

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

319- When Therefore Will These Things Happen?- Part 5- The Promise of Judgment- Part 3

July 10, 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

It is not enough for us to study the Words that came out of Jesus' Mouth. It is not enough for us to ponder what they might mean and to analyze them like we would some political speech, or discuss them like we would some history lesson. No! We must *love* what Jesus said. We must place such a high value on the Words of our Lord that we are willing to change to fit in with them.

So it is very important for us to understand that God is not to simply be *studied* and *pondered* and *discussed* and *analyzed*. No! In His Pristine Perfection, God is to be *adored*! In His Breathtaking Beauty, God is to be *proclaimed*! In His Unimaginable Purity, God is to be *delighted in*, and in His Blinding Glory, God is to be *heralded*!

We are saved, and God spoke so that we would be transfixed by Him and what He said. And so this effort every Sunday to exposit the Word of God from the Gospel of Luke is *not* an intellectual exercise or an academic discussion. I'm not giving you information so you can be smart about the Bible. No, that is what the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Scribes did as they rejected Jesus.

This is about seeing Jesus, about looking at Jesus, about knowing Jesus, and enjoying what you know. It is about loving the Man, Jesus Christ, and about so valuing what He said that all the other words from all the other people pale by comparison. *That* is what I am doing here Sunday after Sunday, and I pray that *that* is what you are doing as well.

Now, as I told you last week, 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.

And as we know now, approximately 40 years after Jesus spoke these words, the Roman Army descended down into Jerusalem and fulfilled all of Jesus’ Words here. And 40 years is a long time. But no matter how you slice it or dice it, there is simply no honest way to get 2,000 years or more out of this Statement by Jesus. 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 that in these 31 verses.

So 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, last week, we ended by looking at verses 12-15, and I want to begin this morning by looking again at those verses:

Luke 21:12-15

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.

Now as I said last week, the testimony that we have from early Church historians is that most Christians were practically pacifists back in the First Century. They were so conscious of *not* being included in the political and social terrorism that was being brought about by the many, many false messiahs that they very seldom, if ever, even defended themselves.

But we must understand the dynamic that was going on here. During the First Century, Palestine, or what was left of Israel, was a "client state" of Rome. They were wholly owned and governed by the Gentile Romans who *allowed* the Jews to practice *some*, but not all, of their religion. So the ruling Jews had to constantly get *permission* from the pagans to enforce their religious rules, which infuriated the average Jew who looked at the rulers as "sell-outs".

This created the great anger and bitterness that the average Jew had that not only were they being humiliated by the pagans, but that their leaders had sold them out. And this was the source of the many false messiahs rising up. Each one laid claim to being the "one" who was going to militarily defeat the pagans and drive them from the land that God gave them and restore Israel to its former glory.

Only it never worked out. So a man would rise up *claiming* to be the long awaited messiah, and he would gather followers that supported him, and then he would engage in assassinations, kidnappings, and other terrorist activities against the Romans to overthrow them, only to see the Romans respond by going through the towns trying to find him. And so these soldiers would search house to house, kicking in the doors in the middle of the night, and dragging Jewish men out to be tortured and killed. Eventually, they would catch the self-appointed messiah, put him on trial, and have him publicly killed. And these repeated defeats would *disillusion* the people because they could not understand why God wasn't fighting along with them. And then, another messiah would rise up, and the process would repeat itself.

But there were so many of these false messiahs that the Roman Government saw that the local Roman authorities and the Jewish rulers were fast losing control of the situation. And so they told them that if they could not restore order, the might and force of the Roman

Army would. So the local Roman authorities were afraid of failure and being replaced by the Roman Government, while the local Jewish rulers were constantly looking over their shoulder terrified that what little authority they had would soon be taken away.

The result was that both the local Roman authorities and the Jewish rulers joined together to begin a great persecution against all these various Jewish terrorist groups to silence them and bring an end to all this talk of restoring Israel. But, rather than fixing the situation, this only convinced the average Jew of two things:

- A. The Romans had to be destroyed
- B. The Jewish rulers had sold them out

... which did nothing but bring about an *increase* in the violence and chaos.

And so after a few years of this the Christians found themselves caught in the middle. We need to remember that the Jews looked at Christianity back then as being a cult and a *perversion* of Judaism. They saw any mention of the Deity of Jesus Christ as being blasphemy, and they looked down their noses at the followers of Jesus, convinced that their teachings would soon fade away. So the Jews called the followers of Jesus "christians", or "little christs", as a pejorative. And many Jewish leaders referred to the followers of Jesus as being "cannibals", because they talked about eating Christ's flesh and drinking His Blood at the Lord's Supper, while the Romans referred to followers of Jesus as "Atheists" because they worshipped only one God.

So the Christians were not safe with either the Jews or the Romans. And the Jews were eager to accuse the Christians of being the source of all the trouble because many of the false messiahs would run up into Galilee to hide from Roman retribution, and Jesus and many of His followers had come from Galilee. The result of all this was that great persecution came against the Church.

The Jews attacked the believers because of their hatred toward Jesus and what He taught, while the Romans attacked them trying to maintain order.

So, being completely Omniscient and *knowing* the future, as well as being Omnipotent and controlling the future, Jesus gives an amazing

Promise of horrendous suffering in verses 12-15. And in verse 13- our Lord also gave the reason behind this great persecution:

... **will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.**

And it is from this strange Promise by Jesus Himself that the Christian Church, very early on, developed a very powerful theology about "suffering" and "persecution" and "unfair treatment" at the hands of evil men, that many in the modern Church have either sadly not even heard of, or one that they have chosen to ignore or reject.

The Christian Church believed and taught that "suffering" and "persecution" and "unfair treatment" at the hands of evil men is, in fact, really nothing more than God sovereignly giving them an opportunity for a testimony as to the great Worth and Value and Treasure that Jesus really is.

How vastly different that Truth is from what is being propagated from many of the leaders of the modern Church! How strange this sounds to us today! We need to understand that with the proliferation of a false "Man-centered Theology", many in the modern Church honestly believe that the height of true spirituality is to *always* be "delivered" whenever they are persecuted, to *always* be "healed" whenever they are sick, and to *always* be "blessed" whenever they are oppressed.

Many false teachers of our day say that a sure testimony of God's Goodness and Favor toward His people are things like:

- ✓ Financial Security
- ✓ Physical Health
- ✓ Material Blessings

... but the early Church, based on the Teachings of the *real* Messiah, taught that the sure testimony of the Favor of God and the infinite Worth of Jesus are things like:

- ✓ Faithfulness in Persecution
- ✓ Fruitfulness in Sufferings
- ✓ Enduring Unfair Treatment at the hands of evil men without Murmuring or Complaining

How did we get so off base? And even though we can very easily see amazing hardship being faithfully endured by the vast majority of believers in other countries in our day, many within the comfort and safety of American laws and borders refuse to acknowledge an obvious fact, Jesus Christ *promised* persecution to those who follow Him.

And so while many within the American Church embrace a theology that says we should *avoid* hardship, at any cost, *including* turning *away* from Jesus and being *disobedient* to what Jesus taught, the early Christians developed a Teaching that said that we should learn how to:

- Live Well
- Suffer Well
- Die Well- to the Glory of God

In fact, Jesus says here that suffering and persecution would serve to further the Gospel being preached to every creature. So, from that, we must conclude that persecution and suffering and unfair treatment at the hands of evil men is *not* some failure on the part of believers to “bind the devil” or to speak “peace” into existence or a lack of faith, but rather the Will of God for His people and the fulfillment of the Promise by Jesus Himself.

Here, in these verses, Jesus promises three things:

1. You will be persecuted
2. This persecution would lead to an opportunity for a testimony
3. Jesus Himself will give you supernatural utterance and wisdom and that the evil ones will not be able to resist or refute.

So let's look at all three:

1. You will be persecuted

Luke 21:12b

... they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you...

Now it is very hard for most people to understand *why* God would allow evil men to hurt His Own people. Why would a Kind and Merciful Father *desire* that His children be hurt? Why doesn't He stop it? Why doesn't God intervene and either save the evil ones or force them to stop? What possible "Good" could ever come out of God's people being persecuted and treated unfairly? And yet we see that the overwhelming testimony of the overwhelming majority of all believers from every age and from every nation on earth is that God's children suffer, sometimes horrifically, and are persecuted on a regular basis.

But, because this runs so counter-intuitive to human nature, we have a great need to be taught what the Bible actually says about suffering, and to develop a theology about persecution and unfair treatment that is designed to honor God, and *not* merely to help us get out of it.

Now during a season of fasting and prayer several years ago, God burdened my heart to prepare this Church for suffering. It is my firm conviction that, barring any supernatural transformation, the course that this nation is going down will result in intense persecution against the American Church, the likes of which none of us have ever seen. We must understand that the days of Gospel persecution in the United States no longer hangs on the distant horizon, it is now here. It is beginning with business owners, the bakers, the florists, hobby shops, and the photographers, but it won't be long until it comes to the doors of the Church. And when that persecution comes, we will have but two choices:

- A. We will remain faithful to Jesus
- B. We won't

And so to begin the year of 2013, I preached a series of sermons on Suffering that gave us the biblical reasons why God allows His Own People to suffer at the hands of evil men, and you might want to get copies of those sermons. But, suffice it to say, there are at least four biblical reasons *why* suffering and persecution and unfair treatment at the hands of evil men is absolutely the Will of God for genuine believers:

1. **The Moral (Spiritual) Purpose:** because suffering refines our holiness and hope (**Romans 5:1–8**).

2. **The Intimacy Purpose:** because through our suffering- our relationship with Christ becomes deeper and sweeter (**Philippians 3:7–14**).
3. **The Missions Purpose:** because God calls us to *complete* Christ's Afflictions as we extend the Worth of His Suffering through the reality of our own (**Colossians 1:24**).
4. **The Glory Purpose:** because this slight, momentary affliction is working for us something called "an eternal weight of glory" (**2Corinthians 4:16–18**).

... and we went over those four reasons in great detail during that season here in this Church.

But today, I want to look very closely at this *particular* persecution that Jesus promises to that *particular* generation, who would not "pass away" until they saw the end of the reign of the Old Covenant.

Jesus promised them persecution and they received it from two sides:

1. Jewish religious rulers
2. Secular Roman Government

And so here in verse 13, Jesus said that both of these groups would attack the Church and wage war against it. And so Jesus said that the Secular Roman Government would haul the Christians before:

- Prisons
- Kings
- Governors

... while the ruling Jews would haul believers into the synagogues.

Now keep in mind that, while it is true, that there has *always* been persecution against Christians by secular governments, and it is true even today that there are ongoing persecutions against believers by false religions and even individual Jews. But, it is also true that only during the 40-year time frame, from immediately *after* the physical and bodily Resurrection of Jesus until the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, did the Jews have the governing *authority* to bring Christians into the

synagogues for persecution. So, once again this shows us that the correct context of this Passage is for those people back then and *not* for our future consideration.

So, the first thing that Jesus promised was that believers belonging to that particular generation would be persecuted.

2. This Persecution Would Lead to an Opportunity for a Testimony

Luke 21:13

It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.

So this is *not* "normal" persecution. This is *not* Christians being persecuted because they were part of the ongoing terrorist activity by these false messiahs. No, Jesus had told them in verse 8 not to join in with those men. This is persecution that was sovereignly *allowed* by God in order to facilitate a testimony. Now how do we know this? Look again at the last phrase in verse 12:

... for My name's sake.

So this is persecution from both the secular Roman Government and from the Jewish rulers for the sake of the Character and Reputation of Jesus Christ. So this persecution was to facilitate the testimony about Who Jesus is and what Jesus did and what Jesus said. So we need to know that this particular persecution was allowed by God to help facilitate the *establishment* of Christianity in the earth.

3. Jesus Himself will give you supernatural utterance and wisdom and that the evil ones will not be able to resist or refute.

Now there are many people today who use this very verse as reason why they *do not* and *will not* study the Bible or prepare for sermons. These people say that Jesus promised to give us the words they need to speak, therefore, there is no reason to study or prepare. There are even some people who teach that it is wrong- even *sinful* to study and prepare for sermons. These people teach that studying the Bible and preparing for sermons is relying on human wisdom and not relying on God the Holy Spirit.

To these people being “spontaneous” is the height of spirituality, while studying and being prepared is the height of carnality. They teach that you can’t “program” the Holy Spirit, and so we must remain open to the leading of God the Spirit as to how He may want to move in a particular Church service. So these people lay claim to be led by the Spirit as they simply get up and begin to say whatever the Spirit lays on their heart. I disagree.

Spontaneous= a performance or an occurrence resulting from a sudden inner impulse or inclination- without premeditation or any external stimulus.

So because these people lay claim to be filled with God’s Spirit, they operate in response to these “inner impulses” that they say are, in fact, God’s Will. So, to be led by the Spirit is seen as being infinitely more desirable than preparing to preach. Of course, these people are hard pressed to explain why so much of what they say never happens, *especially* since they say God the Holy Spirit told them to speak it. And they also find it difficult to explain why, if what they say is true, why so many of the New Testament writers *commanded* the leaders of the Church to study the Scriptures. So I would suggest that the opposite of being planned is *not* being spontaneous, but rather is simply chaotic.

But, aside to that, the first thing we need to understand is that **Luke 21:12-15** has nothing to do with studying the Bible or preparing for sermons or even a Church Service in the first place. So, this is not a choice between being spontaneous or being planned. This Passage is about Christians being persecuted by both Roman and Jewish authorities, and being thrown in jail and being put on trial for the sake of Christ’s Name.

And Jesus promises here that He will visit them in jail and supernaturally give them the words they are to speak to the magistrates and to the ruling authorities. And unlike many in the modern Church who lay claim to do this, what these believers will speak will be so right and so true and so in line with the already established Old Testament Truth that those evil men who have put these precious souls on trial will not be able to either resist what they say or refute it. And so, as the water of life flows out from the bellies of these anointed saints, the result will be that many of these people who

persecuted the Christians will be gripped with conviction and will be saved, precisely because of this marvelous Act of God.

This illustrates the length to which God goes to reach His elect. Some of these Romans and Jews have been chosen by God, from before the foundation of the world, to be saved. And in their wicked sin, they are now persecuting the Christians. And yet, the Hand of God is on them to save them. God has graciously set His Love on them to draw them to Jesus, and God has chosen to draw these people to Salvation by and through the suffering of genuine believers, at their hands!

And probably the best example of the fulfillment of what Jesus was promising here, in supernaturally giving a persecuted believer the words to speak at his trial for the sake of the Name of Jesus in putting forth a testimony to save a wicked sinner, was recorded for us in **The Acts 6**; please turn there with me, **The Acts 6**.

The Acts 6:8-15

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

9 But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, *including* both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

10 But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and *against* God."

12 And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council.

13 They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law;

14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

15 And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

So, here Stephen is being persecuted. And he is being brought up by the Jewish authorities in the synagogue to be tried for blasphemy. Verses 13b-14 tells us why Stephen is being tried:

**13... This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law;
14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place
and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."**

So, now the Promise of Jesus in **Luke 21** is going to be fulfilled, and Stephen is now going to be used by God to bring a division between those whom God has chosen for Salvation and those who have not been chosen. And now Jesus, and the Spirit of Jesus, is visiting Stephen and is giving him the words to speak that the evil men cannot find fault with, and that the ones God has chosen for Salvation will not be able to resist.

And the evidence that this was not a normal testimony, or even a normal sermon, is that God has so moved upon Stephen that even his face looks like an angel, and everybody sees it! Now read **The Acts 7:**

The Acts 7:1-53

1 The high priest said, "Are these things so?"

2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

3 and said to him, '*LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.*'

4 "Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, *God* had him move to this country in which you are now living.

5 "But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that *HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM.*

6 "But God spoke to this effect, that his *DESCENDANTS WOULD BE ALIENS IN A FOREIGN LAND, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS.*

7 " '*AND WHATEVER NATION TO WHICH THEY WILL BE IN BONDAGE I MYSELF WILL JUDGE,*' said God, '*AND AFTER THAT THEY WILL COME OUT AND SERVE ME IN THIS PLACE.*'

8 "And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so *Abraham* became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac *became the father of Jacob*, and Jacob *of the twelve patriarchs.*

9 "The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. *Yet* God was with him,
10 and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household.
11 "Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction *with it*, and our fathers could find no food.
12 "But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers *there* the first time.
13 "On the second *visit* Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh.
14 "Then Joseph sent *word* and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons *in all*.
15 "And Jacob went down to Egypt and *there* he and our fathers died.
16 "*From there* they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.
17 "But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt,
18 until *THERE AROSE ANOTHER KING OVER EGYPT WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT JOSEPH*.
19 "It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive.
20 "It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home.
21 "And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son.
22 "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.
23 "But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.
24 "And when he saw one *of them* being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian.
25 "And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.

26 "On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?'

27 "But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, '*WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US?*'

28 '*YOU DO NOT MEAN TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU?*'

29 "At this remark, *MOSES FLED AND BECAME AN ALIEN IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN*, where he became the father of two sons.

30 "After forty years had passed, *AN ANGEL APPEARED TO HIM IN THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNT Sinai, IN THE FLAME OF A BURNING THORN BUSH*.

31 "When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he approached to look *more* closely, there came the voice of the Lord:

32 '*I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AND JACOB.*' Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look.

33 "*BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM, 'TAKE OFF THE SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND.*

34 '*I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT AND HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANS, AND I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM; COME NOW, AND I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT.*'

35 "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, '*WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?*' is the one whom God sent *to be* both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush.

36 "This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.

37 "This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, '*GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.*'

38 "This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and *who was* with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you.

39 "Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt,

40 *SAYING TO AARON, 'MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT — WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.'*

41 "At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

42 "But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, '*IT WAS NOT TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?*'

43 '*YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.*'

44 "Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it according to the pattern which he had seen.

45 "And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David.

46 "*David* found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.

47 "But it was Solomon who built a house for Him.

48 "However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says:

49 '*HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET; WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?*' says the Lord, '*OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE?*'

50 '*WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?*'

51 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

52 "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;

53 you who received the law as ordained by angels, and *yet* did not keep it."

Now, I would suggest to you that the only reason that Stephen could basically summarize the entire Old Testament here is because these Truths were already *in* him to begin with. Like all good Jews of his day, Stephen had been raised hearing these stories and he had been taught the Word of God from the time he was a child.

So God the Holy Spirit was *not* giving Stephen *new* information here; He was simply taking the information that Stephen *already* had in his mind and heart and letting it flow out from Stephen in a miraculous way that was designed by God to bring both hatred and conviction. Now look at their response.

Luke 7:54-60

54 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him.

55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse.

58 When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

Now right in the middle of all this was a young Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus, who had trained at the feet of the wise Jewish rabbi, Gamiliel. And Dr. Luke was faithful to tell us in **The Acts 7:58**:

When they had driven him out of the city, they *began* stoning *him*; and he witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

... showing that, in this case, Saul was not merely present at the persecution of Stephen, he was the Pharisee in charge. And then the Bible says in **The Acts 8:1**:

Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

So Saul had personally given the “thumbs down” signal to stone to death one of the first deacons in the Christian Church, a man named Stephen. But as this evil religious hypocrite watched Stephen die, Dr. Luke gives us this description of what Saul saw:

The Acts 6:15b

... all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

The Acts 7:55-56

55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

56 and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

The Acts 7:59-60

59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on *the Lord* and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

... Paul saw and heard all this.

Now keep in mind what we have already found out about Dr. Luke. Luke was a Gentile medical professional who was not saved until *after* the Lord had risen from the dead. Luke was chosen to write because he was highly educated and possessed a brilliant mind that was gifted to be able to grasp profound Truths and lay them out with simplicity. And it was the Apostle Paul who personally commissioned Luke to pen down his two Books, **The Gospel of Luke** and **The Book of the Acts of the Apostles**.

And we found out that Luke personally interviewed many of the eyewitnesses of the Accounts that he wrote in these two books, including the mother of Jesus, which is why Luke's Gospel contains information that no other Book has. And he tells us in his introduction why he was so detailed and so accurate:

Luke 1:1-4

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,

- 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,**
3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;
4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

... and as we found out, these four verses were written in Classical Greek rather than the normal Koine Greek, indicating that both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of the Acts was an official and formal *transcript* that could not only be studied and read and believed, but which could also be used in a court of law and be used as an official historical record.

So the Apostle Paul commissioned Dr. Luke to write this two volume work to a Roman dignitary, named Theophilus, so that he and all of us would:

... know the exact truth about the things you have been taught

And one of the people that Luke interviewed was the man who commissioned him to write this book in the first place, Paul. And this is why Luke goes into such detail here. The Apostle Paul was giving Luke the details about what had happened on that day when he, as a lost Pharisee, had given the "thumbs down" to have Stephen martyred.

Now the Scriptures don't say this specifically, but what Saul of Tarsus saw in Stephen that day and what he heard Stephen speak that day would have been very hard to forget. And so it is very possible that this was *part* of what eventually brought this wicked religious fraud to Salvation. And that is why Luke wrote the details of this account down for us here.

And so, *part* of the reason why Jesus tells those believers on that day in **Luke 21** that they would be persecuted and that He would give them the words they would speak was so that the greatest Evangelist and Missionary that the Church has ever known, the Apostle Paul, would be gripped with conviction as he authorized the murder of Stephen.

And even though he tried to forget it and push it out of his mind, God was working on this man. And later on, as he traveled down the

road to Damascus to receive permission to persecute the Christians even more, Jesus personally visited Paul and knocked him off his horse and blinded him and spoke directly to him. And Jesus sent this evil Jewish ruler, who had murdered in the name of his demonically inspired religion, to a humble believer named Annanias to be saved.

So we need to realize, dear friends, that even when it looks like all is lost, and even when it looks like evil will triumph, and even when it looks like the Church will surely be destroyed, we need to take heart and realize that God has the evil ones right where He wants them, and they have never and they will never be in charge. God is Sovereign, and God is using the evil and the persecution and the unfair treatment to bring about the fulfillment of His Will on the earth!

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.