case, on one side of which was inscribed the Hebrew letter shin, to which the rabbis attached some significance. This case was sometimes worn on the forehead just between the eyes. Sometimes it was worn on the left arm near the elbow. The “making broad the phylacteries” refers to the enlarging of the case so as to make it conspicuous. The four texts were:*

Exodus 13:1-10 – The commandment for the Passover

Exodus 13:11-16 – The Passover, the law of the sacrifice of the Firstborn

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – The Shema “Love the Lord your God” the greatest commandment.

Deuteronomy 11:18-21 – “Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds.”

These were scriptures that would have pointed them toward Jesus as the Messiah if they had been written on their hearts as well.

⁴ *These tassels were in accordance with the command of Numbers 15:37-40: “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God.’”*

Matthew 23:8 **“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’⁵ for you have only one Master ⁶ and you are all brothers.**

Here Jesus set a standard for those who would be His servants. Since this standard was set just days before the beginning of the Church Age, we know that it was really meant for the Church.

Sadly, it seems to be a standard that has been almost uniformly ignored in the centuries that followed by the organizations who have set themselves up as “the Church.”

This first instruction tells us that there are no ranks in the body of Christ which is the Church. We are all on the same level as brothers. The real Church has nothing to do with ranks, titles, or uniforms, only gifts.

Matthew 23:9 **And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.**

This certainly strikes at the later practice in some churches of calling some clergy “Father.”

Matthew 23:10 **Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ.**

The Epistle of 1 John expands on this.

1 John 2:27 “As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you.⁷ But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.”

Jesus is the “Living Word.” This teaches that the final authority is always the Word of God.

Matthew 23:11-12 **The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.⁸**

There was no place in Christ’s household for anyone setting himself up as more than a servant.

⁵ The Greek here is *ῥαββί* {rhäb-bē'} which is from the Hebrew *רַב* {rav}. It means “my master.”

⁶ The Greek here is *καθηγητής* {kä-thā-gā-tā's} which means leader or master.

⁷ At the time 1 John was written it was during the great persecution of Christians under the Emperor Domitian. At that time, many of the teachers had been imprisoned, executed, or were in hiding. John wasn't ignoring the need for teachers, he was just pointing out that within each of them was the greatest teacher of all, the Holy Spirit.

⁸ Ezekiel 21:25

Matthew 23:13 **“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.**

In their own souls, the Pharisees had to know they were wearing a mask of false righteousness. They had deceived themselves into thinking that they had achieved, by their own works, a righteousness that was pleasing to God. They had ignored the LORD’s offered gift of righteousness through faith.⁹ By doing so, they were not only keeping themselves out of God’s Kingdom but were hindering others who were sincerely seeking God.

Matthew 23:14 **Woe unto you, scribes¹⁰ and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows’ houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers: therefore, you shall receive greater condemnation.¹¹**

This certainly would have struck home to the multitude, if not to the scribes and Pharisees themselves. I have always thought it should also be a warning to us about the making of public prayers. I believe that prayers should be addressed to God. They shouldn’t ordinarily be a sermon to others who are listening.

Matthew 23:15 **Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.**

Edersheim comments, I think rightly, that this did not refer to converting Gentiles to Judaism. This referred to converting Jews to the Pharisaical way of life. Here Jesus was telling them that that they were not only going to be left out of God’s Kingdom (verse 13), He was also telling them that they were going to Hell.

Matthew 23:16a **“Woe to you, blind guides!**

The Pharisees were the ones who were supposed to be guiding the Jewish people, but Jesus called them “blind guides.”

Matthew 23:16b-22 **You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, ‘If anyone**

⁹ Genesis 15:6 *“Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”*

¹⁰ The word translated “scribe” is the Greek word γραμματεὺς {gräm-mä-tyü's}. It referred to those whose main occupation was to interpret the meaning of the law for the Sanhedrin and other Jewish courts.

¹¹ This verse is omitted from the faulty Alexandrian text of the Codex Sinaiticus. As I have demonstrated many times, the Textus Receptus is the preferred source.

swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

Here Jesus seems to have taken an example of current Pharisaical adjudication on a relatively unimportant subject. Those rulings illustrated where their priorities were. To them the most important function of the Temple and the Altar was materialistic. That function was to generate gifts of gold for the Temple and animals for the Altar. Of course, those were gifts which enriched them. They had lost sight of the fact that the purposes of the Temple and the Altar were point to God’s gift to us, not our gifts to Him. To consider that the important function of the Temple and Altar was to produce gifts from us to God was extreme blindness as to the nature of the LORD.

Matthew 23:23a “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin.

Evidently, these rich Pharisees had private gardens in which they grew mint, dill and cummin. They were scrupulous about the “Law” of giving a tithe of even these crops although the Law of Tithing was originally intended to be of grain from the soil, fruit from the trees, or animals from the herds.¹² They prided themselves for following the Law even to the extent of giving a tenth of even the miniscule harvest of spices in their small private gardens. Remember, these men who scrupulously gave these small tithes were the same ones who “devoured widow’s houses.”

Matthew 23:23b But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.

Here Jesus referred to the more important Old Testament teachings, which they should have known to live by:

Micah 6:8 “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Zechariah 7:9-10 “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.’”

Isaiah 58:6-7 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share

¹² *Leviticus 27:30-32.*

your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

Matthew 23:23c **You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.**

Jesus didn't criticize them for exceeding the necessary tithe. He did criticize them for not realizing what was far more important: justice, mercy and faithfulness. Those were important offerings in that they were meant to be tributes to God's justice, mercy, and faithfulness to each of us.

Matthew 23:24 **You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.**

The tiny "gnat" which they strained out of the Law was their careful observation of giving a tithe of even their spices. The huge "camel" which they didn't see in the Law was God's justice, mercy, and faithfulness which He expected them to reflect back to His people.

Matthew 23:25 **"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.**

The Pharisees were hypocrites who presented an outside face of arrogant self-righteousness while ignoring their own sinful hearts of darkness which they wouldn't acknowledge.

Matthew 23:26 **Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.**

The only way to clean the inside of the cup was the same way Abraham did, by faith. If the heart was led by faith in God, a true righteousness which reflected the character of God would show itself on the outside.

Matthew 23:27-28 **"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.**

In the Law of Moses, contact with a dead body made a person ritually unclean.¹³ Jesus was saying that the Pharisees were spiritually unclean. They were like beautiful tombs that looked good on the outside but were full of death and spiritual uncleanness on the inside.

Matthew 23:29-30 **"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in**

¹³ *Leviticus 21:11, Numbers 5:2.*

the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'

The Pharisees were open in celebrating the prophets of the Old Testament, particularly those like Isaiah (who had been sawn in half by King Manasseh)¹⁴ or Jeremiah (who had been beaten, tortured, and imprisoned). They declaimed against the people who had done such things.

Matthew 23:31 So you testify against yourselves, that because¹⁵ you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.

By what they were doing against Christ they were proving that they were in fact both literal and spiritual descendants of their forefathers who killed those who had prophesied the coming of the Christ who stood before them. They would soon prove this by murdering Him.

Matthew 23:32 Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!

Jesus knew what was coming. He had come to die on the cross. Here Jesus challenged the Pharisees to do what He knew they intended to do within the next two days.

Matthew 23:33a "You snakes! You brood of vipers!

He compared them to snakes and vipers. Snakes and vipers are always symbols of Satan, the deceiver. Like snakes and vipers, their killing poison was found in their mouths.

Matthew 23:33b How will you escape being condemned to hell?

Here Jesus asked them a vital question. How could they escape their just condemnation? There actually was an escape. The wicked King Manasseh who had murdered the prophet Isaiah was an example of God's overwhelming grace. After 55 years of wicked rule, Manasseh repented, and God forgave him:

2 Chronicles 33:12-13 "In his (Manasseh's) distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God."

¹⁴ Hebrew 11:37.

¹⁵ The word that is here is ὅτι {hot'-ee}. It can be translated "that" or "because." I believe "because" is the correct understanding here. Their glorification of the martyred saints helped condemn them "because" they were going to make a martyr of the one for whom those saints had been martyred.

Matthew 23:34 **Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.**

Here Jesus was prophesying about the next forty years when many from His Church would preach to them. They would kill, crucify, or flog many of them. Sadly, although some from their number would repent and believe, most would reject their message.

Matthew 23:35-36 **And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah,¹⁶ whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.**

The judgment for the murders of God's prophets from before the flood (Abel) and during the Kingdom of Judah (Zechariah) would also come on that generation. Many of those Pharisees standing there would live to see the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Matthew 23:37 **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.**

You will notice that although God is sovereign and He longed to gather the people of Israel under His wings, there was something that He would not do to achieve that. He would not violate their free will. They “were not willing” and so He wasn't able to gather them under His wings.

Matthew 23:38 **Look, your house is left to you desolate.**

Instead, the Temple and Jerusalem would be made an uninhabited ruin by the Romans in 70 AD.

Matthew 23:39 **For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”¹⁷**

¹⁶ I believe that the Zechariah to whom Jesus was referring was the brother of Asaph, the Psalmist. That Zechariah was killed during the reign of Solomon. There is no evidence that the other Zechariah, who was also a son of a Berekiah was murdered. That Zechariah was the post-exilic prophet who wrote the Book of Zechariah. The other famous Zechariah who was murdered in the Temple was the son of the High Priest Jehoiada (2 Chronicles 24:20-22). He was murdered on the order of King Joash. It could be argued that he was a “son of Berekiah” in the sense that one of his ancestors was named Berekiah but there is no record of that.

¹⁷ From the Messianic Psalm 118:6. In other words when they acknowledged that He is the Messiah.

When Christ returns to Jerusalem as King at the end of the Tribulation, only those who are believers in Him will be left.

The Widow's Mite.

Mark 12:41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts.

Luke 21:1 As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury.

Here Jesus would have been sitting next to the Temple proper where the vessels ¹⁸ that received the offerings were located. It would have been guarded by Temple guards. Jesus had just finished several declamations which decried the elevation of material values over spiritual values. He wasn't through. Here he had an example from real life with real people. First were all the rich people. Mark's description was that they "threw" their offerings in, which denotes a measure of ostentation.

Mark 12:42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

Luke 21:2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins.

Next came a poor widow. She quietly put in two small coins of copper. Copper was the least valued metal, and these coins were very small.

Mark 12:43-44 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Luke 21:3-4 "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Jesus pointed out that, in God's value system, she had given more than the rest, because her real donation was the spiritual value of her faith and devotion.

**Time –4/1/30 AD, 12 Nisan
The Last Week – Monday Afternoon**

¹⁸ They were called trumpets because they were narrow at the top and wide at the bottom.

The prophetic teachings of Jesus on the fall of Jerusalem, the Tribulation and Second Coming appear in the text of all three synoptic gospel accounts following the accounts of the lessons in the Temple on Monday afternoon which we have read above. Those lessons seem to have been His last in the Temple. This is indicated, not only by their place in the narrative, but by the fact that at their conclusion Matthew tells us:

Matthew 26:1-2 “When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ‘As you know, the Passover is two days away -- and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.’”

The killing of the Passover lamb was to take place at twilight on the 14th of Nisan. Thus, on Monday the 12th of Nisan when Jesus left the Temple for the last time, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread were “two days away.” Luke testifies that on that Tuesday morning, John and Peter left to prepare the upper room (Luke 22:8). After twilight on Tuesday, it became the 14th day of Nisan, the day the Passover lamb was to be slain. It was also the “day of preparation.”¹⁹ It was during that evening that Jesus and His disciples ate “the last supper.”

Having left the Temple, as He and His disciples were watching the sun to go down, Jesus delivered the following prophecies of what was to come. The first was a near term prophecy.

The Near Prophecy – the Destruction of Jerusalem.

These prophecies were revealed as Jesus was walking away from the Temple, probably as the sun was going down and the evening rays and lengthening shadows made it look even more spectacular than usual.

Luke 21:5a Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God.

Matthew 24:1 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings.

Mark 13:1 As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”

They couldn’t help admiring the Temple, which was certainly the most magnificent building in the Roman Empire and probably the world.

Luke 21:5b-6 But Jesus said, “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.”

¹⁹ John makes it abundantly clear that Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover (John 19:14, 31, 42)

Matthew 24:2 **“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”**

Mark 13:2 **“Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”**

Here Jesus prophesied the destruction of the Temple which would take place in forty years. No stone was left standing on another. One of the reasons that this happened was that the Temple caught fire, and the gold that plated much of it seeped into the stones. To get to that gold, the Roman soldiers, who had taken the Temple, heated the porous stones until they shattered. As a result, not one stone was left standing on another.

Luke 21:7 **“Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”**

Only Luke included the question that the disciples asked about when those things would happen. As a result, only Luke recorded the answer.

In the account in Luke, Jesus interrupted his description of the destruction of the Temple. In the succeeding passage in Luke 21:8-19 Jesus warned His disciples of the persecution that would happen to them throughout the Church Age. However, I have delayed the discussion of that passage until the next section to better study the parallel passages in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Here, in Luke, we will skip to the account in Luke 21:20-24 of the destruction of the Temple.

Luke 21:20-21 **“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.**

Here Jesus was still speaking of the destruction of the Temple and the city which wouldn't leave one stone standing upon another. One question that used to nag at me when I used to read the passage was:

What good was it to try and flee the city when, according to the prophecy here, it would already be surrounded by the troops of the enemy? By then it would be too late to escape capture and slavery.

Luke 21:22 **For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.**

Psalms 69:22-25, written about a thousand years before. It is just one of the passages written about what would happen to the Jews who crucified and rejected Jesus Christ.

Psalms 69:22-25 “May the table set before them (*the Jews who would have Christ crucified*) become a snare; may it become retribution and a trap. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever. Pour out your wrath on them; let your fierce anger overtake them. May their place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in their tents.”²⁰

Luke 21:23-24 **How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**²¹

These events took place between 66 AD and 70 AD, after the Book of Acts had already been written, and after Paul and Peter were dead. There is no biblical account of what happened in Jerusalem during that time. However, the LORD made sure that we have a historical account of the events that transpired, which was described and written down by an eyewitness. That eyewitness was the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. It was written before he was a believer in Christ. It appeared in his book Wars of the Jews. I think you will find the account fascinating. It answers the question of how the believers could still safely flee the city after they had seen troops surrounding it. Below is Josephus’ account.

Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter V, Paragraph 3, Flavius Josephus - “Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers (*the Jewish leaders*), 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. Thus, there was a star resembling a sword (*in other words, in the shape of a cross*), which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. Thus also before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread (*Passover*), on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, (*the Jewish month Nisan*) and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes, as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it. At the same festival also, a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple.²² Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple, which was of brass, and vastly heavy, and had been with difficulty shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts

²⁰ *Judah and Jerusalem would be emptied of Jews in 70 AD for over a generation.*

²¹ *Clearly, up to this point Jesus was speaking about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the beginning of the times of the Gentiles spoken of in Daniel 9:26. It is also known as the Church Age.*

²² *Keeping in mind that this is non-scriptural, it occurs to me that this might be read to mean that the only sacrifice eligible for use at the Passover had to have had a unique birth (as did Jesus).*

fastened very deep into the firm floor, which was there made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now those that kept watch in the temple came hereupon running to the captain of the temple, and told him of it; who then came up thither, and not without great difficulty was able to shut the gate again. This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God did thereby open them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So these publicly declared that the signal foreshowed the desolation that was coming upon them.”

Josephus also then recorded the way the LORD’s warning to the Church to flee Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-21 above) was able to be fulfilled:

Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter V, Paragraph 3, Flavius Josephus – “Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one and twentieth day of the month Artemisius, [*the Jewish month Jyar,*] a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about **among the clouds**, and surrounding of cities. Moreover, at that feast which we call **Pentecost**,²³ as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, ‘Let us remove hence.’”²⁴

Time – 4/2/30 AD, 12 Nisan
The Last Week – Monday Afternoon

The Farther Prophecies.

It is worth noting that within the near prophecies and the far prophecies that Christ gave here, there were three periods in view.

First, in Luke, we saw the time when the Christians should flee Jerusalem **before** the revolution which led to the destruction of the city in 70 AD.

Second, Jesus spoke about the conditions of the Church age from Pentecost in 30 AD until the Rapture of the Church.

²³ Remember, this warning was to the Church. What better day than Pentecost, the day the Church began.

²⁴ This occurred in 66 AD. Titus laid the siege on Jerusalem on Passover 70 AD. According to Eusebius, the Christians of Judea had fled to Pella, on the northern boundary of Perea at the time of this phenomenon in 66 AD. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3:5 – “But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella.”

Third, Jesus described the events of the Great Tribulation, which included a second time when Christians should flee Jerusalem. That time was to be at the 3½ year mark of the Tribulation when, after the two witnesses Moses and Elijah are killed, the Beast will set up his image in Jerusalem. Also included in the last section is seen the Second Advent of Christ when He will set foot on the Mount of Olives and all unbelievers will be purged from the earth.

Jesus' Continuing Prophecy – the Church Age

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark don't include these last prophecies in Luke about the surrounding of Jerusalem, but they do include the succeeding prophecies about the Church Age and the End Times. These prophecies were revealed after Jesus had left the Temple with His disciples and had reached the Mount of Olives.

Matthew 24:3a As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately.

Mark 13:3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately,

Jesus and His disciples were probably sitting in the Garden of Gethsemane which is on the Mt. of Olives opposite the Temple. They had picked it as their camp for that evening (our Monday night to Tuesday morning) and for the next evening (our Tuesday night to Wednesday morning). This further instruction occurred when they had arrived. It was not the instruction which He gave to all the disciples as they were leaving the Temple (Mark 13:1, Matthew 24:1). At that time Jesus had begun to speak about the destruction of the Temple. Here Jesus was privately approached by the two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew, and James and John.

Matthew 24:3b "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Mark 13:4 "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

Matthew tells us that Jesus had spoken to the Pharisees and the people of Jerusalem about the end of the age just before He left the Temple:

Matthew 23:39 "You will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Jesus' reply to the question about "when will these things happen" in Mark referred to this statement which related to the time of the Rapture and Tribulation. Some of the discourse recorded by Mark does refer to the time before the destruction of the Temple, but that is primarily covered in Luke 21.

Jesus had already answered the question regarding the destruction of the Temple as recorded in Luke, so He went on to these new questions regarding His coming again.

In the questions as recorded in Matthew and Mark, the disciples were responding to two statements Jesus had recently made. The first question (“when will this happen”) responded to Matthew 24:2 about the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. That answer was recorded in Luke. The second question (“What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”) responded to Matthew 23:39. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recorded Jesus’ answer to that question.

Matthew 24:4-5 Jesus answered:²⁵ “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.²⁶

Mark 13:5-6 Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many.

Luke 21:8 He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them.

In Luke these warnings, recorded in Luke 21:8-19, were given on the way to the Mt. of Olives in the context of the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple. It is quite probable that they were given twice. They were given first on the way from the Temple to the Mt. of Olives in the presence of all the disciples. Matthew and Mark record the warnings being given again only to the four brothers. It was a warning that bore repeating. One of the greatest tests the disciples had in building the Church was the opposition from outside the Church and also from those who claimed that they were believers inside the Church.

Matthew 24:6-8 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

²⁵ *The warning that Jesus gives about the conditions before he comes again are almost identical to the warnings He gave about conditions before the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:8:21. The same conditions have prevailed since His crucifixion.*

²⁶ *Simon bar Kokhba was a Jewish military leader in Judea. He lent his name to the Bar Kokhba revolt, which he initiated against the Roman Empire in 132 AD. Though they were ultimately unsuccessful, Bar Kokhba and his rebels did manage to establish and maintain a Jewish state for about three years after beginning the rebellion. Some of the rabbinic scholars in his time imagined him to be the long-expected Messiah of Judaism.*

Mark 13:7-8 **When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.**

Luke 21:9-10 **When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.” Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.**

The disciples hadn't understood that Jesus was about to die on the cross. Neither did they understand that what followed wasn't going to usher in Christ's Kingdom on earth. They needed to be prepared to understand that although death would be defeated and salvation assured, Satan and his demons would still be at large on the earth and largely in control of the kingdoms of this world.

Luke 21:11-12a **There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. “But before all this,**

In the warning in Luke, delivered on the road earlier, Jesus seemed to refer to the great signs of the Tribulation. However, He had said that before these signs would come to pass the persecutions of the Church Age would come to pass.

Matthew 24:9 **“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.**

Mark 13:9 **“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.**

Luke 21:12b-13 **they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them.**

Jesus warned that they could expect to be imprisoned and killed. As far as we know, all the remaining Eleven, excepting John, would die a martyr's death.²⁷ Disappointingly, as Jesus warned here, one of the greatest agents of persecution of the early Church, even among the Gentile nations, would turn out to be the Jewish Synagogues.²⁸

²⁷ *The Romans tried to kill John in Ephesus in about 96 AD by boiling him in oil but the LORD protected him as he had protected Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego from the fire in Daniel's day. When the oil failed to harm him, they exiled him to the island of Patmos where the LORD gave to him the Book of Revelation.*

Matthew 24:10-12 **At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase profusion of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,**

Even more disappointingly, some of the greatest enemies of the Word and the true Church would come from those who “claimed” to be Christians. In about 59 AD Paul had this warning for the elders of the Ephesian church:

Acts 20:29-30 “I (*Paul*) know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.”

In the history of the “organized church” it is repeatedly recorded how often the teaching of the Word has been abandoned. History also records countless bloody wars of persecution between people who call themselves Christians.

The Greek word translated “increase” in Matthew 24:10-12 is πληθύνω {plā-thū'-nō} **from which is derived the English word plethora. It is more correctly defined “profusion, surfeit, or plethora.” This just means that evil in the world is already great. It is the cause of the falling away of many. This is not talking about the run up to the end times being any more wicked than the time before it. This is just warning believers that, because of the ever-present profusion of evil that is always in the world, many will be caused to fall away from the Faith, as they did from Christ after His sermon on the bread of life (John 6:66).**

Matthew 24:13-14 **but he who ~~stands firm~~ remains behind to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**²⁹

Mark 13:10-13 **And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who ~~stands firm~~ remains behind to the end will be saved.**

Luke 21:14-19 **But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist**

²⁸ *The Jews tried to have Paul killed at least four times. Once in Damascus (Acts 9:23), once in Lystra (Acts 14:19), once in Ephesus (Acts 19:33), and once in Corinth (Acts 20:3).*

²⁹ *It can be argued either way, whether this is speaking about the end of the Church Age, or the end of the Tribulation.*

or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish.³⁰ ~~By standing firm~~ *In your remaining behind you will gain life.*

Christians must be prepared to be betrayed by their families. The prophecy about the Gospel being preached to all nations indicates that this part is speaking of the Church Age. It is after that when the end times shall come.

The Greek words translated “stands firm” or “standing firm” here are from the Greek word ὑπομένω {hü-po-me'-nō}. It means “to tarry” or “to remain behind.” There are two things to consider in getting to the true meaning of this verse.

First, this is not saying that we can lose our salvation. We know that our salvation depends on our initial faith. It doesn't depend on our continued faithfulness. It doesn't depend on our “standing firm” as the NIV translation has it. We can lose our rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but we cannot lose our identification with Christ Himself. Paul made this clear in 2 Timothy:

2 Timothy 2:11-13 *“Faithful is the Word:”*³¹ If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;³² if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

Second, Jesus' prophecy proceeded chronologically to take up the Great Tribulation.³³ Hence, I believe those “remaining behind” speaks of the deliverance of those “remaining behind” at the end of the Church Age. They would “be saved” or “delivered” from the Great Tribulation by the Rapture. The Rapture was described by Paul in 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God,³⁴ and the dead in Christ will ~~rise~~ *stand forth*³⁵ first. After that,

³⁰ *Clearly, since some will be put to death, this is speaking in an eternal sense.*

³¹ *The Greek is πιστός ὁ λόγος which is literally: “Faithful is the word.” Of course Jesus is the Living Word.*

³² *See Matthew 10:32-33 “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”*

³³ *We will study that in our next lesson.*

we who are still alive and are left (*or remain*) will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.³⁶ For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised (*stand forth*) ~~imperishable~~ (*incorruptible*), and we will be changed.”

³⁴ *This may indicate that the Rapture of the Church when it occurs, will occur on 1 Tishri, the Feast of Trumpets on the new moon of the seventh month of the Jewish Religious Calendar.*

³⁵ *The idea is on the order of a military assembly at the trumpet call. The “dead in Christ” will assemble from where they have enjoyed their lives in heaven and where they have awaited this moment.*

³⁶ *Speaking of the Rapture of the Church.*