

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 22

Widow's Mite

Luke 21:1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. ² And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. ³ And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all *of them*; ⁴ for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

The worship of God is our gift in support of God; the Lord sees in our hearts what we have to give for His service to us. The poorest may have only two mites to give but they also have a soul and a body. The widow's body needs provisions yet her soul needs a Savior. Therefore, everything this widow has is available to "the treasury" for use in the service of the Lord.

Beautiful Stones

Luke 21:5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, ⁶ "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."

The Temple these disciples are admiring is not Solomon's temple; it had been destroyed by the Babylonians in the seventh century BC. This temple had been built by Ezra after the return from exile in the sixth century BC. It was desecrated by the Seleucids in the second century BC, consecrated again by the Maccabees soon afterward, and expanded enormously by Herod the Great for the past 46 years. It is a beautiful imposing structure with a significant history but Jesus says that it will be completely destroyed and it will happen in AD 70 when the Roman army burns Jerusalem.

False Sign

Luke 21:7 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?" ⁸ And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am *He*,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them. ⁹ "When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end *does not follow* immediately."

These words are prophetic. They surely startle every Jewish person who hears them that day. They are spoken about a building that has sat on a site that is associated with most of the principal names in Jewish history including David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra and Nehemiah. It is a building to which every devout Jew had turned. Wherever he traveled in the world, from there he would turn toward the Temple in

Jerusalem and offer his daily prayers.¹⁹ But Jesus' words are spoken advisedly; they are to teach us the great truth that the true glory of a place of worship does not consist in outer ornaments. When will this building be torn down again on this site? The answer is simply, "not when you expect it to happen!" The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple is an extended process. Here is a synopsis from the record of Josephus.

The siege of Jerusalem, the capital city, had begun early in the war, but had turned into a stalemate. Unable to breach the city's defenses, the Roman armies established a permanent camp just outside the city, digging a trench around the circumference of its walls and building a wall as high as the city walls themselves around Jerusalem. Anyone caught in the trench attempting to flee the city would be captured, crucified, and placed in lines on top of the dirt wall facing into Jerusalem. The two Zealot leaders, John of Gischala and Simon bar Giora only ceased hostilities and joined forces to defend the city when the Romans began to construct ramparts for the siege. Tens of thousands of crucified bodies encircled Jerusalem by the end of the siege.

Titus Flavius, Vespasian's son, led the final assault and siege of Jerusalem. During the infighting inside the city walls, a stockpiled supply of dry food was intentionally burned by Jewish leaders to induce the defenders to fight against the siege instead of negotiating peace; as a result many city dwellers and soldiers died of starvation during the siege. Zealots under Eleazar ben Simon held the Temple, Sicarii led by Simon ben Girora held the upper city. Titus eventually wiped out the last remnants of Jewish resistance. He was so determined that nearly three years after the destruction of Jerusalem, he was still hunting down rebellious Jews, including a determined band that held the mountain fortress Masada.

By the summer of 70, the Romans had breached the walls of Jerusalem, ransacking and burning nearly the entire city. The Romans began by attacking the weakest spot which was the third wall. It was built shortly before the siege so it did not have as much time invested in its protection. They succeeded towards the end of May and shortly afterwards broke through the more important second wall. The Second Temple was destroyed on Tisha B'Av, 70. Those who were besieged in Jerusalem amounted to no fewer than six hundred thousand, men and women alike and every age, engaged in armed resistance, everyone who could pick up a weapon did. Both sexes showed equal determination, preferring death to a life that involved expulsion from their country. All three walls were destroyed and in turn so was the Temple. John of Giscala surrendered at Agrippa II's fortress of Jotaphta and was sentenced to life imprisonment. The famous Arch of Titus still stands in Rome: it depicts Roman legionaries carrying off the Temple of Jerusalem's treasures, including the menorah.



Picture: Arch of Titus



Picture: Relief on Arch of Titus depicting the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem

¹⁹ Some Jews offered prayers three times a day and some offered them five.

Nation Against Nation

Luke 21:10 Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, **11** and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. **12** "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. **13** "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. **14** "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; **15** for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. **16** "But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death, **17** and you will be hated by all because of My name. **18** "Yet not a hair of your head will perish. **19** "By your endurance you will gain your lives. **20** "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. **21** "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; **22** because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. **23** "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; **24** and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Without a doubt, these words are fulfilled when the Romans take Jerusalem and the Jews run to hide and live outside their homeland. It is a time of unparalleled desolation for Judea and the surrounding countries. The last days of the Jewish dispensation are wound up by a struggle which, considering bloodshed, misery and tribulation, has never been equaled since the world began. But these words also have a future fulfillment. They describe the time which will immediately precede the Lord's Second Coming. The end will be a time of war, not of universal peace. The Christian dispensation will pass away like the Jewish one with wars, tumult and desolation as empires and kingdoms crash as never before. The last days of the earth will be its worst days.

What is the Times of the Gentiles?

Based on scriptural revelation, the "times of the Gentiles" began when the nation of Israel was sent into exile by God to Babylon because of her relentless idolatry and disobedience, causing Israel no longer to be the "head" but the "tail," as prophesied in Deuteronomy 28:1, 10, 13-15.

Deuteronomy 28:1 "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

Deuteronomy 28:10 "So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you.

Deuteronomy 28:13 "The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe *them* carefully, **14** and do not

turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

But God had also warned Israel that she would fail to obey the Lord and would seek other gods.

Deuteronomy 28:43 "The alien who is among you shall rise above you higher and higher, but you will go down lower and lower. ⁴⁴ "He shall lend to you, but you will not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you will be the tail.

Starting with Israel's exile into Babylon, Gentile political dominions were divinely ordained. These dominions were revealed and described by the prophet Daniel as a statue of various metals in chapter 2 and the four beasts in chapter 7 of Daniel's prophetic Book. Scofield defines the time limits of the Gentiles:

The Times of the Gentiles is that long period beginning with the Babylonian captivity of Judah, under Nebuchadnezzar, and to be brought to an end by the destruction of Gentile world power by the "stone cut out with hands" (Dan. 2:34, 35, 44), i.e., the coming of the Lord in glory (Rev. 19:11, 21), until which time Jerusalem is politically subject to Gentile rule (Luke 21:24).²⁰

When Jesus says that Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the "times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," He does not at all mean until the Jews will again take control of the ancient city of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount from Gentile hands. Instead, He is specifically referring to those successive Gentile political powers revealed by the prophet Daniel which will have dominion over the nation of Israel starting with Babylon and ending with the revived Roman Empire under the Antichrist.

These successive Gentile powers are historically seen to be Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. During the time of ancient Rome, Jerusalem and its Temple are destroyed, causing the Jews to be dispersed into the Roman Empire. Today, Israel is again back as a nation and according to the prophet Daniel, the last phase of Gentile dominance over her will soon develop as well. This last Gentile dominion is described as the ten toes on the statue in Daniel Chapter 2 and the ten horns on the fourth beast along with the little horn Antichrist, in Daniel chapter 7.

Gentile oppression over Jerusalem will culminate with the Antichrist exalting himself when he takes his seat in the Temple of God proclaiming himself to be God.²¹ When Christ returns, the Gentile nations will be judged on the basis of their treatment of God's covenant people, Israel, during the time of the Tribulation period.²² Then, Christ will rule the nations with a rod of iron for 1,000 years and Satan and his evil angels will be bound and removed

²⁰ C.I. Scofield, Reference Bible, p. 1345

²¹ II Thess. 2:4

²² Matt. 25:31-46

to the abyss.²³ The earth will be restored after the destruction of the tribulation, repopulated and God's saints will serve Him. Great prosperity and blessing will be in store for Israel as the nation of nations with its world capital, Jerusalem, and with Christ reigning on the throne of His father, David.

Even if the nation of Israel gains sovereign control over the city, as has occurred today, there will still be Gentile world dominion and oppression for Jerusalem. For instance, there is the ongoing Islamic control over Israel's most sacred site, the Temple Mount. Nations have suggested that Jerusalem might be made an International city or that it should be the capital of a Palestinian Arab state. Recently the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously for the creation of a Palestinian State to be carved out of the land of Israel, which includes portions of the land promised by God to Israel by His everlasting covenant. For the first time ever, the United States has voted in favor of this resolution! The United States has joined with the Arab nations, the European Union and the United Nations in calling for a division of Israel and the city of Jerusalem to create a Muslim Palestinian nation in the midst of the Promised Land. The prophet Zechariah declared that the day will come when all the nations will come against Jerusalem and Judah!

Zechariah 12:2-3 Behold I will make Jerusalem a goblet of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples. Then they will lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And in that day I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who try to life it will be severely injured. All nations of the earth will gather for war because of it.²⁴

Coming in a Cloud

Luke 21:25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶ men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. ²⁸ "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. Upon fulfillment, then the signs mentioned in verses 25-28 will follow. At that time, the world will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud! It will not occur at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD but at the end of the "times of the Gentiles".

The Fig Tree

Luke 21:29 Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they put forth *leaves*, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹ "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. ³² "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. ³³ "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

²³ Rev. 20

²⁴ Literal translation from the original Hebrew

Referring to the things that will occur before the "times of the Gentiles" is complete, Luke records Jesus' parable of the fig tree. The generation standing in front of Jesus at that time will see the destruction of Jerusalem. His words will ring true on Av 9th, 70 AD.

Hearts Weighted Down

Luke 21:34 "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; ³⁵ for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. ³⁶ "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The Lord tells his disciples to observe the signs of the times and use them to judge the fulfillment of prophecy. He charges them to beware that the ruin of the Jewish nation is near. Yet, this race and family of Abraham will not be rooted out; it will survive as a nation and be exalted as prophesied when the Son of man is revealed. He cautions His followers against being secure and sensual. He has warned them not to be overpowered by temptations nor betrayed by self corruptions. We cannot be safe if we are carnally secure. The danger is near and the disciples must be prepared lest the day of death and of judgment should come them. The same is true today, lest when we are called to meet our Lord, that which is furthest from our thoughts ought to be nearest to our hearts. For so it will come upon most of the men who dwell upon the earth and mind earthly things only and have no thought of heaven but only terror and destruction. Here we see that our aim should be that we may be accounted worthy to escape all the judgments of God. Should we ask how we can be found worthy to stand before Christ on that day? Those who never seek Christ, let them now find Him; let those who never humble themselves before their sins now begin; let those who have already begun a relationship with the Lord, let them go forward and stay humbled. Watch therefore, and pray always! Watch against sin; watch in every duty; make the most of every opportunity to do good. Pray always! Those who will be accounted worthy to live a life of praise in the other world are those who live a life of prayer in this world. May we begin, employ and conclude each day attending to Christ's word, obeying His precepts and following His example so that whenever He comes, we may be found watching and waiting.

Olivet for the Night

Luke 21:37 Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. ³⁸ And all the people would get up early in the morning *to come* to Him in the temple to listen to Him.