

The Admiration of Desolation

Luke 21:5-6

February 18, 2024

Well, as we enter into our study of Luke's Gospel and return to it, we come to a fascinating section called the Olivet Discourse. Which you'll find in Luke 21, if you could turn to Luke 21 in your bibles, Luke 21:5 and following is the section that we're entering into. This is known as the Olivet Discourse because that's where he taught this, on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, overlooking the Temple.

Luke in his account here does not tell us that Jesus is on the Mount of Olives. We, we actually know about the location from the other two synoptic writers, Matthew and Mark. Luke in his account, he's intentional, he doesn't just leave it out. He's intentional about not including ah where Jesus is at this moment because he's keeping our attention, keeping the focus and the flow of the narrative, focused on the Temple itself.

The spiritual condition of Israel as emblematic or symbolic in the Temple is a theme in Luke's Gospel, especially as we get into these final chapters. But even as we go from the final chapters of Luke and into the beginning of Acts, we're going to find the Temple is a featured location. So that's why Luke keeps our attention on the Temple.

But he is teaching this portion of scripture, this portion of his discourse on the Mount of Olives. What I'd like to do for this morning, as we enter into a kind of a longer study, is a ah kind of start with a slow roll through the chapter. Just so we can, as a church, kind of get a basic sense of this, because we're going to be studying this together. We're going to be getting a familiar with the contents of Luke 21 and it's going to take us quite some time. So as you continue to turn to Luke 21 over the coming weeks and months, a you're going to develop a little crease in your Bible there where it's just going to fall open to that section of Scripture. Ah And ah but you're going to really appreciate the things that Jesus has to teach us out of this wonderful, wonderful chapter.

So we're going to get ah do a slow roll through the chapter, get the basic sense, and then we'll wade into the first couple of verses. We're going to start our reading not in Luke 21, but in Luke 20, end of Luke 20, in verse 45. Now we could have started reading back in chapter 19, but we've got a lot, lot to cover. I'd love to start in chapter 19 at Jesus' coronation procession, as Jesus in his procession to be coronated as King of Israel. He's fulfilling prophecy in almost every step. He's David's greater son, he enters Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey. So, so much imagery that we've already covered.

But as Jesus is on that coronation procession, as he descends from the Mount of Olives and goes down in the Kidron Valley to go up back up into Jerusalem. We see that as Jesus draws near, people are cheering his arrival. They're hailing him as the coming king, they're praising God. But we noted how Jesus, his mind, and his heart is in a very different direction, than the rest of the crowd around him. He's feeling an opposite sentiment that they are. They're celebrating and cheering, but he his heart, is breaking. He knows the fickleness of this

crowd, that this moment, they're cheering, but in less than a week's time, they're going to be jeering.

They're going to be calling for his blood, he knows the fickleness of the crowd, he knows the sinfulness of the leaders who will lead them into the crucifixion of their own Messiah, and so Jesus can't help as he moves through the crowd. He can't help but see the judgement that is coming. And that's what evokes the lament that we read about in Luke 19:41-44. The lament with the corresponding word of judgement that is encapsulated there, but is unpacked here in Luke 21, at the end of chapter 19, as we've seen, Jesus goes straight into the temple. He goes there to cleanse the temple, as we have covered. He casts out the, the robbers who are wearing religious garb. And he does that so that he can cleanse the temple, so he can preach and teach, so he can minister to the people, so he can reveal God to the people and restore the temple to its original design into its true purpose.

The response to this spiritual cleansing, the response to his ministry of teaching and preaching, teaching truth to the people, preaching the gospel to the people. Ah we find out also that they were bringing their sick to him and he was laying his hands on them and healing them. All this gospel ministry going on in the heart of the temple, where once there was a cacophony of marketplace buying, selling, changing money, the lowing of cattle and all those things going on in the temple courts. Now there's pure, unadulterated ministry of the gospel to the people. And in response, he didn't even get a thank you. He wasn't praised by the temple leaders, he wasn't appreciated by them, no repentance took place, no confession of sin before him, no worship. Instead, Jesus was opposed by the relig, religious author religious authorities, he was confronted by several groups of religious leaders all through chapter 20, as we studied that.

They tried to bait him, lure him into little traps that they'd set for him to so they might discredit Jesus before the people and completely undermine him and expose him as a fraud and false. So as we come to the end of chapter 20, the section I want to start in verse 45. Jesus is condemning the religious

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heart of the nation, and this temple surrounding him is evidence of everything that's gone wrong. There's a spirit that animates this temple and it is not the spirit of God, it is not the spirit of truth of righteousness.

Take a look at the text Luke 20:45, "While all the people were listening, he said to the disciples, beware of the scribes, who want to walk around in long robes and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets. But who devour widows' houses and for appearances sake they offer long prayers. Well, these, these will receive the greater condemnation." The men he's talking about here, the scribes, beneath their religious garb, the men who are publicly recognized, admired, and noticed and revered. These men who are studied and scholarly, multiple degrees, letters and credentials behind their names.

These are the very men who had turned God's temple, which is intended as a house of prayer for all the nations. They had turned this temple into a den of robbers and the scribes are the ones who live in the den, they are the robbers. These are not

the robin hood kind of robbers, likable scoundrels who steal for the rich and give to the poor. These are rapacious wolves, devouring widow's houses, and is it as if on cue, Jesus having taken rest sitting down, he looks up and he sees a robbery in progress. Look at the first part of chapter 21, "He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and he saw a poor widow putting in two lepta," two mites, two tiny little coins.

And he said, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them, for they all put in their gifts out of their abundance. But she, out of what she lacked, put in all that she had to live on." He's no way commending the situation, he's noticing the disparity, he's noticing how much this temple squeezes out of people. And then everything that's built on the foundation of the temple mount and built upward from the temple mount is built on the backs of widows and rich people. And by this point, as we being readers of Luke's Gospel, we're picking up what he's laying down, aren't we?

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We're the corruption of these religious leaders here, so painfully obvious. They're running these profiteering enterprises in the temple. They're ignoring his righteous rebuke, the correction that Jesus is bringing, the teaching that he brings instead of falling on their knees before him and repenting, confessing all their sins, saying "I'm the man, I'm guilty, please forgive me." They oppose him at every opportunity, they try in vain to discredit him. And now as we see how deep this corruption goes, how, how broadly this corruption goes as they're profiting and taking advantage of the most vulnerable members of society, like these helpless widows.

As they're building their religious empire, and all these edifices cloaked all in unabashed hypocrisy. As we read all this, as we see all this from the perspective of our Lord Jesus Christ, man, our hearts are crying out for justice, aren't they? We're demanding that something be done. That's what's evoked from us, is this sense of justice, this demand that God do something. What about the disciples? What frame of mind are they in at this moment? Look at verse five, they're talking about the temple, how it's adorned with beautiful stones and gifts that

have been dedicated to the temple. They're looking at rocks, they're looking at gifts, they're looking at beauty.

In Mark 13:1 parallel passage, Mark quotes him as saying, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones." "I know we've just watched the robbery of a widow, but look what wonderful stones, what great buildings," you kidding me? Maybe if you're like me, you're reacting all to all this, your blood is boiling a bit. You lament with our Lord over the people, scattered as they are, like sheep without a shepherd. You're appalled at this heartlessness and the callousness of Israel's shepherds. You think that all good and godly people would be of the same mind, but not the disciples, not at this moment. They're in a different frame of mind, after all, things are really looking up for them.

I mean, Jesus has just reclaimed the temple. He's no longer in some remote backwater of the land somewhere running around the hills of Galilee. He's finally getting the teaching in the most public place possible. He's getting the acclaim and the notoriety that he's deserved all along. People are finally

getting it, seeing him for who he is. It's time of the Passover, so the crowds are massive, hundreds of thousands have swollen the city, the population of Jerusalem, and the people are loving Him, especially as he's putting the leaders in their place.

So as the disciples look around the temple, admiring the architecture, marveling of the stones are really and frankly we can sympathize with this, we will sympathize with this in a moment. They they're in awe of all these displays of Jewish wealth and power, signs of permanence, and the disciples are ready to move in, get comfortable, rule from Jerusalem with Messiah from his temple. Once again facing the dullness of the disciples, our Lord doesn't respond as we, we might be tempted to respond, he doesn't respond with a stern rebuke. Instead, He corrects them gently and lovingly, by teaching them further.

He starts by contradicting the expectation in the hope of every Jew, including these disciples, by predicting the temple's destruction, and he tells them plainly in verse 6. "As for these things which you're looking at, the days will come in which shall wil there will not be left one stone upon another which

will not be torn down." So they question him saying, "Teacher, When, therefore will these things happen and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?"

It's dawning on them that they'd all expected and hoped for the restoration of Israel, but it's not going to happen right now. It's not going to happen on the timetable that they had come to expect. And so if we want to create a little outline as we move through kind of a large kind of overarching outline for this chapter. What we call this verses 5 to 7 is really the occasion for the Olivet Discourse. If you want to jot, if you like to take notes, you can jot this down. This won't be the outline for the sermon, this is the introduction, sort of. But the occasion for the Olivet Discourse is verses 5 to 7.

And that leads to the prediction in verses 8 to 28, followed by the exhortation in verses 29 to 36. And then at the end of the chapter, we come to the conclusion in verses 37 to 38. So that's really how we outline chapter 21, verses 5 to 38, The occasion verses, 5 to 7, the prediction verses 8 to 28, the exhortation, verses 29 to 36, and the conclusion verses 37 to

38. Let's read on, so we can just kind of again get the fullest scope that we can of this amazing prophecy. The prediction section starts in verse eight with a prediction about the far future, and then he comes back to a prediction about the nearer future and then back to the far future.

So, the prediction starts with the far future, verses 8 through 11, he said verse 8. "See to it that you're not deceived, for many will come in my name saying I am he and the time is at hand. Do not go after them, when you hear of wars and disturbances. Do not be terrified, for these things must take place first. But the end does not come immediately." And then he continued saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and Kingdom against Kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes and in various places famines and plagues, and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven." Now he's waded into the prediction here, and then Jesus dials back a bit to talk about the near future in verses 20:12 to 24. Notice how he begins in verse 12 with a time reference.

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"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. It'll result in an opportunity for you for your testimony. So set in your hearts not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. That you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your perseverance you will gain your lives.

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that it's desolation is at hand. And 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 countryside must not enter into the city, because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. Woe to those who are pregnant, to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath against this people. 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.”

That section ends with a prediction of imminent destruction in Jerusalem's near future, very similar to the one that Jesus gave in Luke 19:43 to 44. But there are some differences in the predictions of Jerusalem's destruction there in Matthew and Mark, and then this one in Luke, and we'll note those in due course. But notice at the end of verse 24, Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. He pivots, doesn't he? And another time reference, he returns to the far future. Once again Luke's account returns to track with Matthew and Mark, and the trampling of the Jerusalem by Gentiles nations continues. And it continues until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

Another time reference, and then verse 25. And then after that time, as he says in verse 25 far future, “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth, anguish among nations, in perplexity, at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which

are coming upon the world. But the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up, lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

That's how this long section of predictive prophecy ends with a word of hope for the Jewish nation, for the Jewish people. As the second coming means judgment for the nations, but it means salvation for those who, according to Matthew 23:39, those who say, “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” They will not see him until they say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” the son of man then returns to redeem these his people.

So, it's on this triumphant note, we come to verses 29 to 36, which is a concluding section of exhortation. Now that he's given this predictive prophecy of coming trouble and tribulation and judgement. Now he pivots and tells them, here's the so what? Here's what you do about this and told him a parable, verse 29 “Behold the fig tree,” and really all the trees; “as soon as

they put forth leaves and you see it for yourselves, you know that summer is now near. So, you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.

“Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. But be on guard, so that your hearts will not be overcome with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life. And that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who inhabit the face of all the earth. Keep on the alert at all times, praying earnestly that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Tucked into that section of exhortation is probably one of the most difficult verses in Luke's Gospel to interpret, which is verse 32. “Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.” That verse is an eschatological watershed, which we'll explain once again in due course as we move through the text. Then we come to Luke's

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conclusion in the Olivet Discourse, but notice in this exhortation section how he's calling all generations of those who are believers, all the faithful, all the redeemed, no matter what time they live, and it's been 2000 years since he's ascended into heaven.

And we are still to live this way, to be on our guard, that worldliness and dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life do not overtake us, do not dull our minds and dull our thinking and dull our hearts. But we're to be on the alert at all times. We're always have to have one eye cast toward heaven and one eye toward the earth, as we live and move and have our being in the world around us, but we're always looking for the return of our Savior.

We're praying earnestly, we always are walking faithfully, making no provision for the flesh, but always giving ourselves to the ministry of the word and The Gospel and following the great commission to make disciples of all the nations. We pray that we will have the strength to escape all the things that are about to come upon the rest of the world. And we come to Luke's

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conclusion for the Olivet discourse in verses 30, 37, 38, noting and noting Jesus habit, as Luke does here, of spending the night on the Mount of Olives, Luke is setting up what's about to happen, because that's where the temple police led by Judas Iscariot, That's where they will find Jesus is on the Mount of Olives in the Garden of or get the foot of the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane.

But notice how it looks, conclusion how it starts and ends once again with a focus on the temple. Now during the day he was teaching, where in the temple, but during the night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives or the Mount called "of Olives." And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to him again in the temple to listen to him," starts and ends with a focus on the temple. And that's what Luke wants our minds to be focused on. That's the setting that he really wants us to picture all the time, because all this has to do with the Messiah coming to his temple and preaching truth.

We're right back where we started, Jesus is teaching in the temple early in the morning until the evening. And now we know

for certain, because of what we've just read, that this Temple where He is standing will soon be reduced to rubble, before the final restoration of the Jews, judgement will come upon them, because they've rejected their Messiah. So why is it then that the disciples are so enthralled with the stones and the gifts and everything that adorns the Temple? Why is it that they're so caught up in what's around them in their material settings? Why are they so impressed with the external? Well, we probably don't need to look any further than ourselves to realize how easy it is to get caught up in the externals and the superficial and the material things.

All that's around us, right? We do the same thing, don't we? Then what's going on here? That's really what our focus is, what's what we're after here today, so back to the occasion, back to the beginning of the chapter, Olivet Discourse. We're going to cover the occasion of the Olivet Discourse in two points. First, number one. A mistake in admiration, a mistake in admiration, starting with the words of the disciples in verse 5, "While some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts." And then the main verb comes in at the very end. He said, OK, so the main verb of verse

5 is, he said, so it's pointing us on to verse 6. But before we get to what Jesus said, we need to find out what is it that gave rise to what he said. It's what's the occasion. It's while some were talking about the temple, that's what the conversations about.

They're talking about the temple. It's adorned in beautiful stones, votive gifts, they're having that conversation. Let's stop there, so we can talk about the temple, talk about its stones. We remember in our reading of scripture that the, the Babylonians destroyed the first temple, Solomon's temple, the original one, back in 586 BC, prior to Solomon building that temple, you understand that the Jews went to the tabernacle to worship. The tabernacle was basically a, a glorified tent, I bet it was a well glorified tent. I mean, the directions for its construction and all its adornment was given by heaven, by God himself to Moses on the mountain they built, the tabernacle wandered through the wilderness, entered in the promised land.

The Tabernacle moved from in a couple places in Israel's history until David brought the Tabernacle to himself, to the

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city of David, to Mount Moriah, to this location. Well, David was a man of war, a man of bloodshed. And so God said, "Even though David, you have a heart to build this temple for me, you want to build a house for me? I, I think that's a good impulse, but you're not the man, you're the man of bloodshed, the man of warfare, your son, Solomon, Solomon his name means peace, remember, your son Solomon.

He's the one who's going to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, and he will be a king of peace. His Kingdom will be a Kingdom of peace. I'm going to give him rest from all his enemies and allow wealth production to occur in Jerusalem in order that he can build the temple for my name or place for me to dwell. Well, Solomon built that temple, it was glorious, it was a splendor. It was a place that the Jews took pride in and rejoiced in, and then departed from almost instantly. In their hearts they departed into idolatry, so God sent the judgement of the Babylonians, successive judgements 605, 597 and 586 BC, destroying the temple and Jerusalem in 586.

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After the decree of Cyrus, you remember after the Is Israel had been exiled after he Cyrus, the Persian decreed the return of the Jews in 538 BC, they returned to the land the Jews did to start rebuilding the temple. And then 70 years after its destruction in 586, the Temple was completed in 516 BC and then dedicated to the service of the Lord, that temple, the rebuild temple. Obviously for those Jews returning to the land, being exiled and, and having their noses rubbed in Pagan worship in the lands that they lived in, and longing for and lamenting and ruing all their judgement and longing to return to the land of Israel to their own temple and their own worship which God had given them from heaven.

Well, it was an occasion in that rebuilt temple to praise God. The temple itself that they built was a mere shadow of its former glory, it was not as impressive as Solomon's Temple. In fact, when the builders laid the foundation of the temple, there was a mixed reaction of praising and weeping. Remember Ezra, 3:11 and following, says "Many priests and Levites and heads of fathers households." All the old men, all those gray hairs who had seen the first temple, they "were weeping with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes,

while many were shouting for joy." So, the people couldn't distinguish, the sound of the shout of joy from the sound of weeping, is mixed together.

Ever since then, from the fifth century, all the way to the first century BC, the rebuilt temple had a checkered history at best, checkered in its spiritual devotion. Many were still caught up in all kinds of sin, there's a lot of conquests as the Greeks ruled throughout that area. One notable incident of disgrace was when the Greek ruler Antiochus the fourth called Antiochus Epiphanes. He was king of Syria, and he came in and captured Jerusalem in 167 BC, came into the temple itself, and committed sacrilege in the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar of God, to his God, Zeus, showing the dominance of Zeus over Yahweh.

Violent uprisings ensued, as you might imagine, but this temple was a place of controversy and bloodshed and pain and sadness. It was a, as I said, a shadow of its former glory, Herod the Great came to power, when he came to power in, he came to power first in 47 BC as King of Galilee, as kind of over the

Galilee. But then he really came into full authority over the whole region in 36 BC, put there by the Roman Senate. The, the Jews looked at Herod with suspicion as a puppet of Rome, rightly understanding he's a client king of Rome.

He was half Jewish and he was half Idumaeen. Idumaeen is a word for Edomite. So, he was kind of a mixed blood man, but he was always favoring his Jewish side, so to speak, seeing himself as the legitimate ruler of the Jews. Hoping that they would appreciate him, love him, accept him, receive him. He was really, I think, sincere in his attempts at first anyway, to win Jewish favor. And Herod was always a great builder, amazing building projects, lots of money improving the city, beautifying the city, building things to honor those who had lifted him up, but also benefiting the land. And the greatest project of his lifetime, and the one which really did win him Jewish favor, was this project, to rebuild, to fortify, to broaden, to strengthen and beautify the temple.

When Herod announced this project, during the time of his rule, before it even started, when he announced the project to

the Jews, when he came out with it publicly about his plans, the Jews were understandably a bit nervous at this half breed. This usurper to the true throne of the Jews and he would monkey with their religion, and he would put his defiled hands to the work that he would do anything good, so they were not happy. He really had to try to win them over, he tried to provide them with assurances of his sincerity, and that's what he did in a speech that was delivered around 20 or 19 BC before he commenced the work, in 19 BC, he gave this speech. Josephus records it, and I'm going to read a good portion of it for you so you can hear a politician of a different age and how they all sound the same.

Herod says this, "I imagine that with God's assistance, I have advanced the nation of the Jews to a degree of happiness which they never had before, and for the particular edifices, So the buildings belonging to your own country and your own cities, and also those cities that we have lately acquired, which we have erected and greatly adorned and thereby augmented the dignity of your nation. It seems to me a needless task to enumerate them to you, since you well know them yourselves." It's a humble brag, so what we call that humble brag.

"But as to that ever undertaking which I have a mind to set about at present, and which will be a work of the greatest piety and excellence than can possibly be undertaken by us, I will now declare it to you. Our fathers indeed, when they were returned from Babylon, built this temple to God Almighty." Yet it does not want it means it, doesn't it? It, it or he said it does want it does lack, he says, it does lack 60 cubits of its largeness in altitude. That is, he's saying it's not tall enough, 60 cubits is 90 feet. He's saying it's a pretty it's a pretty paltry excuse for a temple, for so much. Did that first temple which Solomon built exceed this temple?

And then Herod goes on from here, which I'm not going to recite for the sake of time. But he goes on to cite the, the reason that the fathers were not able to build up to the standard of Solomon's temple, not able to come back to that former glory because, well, how could they? Because they were subjugated by the Greeks all that time. They just didn't have the means and the opportunity. That's the reason they could do no better, so he's being gracious.

He's given actually a good, accurate explanation, it's true, and he continues, "But since I am now," get this, "by God's will, since I am now by God's will, your governor and I have had peace a long time, and have gained great riches and large revenues. And what is the principal thing of all I am in amity," that is friendship with, "and well regarded by the Romans, who, if I may so say, are the rulers of the whole world. I will do my endeavor to correct that imperfection which hath arisen from the necessity of our affairs and the slavery we have been under formerly, and to make a thankful return after the most pious manner to God, for what blessings I have received from him, by giving me this kingdom, and that by rendering his temple as complete as I am able," end quote.

Wouldn't you like to have that guy as your president? Honestly, he's not too dissimilar from some rulers we know now, right? Claiming divine prerogative, divine direction, using God talk to win the masses, claiming they rule by divine favor, operating under a divine commission. But listen, this Herod, he's a little bit different than our politicians. Herod the Great was a king, not a president. He didn't have a congress to

wrestle with, holding the power of the purse. He didn't have judges to stand in his way, he just did what he wanted to do, and he came through. He kept his word, this building project started in 19 BC and it continued all the way to AD 64. I mean, talk about keeping your word over the long haul, outlasted his own death, turns out Herod was very sincere.

Josephus says this, that Herod got ready a thousand wagons that were to bring stones for the building and chose out ten thousand of the most skillful workmen and brought a thousand sacerdotal garments for as many of the priests, and had some of them taught the arts of stone cutters, others of carpenters, and then he began to build. That is to say, he chose priests to be his workmen, he didn't want defiled hands and pagans to corrupt the work. Interesting, he had such piety and concern, so Herod's builders started by expanding the temple mount, expanding the area of the temple mount, doubling in size to approximately 36 acres. That's basically we're 10 acres on this property, so take this property three times and more over, 40 acres some say.

It was an incredible feat of engineering to level this area, raise up the slopes by back filling with thousands of tons of rock and dirt and rubble. His engineers cut and quarried massive stones to construct huge retaining walls and build the walls of the temple more than 150 feet high. So, when someone is pointing out here in Luke 21:5, the stones of the temple, the Greek term is *lithos kalos*, the word *kalos*. There is a word for good, but it, depending on the context it can be translated in a number of ways. It can be translated as beautiful or as the ESV does noble. The King James renders it as as goodly stones, all those descriptions do fit. But if the good stones refer to these foundation stones, or these massive stones that are cut by cut from a nearby quarry for retaining walls, it's not about as much about their beauty as it is about their quality and their size and their strength.

Noble stones, expertly cut, quarried, well engineered, shaped and fit in perfectly by stone masons. The parallel in Mark's Gospel, the disciples exclaimed, "Teacher, look what massive stones, what tremendous stones." Once those massive stones are set in place, once the temple mount is levelled off and there's a, a platform for building up higher. Herod's

engineers used massive white marble stones to build the temple complex and all the surrounding Portico's in the buildings of the temple. The outer courtyard of the temple, five hundred by four hundred yards, so that's five football fields, let's put this in American terms, right, five football fields by four football fields, that's a lot of space.

Temple walls, as I said, 150 foot high, and they encompass the courtyard of the temple and in the middle of the courtyard, the sanctuary in the holy place and the holy of holies within that, and that rose another hundred 50 feet from the floor of the temple mount, 150 feet in the air. This ceiling, Brett told me, is 28 feet high, just about 30 feet, so imagine five times this height, that's the height of the sanctuary of the temple. That's the height of the walls going from the temple down to the temple or down to the floor. These stone masons cut, quarried white marble stones, fit them expertly throughout the temple.

Josephus says some of the stones, there measured 30 even feet long, 12 feet high, 18 feet wide. These panels over here I think are like ten feet, the back ones are 12 feet or 14 feet.

So those are 12 feet high, 18 feet wide, 37 feet long, each stone weighed more than a million pounds. If you've ever seen the pyramids, you kind of scratch your head and say, how did that happen? And it's the same feat of engineering here in Herod's temple, how they accomplish this, tremendous stones, massive stones. Alfred Plummer says, here were other stones also that evoked wondered amazement, he says, quote, "The columns of the cloister or the portico were monoliths."

So, what's a monoliths? A monoliths is a single stone, monoliths of marble over forty feet high, forty feet high, twenty eight feet go up another twelve feet, that high of columns, single stone of marble. These columns were so big in circumference that three men with their exten, arms extended around the column were barely able to touch each other's fingers, massive. So, the admiration of these stones is not out of place, it's pretty warranted, isn't it? You can understand how they're impressed to the first to the massive size of the stones, points to the stability of the foundation, the strength of all its walls and all its structures, and therefore the strength and stability points to the temple's permanence, nothin' bringing this place down.

This place is not going anywhere, Tacitus, the Roman historian, wrote a few decades later, the temple was a few decades later, after the destruction of the temple. He said, "The Temple was built like a citadel, with its walls of its own, which were constructed with more care and effort than any of the rest, the very colonnades a roundabout, the temple made a splendid defense." As we go back to Luke 21:5, we see that Luke also emphasizes the wealth and the beauty of the temple. He says it's adorned with with beautiful stones and with votive gifts. What's a votive gift? Votive is a word that refers to a voluntary vow, a religious vow that's taken and accompanying the vow. A gift is, is a gift dedicated to the temple that memorializes that vow, that gives kind of meaning to it, significance to it and anybody can say something, but someone who says something makes a vow but then actually takes, a portion of his income to buy a particular gift and dedicate to the temple.

And every time he comes into the temple he sees his gift there and was reminded of his vow. Significant vows adorned the temple, vo, vow offerings or votive offerings. These offerings,

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gifts, decorating the temple included gold and silver plated gates, gold plated doors, metal plating that flashed in the sun. Some of the guys who've went and took down Saddam Hussein, Baghdad, Iraq, they went to the temple palace and found gold plated weapons. OK, a, a few guns, pistols and such, ok, whatever. Gold plated gates, silver plated gates, gold plated doors, metal plating all around in the temple, that's a lot of gold, that's a lot of silver, that's a lot of money.

Josephus says, "The first rising of the sun reflected back a very fiery splendor." You can imagine that light hits, that gold made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away. Just as they would have done at the sun's own rays. This temple appeared to strangers when they were at a distance, like a mountain, covered with snow. Those parts that are not gilt, gilded, a gilded with gold and silver, were exceedingly white. Why, because of the marble. Josephus also tells us about the adornment inside the temple. We've heard about, probably read about the famous gold vine dedicated by Herod, grape clusters on that vine, snaking through the temple with clusters as tall as a man six foot or more in height.

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Babylonian curtain was dedicated there, embroidered with blue, fine linen, scarlet, purple, a contexture that was truly wonderful. So, it's really o impossible for us to imagine fully, but it's impossible for us also to overstate the temple's beauty. It really was the envy of the ancient world. It's impossible to imagine, how imposing this place was, rising hundreds of feet in the air, casting shadows on the Mount of Olives to the east. Edersheim, though, who paints the picture for us as Jesus and the disciples leave Jerusalem and take their evening rest on this particular occasion.

Edersheim says, "They had left the sanctuary in the city, had crossed Black Kidron, and we're slowly climbing the Mount of Olives, a sudden turn in the road and the sacred building was once more in view, and just then the western sun was pouring his golden beams on tops of marble cloister and on the terraced courts, and the glittering on the golden spikes on the roof of the holy place, in the setting even more than the rising sun. Thus the vast proportions, the symmetry and the sparkling sheen of this mass of snowy marble and gold have stood out gloriously. Across the black valley and up the slopes of Olivet lay the dark

shadows of these gigantic walls built of massive stones, some of them nearly 24 feet long." End Quote.

That's the scene that evokes the disciple's admiration of this place, "Teacher, what massive stones, what wonderful stones." Luke tells us, as I mentioned, it's while some were talking about the temple, it's while they're admiring how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones, adorned with votive gifts. This is the point that Jesus interrupted and interjected.

So, we come to a second point in our outline which will fill in more fully next time, number two a certain desolation. So, we've got number one a mistaken admiration. Now we've got number two a certain desolation. Again, it's while some were talking about the temple that Jesus interrupts their admiration and wonder to say this.

"As for these things what you're looking at, the days will come in which there will not be one, wi, not be left one stone upon another, which will not be torn down." Listen, these things you are observing, looking at, admiring so fondly this entire

temple complex, it's all coming down. Each constituent part is coming apart, each part that you think is integrated and tied together is coming to pieces, pulled apart. The temple, no matter what you think, is not an integrated whole, one that's indestructible. It's integrity is only superficial, it's only apparently integral.

It is going to be pulled apart, disintegrated down to each individual stone so that one won't be left upon another. It starts with this word picture, grabbing their attention, and he finishes the sentence with a verb for destruction and desolation. Sealing the prophecy, back to the sentence emphasizes absolute certainty in this prediction of desolation, I'll come back to that next time. How every single point is emphasis, emphasis, emphasis on certainty, do not doubt it.

What I say will come to pass, now the disciples are stunned, absolutely stunned. This comes as an absolute shock, totally unexpected, utterly unimaginable. How do I know, because the last word in work word in the greek sentence in verse five is the verb *kosmetikos*, perfect tense of *kosmeo*, *kosmeo*. *Kosmeo*

is where we get the word cosmetics. Cosmetics is a a term that refers to or cosmology, we could say, but it refe, refers to something that's well ordered. When a woman puts on cosmetics, she has a well ordered face, right? When God built the cosmos, it's a well ordered universe.

I'm trying to say that women's faces shine like stars, that's what I'm trying to say, you've taken me wrong. All right, the verb can mean well ordered, well arranged, beautiful, attractive. I think the commentator AB Bruc, Bruce gets to the sense of Luke's use of the verb in this context. He says, "The perfect tense is to be emphasized here, the perfect tense." It emphasizes quote, "the permanent result of past acts of skillful men and beneficent patrons, a highly ornamented edifice, the admiration of the world." End Quote. The perfect tense emphasizes permanent result of past actions.

Furthest from any of their minds was any thought about, any power, any army, anything really. Nothing could take down the temple, even an act of God, a tornado. Is it really going to carry away a million stones? Come on, an earthquake, oh, not

this temple. Of course, God can destroy the temple, but why would he? Is this not God's chosen people? Is not the return to the land the rebuilt temple now made so glorious and world renowned, restored, beautified. Is this not the sign of God's approval? God isn't going to tear down the temple that he restored and rebuilt and glorified, would he?

I realize at this point we haven't even scratched the surface of this great chapter, but already we need to pause and take instruction from this. We have to wrap up to prepare for communion. We're going to come back to this next week, but I want to mention just several lessons for us at this juncture. First is this, don't assume anything manmade is indestructible. Don't assume anything is untouchable, be cautious how much you admire anything that man has made. Don't admire that which will become desolate, that was just subject to destruction.

You might put it this way, no admiration and desolation buildings, religious systems, telecommunication networks, satellites. Have you heard this news about Russian, you know, sending something up into space to EMP all of our satellites and

shut down all of our communications and all we're wringing our hands, could happen. Power grids, computer networks, financial systems, banking systems, nations, empires. Anything that man has joined together, God can tear apart, he can use whatever means he wills to do so.

So, if your hope is in this world, if it's in your investment portfolio, the stability of the markets, the reliability, the sound principles that under good all of our financial system, the strength of our military, the intelligence and brilliance of so many entrepreneurs and developers and tech, tech gurus and everything in our in our nation and around the world. If you hope and anything but God, listen, you will be ashamed, you'll be let down and you'll be left holding nothing. Don't let that happen to you.

Number two, be careful not to attach divine significance or divine approval to anything that man has accomplished, very careful. I've appreciated conservative talk show radio host Michael Medved. I love how he introduces every program expressing appreciation for our country. He affectionately calls

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this the greatest nation on God's green earth, I appreciate that. I appreciate the sentiment, I share the patriotism, as long as it ascribes to God's mercy the blessings that we enjoy and never takes him for granted, never expects them.

I see a danger, though, as soft sentiment very easily hardens into veneration and becomes idolatry, that happened to the Jews. That happened to the Jews with this temple insisting that God is still in it. What they corrupted, that God is sharing in it, that God blessed it because he instituted it. Oh, God has no problem pulling apart what he instituted. What he blessed with. He can raise up from these very stones, sons of Abraham, he don't need your bloodline.

Third, little lesson, when any institution is overcome with corruption so it becomes characterized by corruption, you need to step away and stand back. Paul wrote in Galatians 6-7, Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows this will he also reap. You know what that principle extends to nations as well. Don't have this pollyannaish, foolish view about our nation to think that it is God's nation and somehow we

have a divine destiny. I mean, we are set up well, blessed abundantly, but if we continue on in corruption and the murder of children in the womb, if we continue on with sexual immorality and filth and pornography, all the stuff that's tearing our nation apart. We continue to just go on glibly, blindly moving along, not caring whatever man sows that will he also reap, we are reaping it and more is to come.

Lastly, fourth, put all your confidence in that which cannot be shaken and that which will never change. I love we read this before, but Hebrews 12:26 and following, God has promised yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven. And this expression, yet once more denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, that is, of created things.

Whatever's created can be shaken, can come apart. This expression yet once more denotes the removing of things which can be shaken, created things in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which

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we offered to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, why, for our God is a consuming fire. If you put your trust in God and God alone, and his Son Jesus Christ, whom He sent to be your Savior, you put your trust in Him and Him alone, then you're not going to admire superficially, externally, materially.

You're not going to admire the, as these disciples did, did that which is destined to become a desolation, that which can be shaken, that which is composed and put together by man, which can easily be decomposed and pulled apart. No admiration in desolation, our only hope, our full, unqualified, unadulterated manneration, and admiration, is in the unchanging God and in his Christ whom he sent to save us from our sins. Look down the chapter at verse 33 again, let's let Jesus have one of the last words here, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

Listen, his words are more stable than a million stones holding up his temple, more stable than the heavens and the earth themselves. Put your confidence in Him, put all your trust

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in Him. Let me close with this word from JC Ryle, He says, "it should never be forgotten that the material part of the of a Christian Church or temple." By material he means the buildings, he means the external things. "The, the material stuff should never be forgotten, the material part of the Christian Church is by far the least important part of it. The most beautiful use of marble, stone, wood, stained glass are worthless in God's sight, unless there is truth in the pulpit and grace in the congregation. The dens and caves in which the early Christians used to meet were probably far more beautiful in Christ's sight, then then noblest cathedral ever erected by man, the temple in which the Lord Jesus delights most, is a broken and contrite heart renewed by the Holy Spirit." Amen and Amen.

Let's pray, our Father, we're so grateful to you for helping us see through the teaching of our Lord Jesus, what's important and what's not. Help us to rejoice in that which remains, in that which is unchanging, which is your perfect and pure word. Help us to find all confidence and hope in what you've promised, what you've predicted, because it will certainly come true. We have history to prove that to us as we look back and see things that you promised have come to pass.

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Most importantly, the coming of your beloved Son in whom we find salvation in the forgiveness of our sins. May all of us put our hope and trust in Him fully, without reser, reser, any reservation and do it now in Jesus' name. Amen.