

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of The Gospel According to Luke

Chapter 21- Luke 21:5- 38

321- When Therefore Will These Things Happen?- Part 7- The Promise of Judgment- Part 5

July 24, 2016

Luke 21:5-38

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.*"

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.*"

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.
- 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."
- 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.
- 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."

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.

To the Glory of God

Now we are right in the middle of looking at this amazing Passage, and today I want you to look, again, very closely at what our Lord said in verses 20 through 24:

Luke 21:20-24

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.

Now there are various ways to understand Redemptive History. For example, some people divide history into what they call "Dispensations". So Dispensationalism divides history into seven dispensations:

1. **Innocence** – From Adam's creation unto the Fall
2. **Conscience** – From the Fall unto the Great Flood.
3. **Human Government** – From the Great Flood unto the Tower of Babel
4. **Promise** – From Abram unto Moses.

5. **Law** – From Moses to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
6. **Grace** – From the Resurrection unto the Second Coming.
7. **Millennial Kingdom** – A 1000 year reign of Christ on earth centered in Jerusalem.

Others seek to understand history through three “Covenants”.
For example:

1. **The Covenant of Works**- Between Adam and God
2. **The Covenant of Grace**- Between God and the Elect
3. **The Covenant of Redemption**- Between the three Persons of the Godhead

But, regardless of which method you use, all throughout Redemptive History God has *sovereignly* and seemingly *suddenly inserted* Himself into the affairs of Man, and brought sudden and dramatic changes. And when God brought about these changes. He did it through cataclysmic Judgment.

- ✓ God damned the world through Adam's sin
- ✓ God judged the violence of the world through the Flood
- ✓ God divided the nations at the Tower of Babel for their arrogance
- ✓ God destroyed the mightiest military on earth in the Exodus
- ✓ God annihilated the Palestinians through Joshua
- ✓ God raised up Empires to humble His people
- ✓ Jesus Christ was brutally murdered for Salvation

All throughout History God moved to sovereignly change things. And periodically, He allowed great Evil to rise to power, but only because by allowing that Evil to rise, God brought forth a greater Good.

Now, from the days of Joshua, God has primarily used other people to bring about His Will in the earth. For example, God used *Himself* in the Garden and in the Flood and at the Tower of Babel and at the Red Sea. And God could have continued to use Himself to enact all His Will in the earth, but with Joshua, God began to use other human beings to carry out His Will.

And God used both righteous and unrighteous men. He used wicked sinners and godly men. And God raised up evil nations, and

even great Empires, that subjugated entire sections of the world for no other reason than to facilitate His Divine Will.

As we have already learned, during the history of the nation of Israel, God raised up no less than five Empires to crush the Jews, and to humble them, so they would repent of their sins and return to God:

- ✓ The Assyrian Empire (721 BC)
- ✓ The Babylonian Empire (586 BC)
- ✓ The Persian Empire (530 BC)
- ✓ The Greek Empire (200 BC)
- ✓ The Roman Empire (61 BC)

Each of these Empires came to Israel and conquered them. And yet *none* of these Empires were godly, *all* of them were pagan, and *all* of them promoted the worship of multiple gods beside the one true living God of the Bible.

So why would God use pagans, and give these pagans power and authority over His Own people? Two reasons:

1. To carry out His Will in the earth
2. To bring His people to repentance

Now what is amazing about all this is that once the Empire that God raised up did their job, once God's Will in the earth was carried out and once God's people repented of their own sin and lukewarmness and worldliness, God then *destroyed* the Empire that He Himself had raised up!

So, by the time that Jesus walked the earth, God had already done this at least five different times. And so, this was a common way that God brought about massive and substantial change in the earth, using two common characteristics:

- A. A Pagan Empire
- B. Great Violence and Destruction

Now, as I have told you several times in this series, the correct context of verses 5-38 of **Luke 21** is *not* what most of the headings in your Bibles say. This is *not* a prophecy about what is going to happen

at some point in *our* future. That is taking these verses completely out of context. And there are two reasons that we know that to be true:

1. The grammatical structure of the text from verses 8- 38
2. The Promise that Jesus made in verse 32

In verses 8-38 our Redeemer is giving a long answer in *response* to the single question that was asked of Him in the last part of verse 7. The question was:

Luke 21:7b

... Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what *will be* the sign when these things are about to take place?

So the question is:

When?

... when what? *When* will You Return to this earth? No. *When* will the anti-christ rise up? No. *When* will you rapture the Church? No. The disciples were asking Jesus in verse 7 *when* He was going to do what He promised to do? Well, what did Jesus say He was going to do? Look again at verses 5-6:

Luke 21:5-6

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."

... and so, in verse 7, Jesus' disciples were asking Him *when* He was going to tear down the Temple, and thus, in effect, end the reign of the Old Covenant and usher in the infinitely superior New Covenant. And so verses 8-38 are His response to that question. So that is the context or the structure of these verses.

But then we also have the Promise that Jesus made in verses 32 that says:

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.

So Jesus is making a Promise to the people who were standing there on that day, hearing Him speak, that *their* generation, the expected lifespan of the people hearing Jesus on that day, would not “**pass away**” until what He said in verses 8-38 would occur.

To suggest that somehow Jesus was prophesying about events that will occur at some point in *our* future is to *invent* a meaning that the text doesn't offer. And it is to take this entire passage out of context.

So our struggle to understand this Passage should *not* be to try to make the Words of Jesus in this Passage fit in with what is going on in our day or in our future. How the Words of Jesus in verses 8-38 fit in with England leaving the European Union, or with the super-computer in Brussels, Belgium, or with the rise of true believers of Islam slaughtering Christians, or with the micro-chip they are supposedly going to put in our hands, or with the decline of Biblical holiness in the American Church, or with the acceptance of sexual perversity in our culture is completely irrelevant. *Some* of those things are very important, and we have tons of verses and passages in the Bible that address those issues. But Jesus was *not* addressing any of those things in these 31 verses.

Our struggle should be to understand what Jesus is saying in these verses within the correct context of this Prophecy being fulfilled about 40 years after He spoke it.

Now, it is very important that we remember all that we have learned up to this point:

- Jesus began this Passage by warning against being led astray by false teaching.
- He then promised that false messiahs would rise up to try to forcefully bring in the Kingdom of God that was promised by the OT prophets by violently overthrowing the Roman occupiers.
- This would create local wars among the various “states” or “nations” within Israel as the followers of the false messiahs would engage in terrorist activities.

- This would result in the local Roman Authorities to crack down on the Jewish population.
- Both the local Roman and Jewish authorities would persecute the Christians.
- This would result in massive disruptions of commerce and trade and sanitary conditions which would result in diseases and deaths to be rampant.
- Great signs in the heavens would frighten the pagans, which resulted in even more persecution of both the Jews and Christians.
- All of these false messiahs would fail, which would precipitate even more, which in turn would bring about harsher and harsher responses from the ruling authorities.
- Rome began to be troubled by the inability of the local Roman authorities to keep order.

And last week we saw how that Jesus promised three different things:

1. All genuine believers would be persecuted by both the Jewish and Roman authorities.
2. Some would be killed.
3. The souls of genuine believers are eternally safe in God's sovereign Protection.

Now keep in mind that while all this as going on, Christianity was *expanding* throughout the known world. So, the intense persecution that was being carried out on the believers not only *did not* stop people from being saved, it also *did not* stop Christianity from spreading and growing throughout the world. From the Resurrection of Jesus, the glorious Revelation of the New Covenant was being received, articulated, written down, and formalized by the small handful of men that God had chosen to carry the Message of Salvation forward into the world.

And, as we have studied, over the first four decades immediately after the Resurrection, several amazing things were going on at the same time:

- ✓ The Books of the New Testament were being received, written down, and taught.
- ✓ The Old Testament was being correctly interpreted.
- ✓ Powerful signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit were being manifested so as to give Divine Credibility to the radical Gospel of Love and Forgiveness.
- ✓ The Gospel was being preached as far East as India and as far West as Spain (**Romans 15**).
- ✓ Local Churches were being raised up.
- ✓ Souls were being saved.

... so, even though Christianity was an *illegal* and *persecuted* religion, its influence was becoming too large for either the Jews or the Romans to ignore.

So, if it is true that Jesus died and rose from the dead in approximately 29 AD, then it took only 11 years after that for James to write his Epistle. Dr. Luke would have begun interviewing his eye witnesses and begun writing his two-volume set just 17 years after that. So that by the time that the Roman army began the siege of Jerusalem in 66 AD:

- At least 22 of the 27 inspired Books of the New Testament had already been written and were being copied and distributed around the world.
- All of the major Christian Doctrines were in place.
- Several theological seminaries were in place and functioning throughout the Middle East, training young men to become Church leaders.

... one of these groups from northern Greece, "the Bereans", were mentioned in **The Acts 17** as being serious students of the Word of God when Dr. Luke wrote:

The Acts 17:11

... these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see whether these things were so.*

Now there were five Emperors of Rome during the forty- year time-frame from just *after* the Resurrection to just *before* the destruction of the Temple:

- ✓ Tiberius (reigned from 9/18/14- 3/16/37)
- ✓ Caligula (3/18/37- 1/24/41)
- ✓ Claudius (1/26/41- 10/13/54)
- ✓ Nero (10/13/54- 6/9/68)

... these are the men who ordered the great persecution of all the Christians that you read about in both the Scriptures and in history during the early days of the Church.

And we need to especially pay attention to Nero. Nero had ascended to the position of Emperor after the death of Caesar Claudius in 54 AD. It is Nero who initiated the horrific persecution against the Christians with which most people are familiar.

For example, it was Nero that instituted the "Games" where lavish sporting events took place. It was Nero that instituted the Gladiators who killed for sport. Nero was the man who invented night time sporting events. This evil man had believers dosed with oil and tied to poles and set them on fire so the Emperor could watch sports at night. It was Nero that fed Christians to the lions to the roar of the crowds. And it was Nero who coined the phrase, "*Paint the town red*", which had to do with smearing the blood of slaughtered Christians on the walls and sides of buildings. You need to remember Nero as he will figure in greatly in our class on Eschatology.

Now according to the Jewish historian, Josephus, the "*Great Revolt*", as the Roman/Jewish war became known as, began at Caesarea in 66 AD. It was provoked by Greeks of a certain merchant house sacrificing birds in front of a local Jewish synagogue.¹ The local Roman garrison did not intervene to defend the Jews against this blasphemy and tensions took a downward spiral.

In reaction, one of the Jewish Temple clerks ceased prayers and sacrifices for the Roman Emperor at the Temple. Soon, anti-taxation protests and Jewish terrorist attacks upon Roman citizens became common.² The local Roman Governor, Gessius Florus, responded by

¹ PACE: *The Jewish War*, 2. (Whiston).

² Ibid

plundering the Jewish Temple (claiming the money was for the Emperor), and the next day launching a raid in the city of Jerusalem, arresting numerous senior Jewish figures, including some who claimed to be the messiah.

This prompted a wider, large scale rebellion by various Jewish groups and the Roman military garrison of Judaea was quickly overrun by the rebels. So the pro-Roman king, Agrippa II, together with Roman officials, fled Jerusalem. As it became clear the rebellion was getting out of control, Cestius Gallus, the legate of Syria, brought in the Syrian army to restore order and quell the revolt. Despite initial advances and conquest of Jaffa, the Syrian Legion was ambushed and defeated by Jewish rebels at the Battle of Beth Horon with 6,000 Romans massacred, a result that shocked the authorities back in Rome.

Later, in Jerusalem, an attempt by yet another false messiah, Menahem ben Yehuda, leader of the Sicarii, to take control of the city failed. He was executed and the remaining Sicarii were ejected from Jerusalem. Another false messiah, the charismatic, but radical peasant leader, Simon bar Giora, was also expelled by the new Judean government.

Finally, Rome had had enough. And Nero gave the experienced general, Vespasian, the task of invading Israel and crushing the rebellion once and for all.

Given four legions and assisted by the forces of King Agrippa II, Vespasian invaded Galilee in 67. Galilee, as you recall was the origination of the Ministry of Jesus, Who the Romans at that time considered to be nothing more than another one of these false messiahs. So, in the spring of 67 AD, the Romans invaded from the north. This was in fulfillment of several Old Testament prophecies in Jeremiah that link Divine Judgment against Jerusalem with an invading army from the north such as:

Jeremiah 1:14-15

14 Then the Lord said to me, "Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land.

15 "For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north," declares the Lord; "and they will come and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about and against all the cities of Judah.

... other references are found in **Jeremiah 4:6**, and **Jeremiah 6:1** where God warns the inhabitants of Jerusalem to flee out of the city as it will be attacked from the north. At one point, the Jewish historian, Josephus, who was an eye witness of the destruction of Jerusalem, tells of literally tens of thousands of Roman horses being seen up in the mountains of Israel that gave the appearance as though the mountains themselves were moving. And almost 600 years earlier, the Prophet Jeremiah cried out:

Jeremiah 4:19-26

19 My soul, my soul! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart! My heart is pounding in me; I cannot be silent, Because you have heard, O my soul, The sound of the trumpet, The alarm of war.

20 Disaster on disaster is proclaimed, For the whole land is devastated; Suddenly my tents are devastated, My curtains in an instant.

21 How long must I see the standard And hear the sound of the trumpet?

22 "For My people are foolish, They know Me not; They are stupid children And have no understanding. They are shrewd to do evil, But to do good they do not know."

23 I looked on the earth, and behold, *it was* formless and void; And to the heavens, and they had no light.

24 I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, And all the hills moved to and fro.

25 I looked, and behold, there was no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled.

26 I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were pulled down Before the Lord, before His fierce anger.

Now there were several reasons *why* the Roman army came down into Jerusalem from the north:

- ✓ This was in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
- ✓ Galilee was an area where the various terrorists fled to when they were attacked by the local Roman Authorities.
- ✓ Rome wanted to avoid a direct attack on the reinforced city of Jerusalem, which was defended by the main rebel force.

So the Romans launched a persistent campaign to brutally eradicate the rebel strongholds and punish the population. And within several months Vespasian took over the major Jewish strongholds of Galilee.

Driven from Galilee, Zealot rebels and thousands of refugees arrived in Judea, creating political turmoil in Jerusalem. The Sadducees wanted to try to broker a peace with the Romans while the Zealots from the North considered this to be treason. So the Zealots began assassinating the Sadducees and anyone else who tried to make peace with the pagan Romans. Two more false messiahs, "John of Giscala" and "Eleazar ben Simon", led these attacks against the Jewish religious leaders.

In AD 68 Nero committed suicide and the political turmoil stopped the Roman advance. In AD 69, Vespasian was called back to Rome to become the next Emperor, and Titus, Vespasian's son, took over the military campaign against the Jews.

Now keep in mind that as the Army of Rome marched through Israel from the north and came closer and closer to Jerusalem, literally millions of Jews were running ahead of them, streaming into the city. And the common theme among them all, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, was that God would protect the Habitation of Peace, where the Temple was. And so, the Jews saw the city of Jerusalem as the very place where they could make their last stand.

However, the Christians had a different perspective. One of the main distinctions in NT Christianity was the fact that it no longer mattered where the genuine believer was. Jesus had taught them that the Kingdom of God was *not* a physical geographical location, and because God the Holy Spirit now dwelt in them and *not* in the Temple in Jerusalem, believers could worship God anywhere they were.

So, as the Jews were rushing *into* Jerusalem so that God would protect them, the Christians remembered the Command of the Lord Jesus in **Luke 21:21-22** where He said:

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.

... and so, the Christians ran *out* of Jerusalem and into the mountains. According to Josephus, approximately 1.1 million Jews died in Jerusalem, while not a single Christian was killed by the advancing Roman army. So while many believers were persecuted and killed by the Jews and the local Roman authorities *before* this invasion, because they obeyed the Lord's Words, *none* died at the hand of Titus.

Now to show his utter disgust with the Jews, Titus began his siege of Jerusalem a few days before Passover³ with three legions of soldiers. The thrust of the siege began in the West at the Third Wall, north of the Jaffa Gate. By May, this wall was breached and the Second Wall also was taken shortly afterwards, leaving the defenders in possession of the Temple and the upper and lower city.

Battering rams made little progress, but the fighting itself eventually set the walls of the Temple on fire. Now what is interesting is that destroying the Temple was *not* among any Titus' original goals. He had wanted to seize the Temple and transform it into a Temple dedicated to the Roman Emperor, his father, Vespasian. But, with the Jewish resistance, Titus had no choice. Josephus described the scene:

"As the legions charged in, neither persuasion nor threat could check their impetuosity: passion alone was in command. Crowded together around the entrances many were trampled by their friends, many fell among the still hot and smoking ruins of the colonnades and died as miserably as the defeated. As they neared the Sanctuary they pretended not even to hear Caesar's commands and urged the men in front to throw in more firebrands. The partisans were no longer in a position to help; everywhere was slaughter and flight. Most of the victims were peaceful citizens, weak and unarmed, butchered wherever they were caught. Round the Altar the heaps of corpses grew higher and higher, while down the Sanctuary steps poured a river of blood and the bodies of those killed at the top slid to the bottom."⁴

The Temple and all that it represented was demolished on July 30, 70 AD, *exactly* 1,946 years ago from this coming Saturday. Not a single stone was left standing. The only thing that remains to this day of the symbol of the glory of the Old Covenant is a 187 foot-long

³ Peter Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World: The Jews of Palestine from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*, Routledge, 2003 pp.129-130.

⁴ Peter Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in Antiquity*, Routledge (1995) 2013 pp.191-192.

expansion wall that helped to hold up the platform on which the Temple was built. This wall today is the most sacred area for the Jew as it is all that he has left of what God destroyed. It is called, today, "The Wailing Wall", as Jews from all over the world come there to pray asking God to rebuild the Temple.

By late August, the entire city of Jerusalem was a smoldering heap of rubble. Dead corpses were everywhere. And the air was filled with the birds that would come down to clean the flesh from the bones of the dead.

It must have been hard on those who went through that. It must have been amazing to be up in the mountains and watch the great city along with all the hopes of all those who did not trust in Jesus burn.

Even after the destruction, there were hard days as disease and pestilence took over. But Jesus had warned His people that not only would the Temple fall, but everything about the Temple and the Jewish way of life, including their worship of God, would all change when He said in **Luke 21:23-24**:

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.

Now it is difficult for those of us who have never known anything at all about Jesus, except what the Christian Church in its domination has taught, to look with eyes that see what these men who heard Jesus speak on that day saw and to hear what they heard. But we must try.

Here in verse 23, Jesus is promising hardship to those who are pregnant and those who nurse babies. Now this doesn't mean that Jesus is against motherhood, or that motherhood somehow makes serving Christ harder. No, all that Jesus is saying here is that because of the great distress and chaos that the Roman Army has brought to the land, it will be *physically* hard for pregnant women and babies. This is purely a *physical* statement here and has nothing to do with anything spiritual.

The first part of verse 24 is very important because it brings out details about this event that have been catalogued for us in the history books. The Jewish survivors were decimated by the Temple being destroyed. They just had their worship of God taken away from them, and, in addition, all of the genealogical records, of which they took great pride, were all destroyed. So since 70 AD, no Jew has any definitive idea of his heritage.

It is as though God was saying, *"I gave you your name and your land and your civilization, your language, your culture, your morality, and your knowledge of Me. I made a Covenant with you and you broke that Covenant. I sent you My Son and proved His Deity beyond any doubt, and you called Him 'satan'. You rejected Him, and so I have rejected you, and I will now strip you of everything I gave you. You will no longer have a home or a Temple in which to worship Me, and you will be scattered over the face of the earth."*

Now there has been much speculation about just what Jesus meant when He used the phrase **"until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"**. It seems to be a prophecy in order. In other words, Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until... meaning that Jerusalem will be destroyed by pagan Gentiles and they will rule over you until... Until what? Until the "times of the Gentiles" are fulfilled.

Now the first part of this statement is relatively easy to understand: Jerusalem will be destroyed by Gentile people who do not love or serve God, or even know God. So this is the Romans. The first part of verse 24 was fulfilled in 70 AD.

The second part of this verse, however, is more complicated. What does Jesus mean when He said:

... and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Was Jesus saying the same thing as the Apostle Paul when he wrote this in **Romans 11:23**:

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in

Now many people in the Dispensational camp see this statement by the Apostle as proof that there are two groups that God is dealing with:

1. The Jews
2. Gentile believers

And so they see God making and fulfilling prophecies in Scripture to two different groups:

1. The Nation of Israel
2. The Church

... and they say that these groups are *separate* and *cannot* be joined together. So what God promised to Israel belongs to Israel and does *not* belong to the Church, and what God promised to the Church belongs to the Church and does *not* belong to Israel.

And the logical conclusion to believing that is that there are two different manners in which people are saved. Which is why many of them teach that Jews are saved by birthright and the Gentiles are saved by Grace through Faith in Jesus.⁵

And I categorically reject that. The Bible is crystal clear, there is only one way to be saved, and that is by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone. And the New Testament is also crystal clear that it no longer matters if a person is a Jew or a Gentile:

Romans 10:12-13

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;

13 for "*WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.*"

Galatians 3:28-29

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

⁵ Most notably John Hagee

29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

The Apostle Paul even went so far as to describe what a true Jew really is:

Romans 2:28-29

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

And this is what makes the New Covenant so infinitely *superior* to the Old. For example:

- ✓ God the Holy Spirit dwells in us, *not* in the Temple in Jerusalem.
- ✓ We no longer have to go to Jerusalem once a year; we may worship God anywhere at any time.
- ✓ We no longer have to sacrifice animals that could not and did not forgive a single sin. We trust that the once for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ paid for all sins forever.
- ✓ We no longer have a formal Priesthood after the Order of Aaron. All genuine believers are priests of God after the Order of Melchizedek.
- ✓ We no longer have to go to the Temple to get close to God; God incarnate abides in us and we abide in Him through His Spirit.

And so, since what the New Testament teaches is true, then a Jew who lives in Jerusalem is no different than a Gentile who lives in Gulfport. They *both* must hear the Gospel, they *both* must believe the Gospel, they *both* must repent, and they *both* must trust in Jesus Christ. They *both* must confess with their mouths that Jesus Christ is God Almighty in human flesh, and they *both* must believe in their heart that God raised Jesus from the dead.

And whoever does that, Jew or Gentile, is saved. And whoever is saved is a member in particular of Christ's Church, and a citizen of the *heavenly* Jerusalem.

And yet, on a surface reading of God's Word, it seems as though God may well turn dramatically toward the Jews once all the Gentiles are saved. But, as we may believe that, we must also believe that Jews have been saved by the boatload every year since the Resurrection. So it isn't as though God isn't already moving upon the Jew to open their eyes to the Gospel and grant them the gift of repentance, even as Gentiles are *continuing* to be saved.

So, however we understand what Jesus and Paul meant, it is incorrect to say that God is waiting until all the Gentiles are saved first and then He will deal with the Jews. That simply is not true. God has been saving elected Jews for 2,000 years even as he has with Gentiles. And that makes what Paul said in **Romans 11:23** as difficult to understand as what Jesus said at the end of **Luke 21:24**.

So, since the advent of the Gospel and the Church, I have no idea what anyone would do with a "national Israel" anymore. I have no idea why it would matter in the least whether a lost sinner is a Jew or a Gentile. I have no idea why anyone would think that Jews can be saved by birthright. And I have no idea why anybody would seek to return to Jerusalem, a city that the Apostle John called:

The Revelation 11:8b

... the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

God judged Jerusalem and the Temple for one reason, because He was finished with them. So neither the city nor the Temple represents Him anymore. The Old Covenant was a true but *inferior* Revelation of God filled with signs and symbols and types. And the entire time it was in place, God was promising something better. And Jesus Himself brought what was better to the world. And at that moment, the need for the Old Covenant and all that it entailed was forever done away.

But, even after Jesus died and rose from the dead, genuine believers were so steeped in their religious traditions that they were still sacrificing animals and still circumcising their flesh and still praying in the Temple, even decades later. So God moved publicly and decisively, and in a way that no one could debate that He was finished with the Old Covenant forever, *not* because there was anything wrong

with it, but only because it was time to usher in the superior New Covenant.

So, as long as the Temple stood, as long as people were using the Temple for animal sacrifices and circumcision and prayers and a sinful priesthood, the New Covenant was being overshadowed. People simply could not make the journey to the New Covenant as long as that Temple stood. So God moved, and Jesus' Words were fulfilled, and it will *remain* that way until we walk through the gates of pearls and walk on streets of Gold in that heavenly Jerusalem!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.