

## The Destruction of Jerusalem, Part 1

Luke 21:20-24

April 21, 2024

Well, turn in your Bibles to Luke 21, the Olivet Discourse. As we come to what is really a very sobering prediction of judgement on the Jewish people, the destruction of Jerusalem. At the same time, in this text, as we read about a sobering prediction of judgement on the Jews, we also think about what's going on in our world now and how harried and pursued the Jews have been for all of history, all this time. Our text actually explains that, as they are trampled under the feet of Gentiles for all these centuries, it's terrible, terrible judgement that's come upon them for rejecting their Messiah.

And so, it's a sobering picture of the judgement that came upon them, starting with the destruction of Jerusalem. And at the same time, we as Christians, we find here a deeply encouraging portion in this text, a very early example of how Jesus has

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shepherded his church, how he shepherded them through this crisis, that would come upon them, and really his shepherding heart that continues to this day.

The whole discourse, we call it the Olivet Discourse, because Jesus gave this teaching on the Mount of Olives, which is just east of the city of Jerusalem. It looks across the Kidron Valley over at the temple on the other side. And it is, as he delivers this discourse, it is Wednesday evening. So it is the night before the night that he is betrayed. And the whole discourse starts with questions that his disciples asked about the city's destruction, about his return, and about the end of the age.

We've noted over the past couple weeks, past number of weeks, that Jesus' disciples and, in particular, we noted in Mark 13, verse 3, it was the two sets of brothers who really lead the way in this, in asking these questions and putting these questions to Jesus. So Peter, James, and John, the brothers, Peter and then his, his brother Andrew, they're the ones who asked the questions that were forming in their minds, really since Sunday, or before Sunday.

They'd been forming in their minds since they had arrived in Jerusalem. These men had believed, it was according to how they understood their eschatology that Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem; this is the event that we call the triumphal entry. So this text, where we are is Wednesday. So looking back just a few days to Sunday, that was the triumphal entry. Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem. He presented himself to them, to the leadership, to the people as their anointed king, anointed by God, and they believed, his disciples believed, anyway, that his arrival in Jerusalem was really the prelude to the fulfilment of all the restoration promises that God had made to the Jewish people through the prophets.

This is the restoration of Israel. This is a triumphant time. It's a celebratory time, and that's what you hear in the people as he passes through their midst riding on the donkey. But it was starting to dawn on the disciples, slowly but surely, that things were not going to work out as they had expected. There's an apparent groundswell, as I said, of popularity amid shouts of Hosanna. But even in the midst of all that excitement and

expectation, Jesus' mind seemed to be somewhere, completely, else.

He was, he seemed unfazed by all the excitement around him. He was subdued. He was even, quite frankly, he was saddened and he kept saying disturbing things, and he was unsettling their hearts with comments like these. If you look at, just go back a couple chapters, to the end of chapter 19 and you can see in Luke 19:41, as he approached to Jerusalem, this is him riding on the colt of a donkey. He approached Jerusalem and saw the city and he cried over it.

Remember, he is thronged about with people everywhere. It's shouting praises, giving praise to God. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven, glory in the highest. And he says, as he, near, draws near the city he cries over and he says, "If you knew in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they've been hidden from your eyes. For the day will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you and surround you and hem you in on every side, they will level you to the ground and your

children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

Man, for the disciples, that did not fit the paradigm at all. This didn't make any sense according to their eschatology of hope and triumph. Why would Jesus want to ruin this glorious moment? It's beyond the disciples' comprehension, at this time. But from there, as he's approaching the city; he did enter into the city. In fact, it's Luke who takes his readers directly into the heart of the temple, as if Jesus first dismounted the donkey's colt in the outer court of the temple. And we see that there's something quite hopeful that takes place there.

Jesus comes into the temple and he reclaims the temple. He drives out the buyers, the sellers, the money changers. He cleanses it of the profiteers who are all in league within, by business contract, with the religious leaders to make some money off of the sacrificial system. And together they had turned the house of prayer into a den of robbers. But he, he drives them all out.

He reclaims the temple and from that moment, Jesus moves then into his newly renovated space and he sets up his ministry. He proceeds to teach the people daily. He preaches the gospel, he heals the sick, the lame, that come to him. So it's a great time. It is a maybe; okay, we're back on track. The disciples are thinking, "good to go." Problem dealt with; everything's sorted out.

But the religious leaders, they regrouped, didn't they? They regathered themselves, got their, got their wits about them, found their, whips, ah, their wits and armed themselves with a bit of courage. And then they came to challenge Jesus' right to do as he did; that's chapter 20. As argument after argument comes to him and Jesus single handedly deflects and turns their arguments upon them, upon, back on them and turns them upside down; ties them up in knots and he exposes them, through the whole thing, as false, hypocritical, unbelieving, in the leadership of the people, and then he sends them away.

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It was after the first confrontation, which you can see in Luke 20:1-8. After that first confrontation, when that's over, Jesus tells the people a parable, and in that parable, it indicated his view of the religious leaders. And looking back through the history of Israel, he's really indicting the spiritual leadership of the Jews. And guess what? The disciples heard it.

We won't read the whole parable, but just dive in, at the middle of verse 15 of chapter 20. Middle of the verse, Jesus, Jesus's telling the story about the, you know, all the servants that are sent to the, to the renters of the vineyard, the tenants in the vineyard, and all the servants that come from the master are, are, treated shabbily, sent away packing, some of them beaten. And then he sends his own son and they kill him and throw him out of the vineyard. And, "So what then," middle of verse 15, "what then will the owner of the vineyard do," to these wicked tenants? What's he going to do? "He will come and destroy these vine growers and will give the vineyard to others."

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Okay, so, "When they heard this, they said, 'May it never be!' May it never be. "Jesus looked at them, He said, 'What then is this that is written: "The stone which the builders rejected, this has become the chief corner stone?" Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.'" Anybody standing in opposition to Jesus Christ will be broken, shattered, pulverized. That's what's coming.

Again, ominous, ominous tones here. The scribes and the Pharisees, the chief priests, they got it. They understood. It says in the next verse, they, "tried to lay their hands on Him that very hour, but they" fel, "feared the people. But they, "understood that He spoke this parable against them." They understood that they were the targets. And they're not the only ones who heard the parable either. They're not the only ones who knew Jesus was speaking against the Jewish religious leaders. The disciples heard this, too.

Peter, James, John, Andrew, they too, started to pick up on these ominous tones, these dark, foreboding words that he is



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giving to them. We come to the end of chapter 20, where Jesus warned against the hypocrisy and covetousness of the scribes. The expanded version is in Matthew 23, whole chapter of woes against the scribes and the Pharisees. In Luke 20, Jesus is just warning against the hypocrisy, covetousness of the scribes and giving an example of that in the, in, in basically taking the last mite, the last two mites of a poor desperate widow.

But in chapter 23 of Matthew, there's a whole chapter of woes and condemnation on the scribes and the Pharisees, the teachers of the law. And at the end of the chapter, Matthew records this lament, which is becoming kind of familiar to us, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. You did not want it." You were not willing. "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Again, the disciples are hearing all of this. They don't have it all figured out yet, of course, but a few things are starting to dawn on them. A few things are starting to materialize or become clear. They, they, can understand now the city of Jerusalem is going to be destroyed. They understand, the leader's, leadership's rejection of the Messiah is to blame for that. The promised Messiah who has come, they realize now, he's their hope of restoration for the people, that he's going to be leaving.

So Jesus' disciples are starting to pick up what he is laying down big time here. Their hearts are becoming increasingly unsettled, and disturbed, and troubled. Adding to their concern and adding to the feelings of worry and anxiety is the lack of information that they have. I mean, it's, it's hazy, it's confusing, it doesn't fit the paradigm, doesn't fit the model. All that they thought was certain about the future, well, the ground just keeps, just keeps, shifting under their feet and it feels like it's just dropped away and they're hovering in midair.

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So it's Wednesday evening, as I said, disciples have, they've just crossed the Kidron Valley, and as they look back, they see the sun setting in the West on the other side of the temple. And they're covered by the shadows of the imposing magnificent buildings on the other side and the temple. They admire the beauty of the temple. Their whimsical kind of tone and feelings of appreciation are rebuffed again by Jesus, his stubborn commitment to speak about this darker reality that's coming upon them.

Look at Luke 21 verse 5, "While some were talking about the temple, that it had been adorned with beautiful stones and dedicated gifts, he said, '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.'"

Again, for these Jewish disciples, this is troubling stuff, especially when everything seems to be so hopeful. There seemed to be, by all other appearances, signs of popular appeal. There's public acceptance. There's Jewish, feverish pitch level, messianic expectation. There's fulfilment of restoration

promises that are, just a, just coming on the brink. So, so many reasons that they have for hope and Jesus dashes them to pieces with this prediction of desolation. What is going on? So the destruction of the temple, that's the temple that Jesus has just reclaimed. It's the temple he just cleansed. He cleaned it up and now it's going to be destroyed. Now it's going to be pulled apart. Why sweep, right?

That destruction of the temple implies the destruction of the city too. At least it's conquering, presumably by the Romans, who are the overlords at this time. Again, none of this fits expectations. So the questions start to come in verse 7, "So they questioned him saying, 'Teacher, when therefore will these things be? What would be the sign when these things are about to take place?'" Now Jesus could have started his answer with what he says in verse 20.

Okay, here's the answer. "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize her desolation is at hand." He could have started answering the most immediate question they had asked with the most immediate answer. He could have done that right

away, but he did not do that, did he? He didn't do it. Instead, Jesus, in his answer in verse 8, as he starts in verse 8, he leapfrogs right over that immediate trouble. He skips way ahead into the future. They had no idea, at the time, how far in the future. We know it's now at least two cent or two millennia, 20 centuries into the future, to give them a much broader context.

In Luke 21:8 through 11, that's paralleled, by the way, in Matthew 2:4-8, Mark 13:5- 8, and Jesus leapfrogs their immediate concerns and tells them about the far concerns, the time of Jacob's trouble, at the start of the Tribulation period. The other writers refer to this as the beginning of labor pains.

So this is the prophetic point of view that Jesus is giving them. This provides his disciples with some biblical scope, some historical broadness in their thinking. It gives them some perspective, and now that he's girded their minds with this broad scriptural perspective. After verse 11, Jesus stops right there. He backs up before he goes any further, and he tells these men about the more immediate situations they're going to face after he ascends back to be with his Father.

The situation these disciples are going to be facing, and they're going to be facing it very soon, is in verses 12 to 19. That's what we've been studying the past couple weeks. Okay, so why am I taking the time to tell you about all this? Why all this preamble, this introduction, before jumping with both feet into the next section of the text, which is destruction of Jerusalem, in verses 20 to 24.

Why am I doing this? Because I want you to see that for these disciples, these questions that they are asking Jesus, these are not academic questions. These disciples are not approaching the text like we're doing now. They're not looking at the text, a text that they can study, that is written down. They're not looking at a document and considering, in relative peace, comfort, with good lighting; they're not sitting down and looking at a document. They're not looking at this context on what Jesus is talking about, from a safe and dispassionate historical distance like we are. They're not seminary students debating views on eschatology. These disciples are living through this.

It is impossible for us to really understand how they are thinking, but I'm trying to help with that. What Jesus is telling them right now, it's not a matter of intellectual curiosity for these men. These aren't curious questions that they're asking just to be satisfied with answers that are merely academic, academic interest. These are very real, very practical matters for them, as in, there is an army coming to destroy my city. There's an army coming to destroy our temple, our city, our families. What are we supposed to do now?

What would you do if you knew, and pick your, pick your poison, pick your enemy, China, Russia? Remember that movie, way back when: Red Dawn and they're all landing and, and it was Colorado. It was set in Colorado. Believe me, as a kid growing up in the 80s, I love that. I was like, arm me Wolverines. But I I've grown up and I've realized that's actually bad news. It's very bad news. This is why Jesus' answer in this chapter flows the way it flows. This is what explains the order of things in Luke.

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Jesus is calming his disciples. He's reorienting their minds, so that they think from a biblical point of view. So they get some perspective. I mean, if their, if their minds are overcome by immediate worry and immediate questions now, they need to be solved now. They're not going to hear anything he said, anything he says. They're not going to think well. They're going to remember this in days, weeks, months to come, years to come.

So what I'm trying to point out here, as I said, we've had a theme this morning in the music that we've been singing, in the scripture that's been read, it's a shepherding theme. Jesus is shepherding his men. He's ministering calm to their troubled hearts, a calm that they so desperately needed; calm and diffuse their anxieties and their tensions, so they can really hear what he has to say.

Keep that in mind and let's go back to the start of his answer, in verse 8, and read that section from verse 8 through 11, first. "He said," can answer their questions, "'See to it that you are not deceived; for many will come in My name, saying 'I am He,'" that is, I am the Christ, "and 'the time is at hand.'



Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately. Then he continued saying to them, 'Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes in various places famines and plagues; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all these things,'" And so he stops.

Again, you note the commands, even in the difficult stuff, during the time of Jacob's trouble, the beginning of the Great Tribulation. What are the commands? "Don't be deceived. Don't be terrified." On the contrary, stay alert. Keep your head up, keep focused, keep awake, be clear eyed, be distur, discerning. Stay calm. Even in the midst of great trouble around the world, be calm. Verse 12, "Before all these things," more immediate trouble is coming. But again, what we're going to read, it's all a part of the plan. I've planned this. I'm sovereign. God is sovereign. You can trust me. It's all got a purpose.

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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 will result in an opportunity 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. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends and they will put some of you to death, and you'll be hated by all because of My name."

And Jesus says, yes, persecution is coming, and yes, it seems frightening to you, at this time standing here. He assures them persecution is not an obstacle to avoid. It is an opportunity to embrace. And you'll see that when the time comes, I'll strengthen you. God himself will strengthen you. The Holy Spirit will give you words to speak; arguments that, care, are irrefutable and irresistible. You'll be good. You'll be fine. We'll do this together.

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And yes, persecution is not without its pain. Jesus knew that full well. Believers will feel the relational pain of betrayal, even by family members and close friends. Some believers will face the physical pain of death. Every believer will experience the ostracizing of society, the pain of social hatred. But even pain is an opportunity, isn't it? How so? Relational pain for the sake of Christ, that reveals our deepest loyalty, doesn't it? Whether we have fidelity to Jesus Christ over all other relations.

Physical pain for the sake of Christ. What does that do? Tests and proves our faith, which is more precious than gold, even though it's tried by fire. It will prove to be strong even over physical suffering. The triumph of the spirit over the flesh. Social pain for the sake of Christ, that's the proof of our citizenship, isn't it? Primary identity, no longer citizens of earthly kingdoms. But as Paul says, in Philippians 3:20, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we," also, "eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by His working through, which He's able to even," to, "subject all things to Himself."

That's what's coming for us. That's why our citizenship is in heaven. That's why, even social, being pushed to the margins of society, and hated by all, we've got a company, a higher company that we are a part of, a higher citizenship. It's in line with the final word of assurance really, that Jesus gives here in this section, even as he warns his disciples about coming persecution, which they are going to face in a short while and right there in the holy city of Jerusalem.

Look at verses 18 and 19. "Yet not a hair of your head will perish." By your endurance, "by your perseverance, you will gain your lives." Listen, it's critical that the disciples hear those words. I mean that they *really* hear them, that they receive them, absorb them, embrace them, because the Lord knows what's coming, that the desolation of Jerusalem and, the, God's vengeance on the Jews for rejecting their Messiah. It is going to be so severe and so dreadful that their hearts might break over the devastation of the city, and its temple, and its people.

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So for verses 12 to 19, far from being out of order in End Time events, far from being superfluous or unnecessary in this context, that portion of our Lord's teaching represents the wise preparation by the Good Shepherd of his disciples. He is the one who loves his sheep. He gets them ready for what they're about to face. Well, what they're about to face very soon, and further, with what we're about to read in verses 20 to 24.

Listen, if they obey what Jesus says, if they follow his instruction here, then quite literally in this event, "not a hair of their heads will perish" in the coming desolation of Jerusalem. Further, by their endurance, "they will gain their lives." All true. Take a look. "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is at hand. 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 countryside must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.

"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 against this people, 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." We'll be in these verses, this week and next, at the very least. Just want to set your expectations on that.

We're not going to finish this today, but the verses divide into two main sections, verses 20 to 24, divide into two main sections. The first half is verses 20 to 22 and that's about protection for believers. The second-half, verses 23 to 24, is about the retribution on the Jews of Jerusalem. As Jesus already said in Luke 19:44, Their retribution or vengeance comes upon them, "because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

Let me just pause and make a comment here. When you think about all the times that you've witnessed to somebody and you share the gospel, evangelize them, explain the gospel, you plead with

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them, pray for them and that person walks away, uninterested, or maybe just walks away indifferent, or worse, walks away scorning, laughing, mocking, turns back to feed on the world, and do whatever pursuits he has or she has in the world. Listen, there is a cost for rejecting Jesus Christ.

And as we see, as in, in the destruction of Jerusalem, which we won't talk about all the horrible things that happened today; we'll get to that. It is a horrible picture of judgement, and that is just a, a historic judgement AD 70, that came upon the city of Jerusalem. Terrible judgement. It came upon those people who had gospel conversations with people like you and me. Oh, but they were people, actually, like the disciples who followed Jesus around and heard him speak, and teach, and preach. Oh, but it was even the twelve Apostles, that they heard the gospel from. Oh, some of them even heard the gospel directly from Jesus himself, and they turned and walked away.

Many of them thought, man, that is good stuff. I'm going to pay more attention to in my synagogue. I'm going to kind of shell out of, a little bit more money when the offering plate comes

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around. I'm going to be kinder to my neighbor. I'm going to do good things. But essentially my life isn't going to change. I like my life. I like what I'm doing. I'm going to keep on with my pursuits. I'm going to do what I want to do. I'm going to live how I want to live, because freedom is my ultimate virtue. Nobody articulates it that way, do they? Nobody says that that boldly, that manifestly, but that's how they're thinking. That's how they are, that's what their lives show.

There are people in our church right now who live like that and I'm concerned for you. I don't want you to hear these prophecies of judgement. I don't want you to hear these things, just, oh, hist, that's an interesting historical fact. Let's study it like we studied the fall of Rome 410. Let us follow the Roman Empire. Constantinople. What is this? Study in context? Historical context? Interesting stuff. Preacher, you're saying some interesting things. I don't want you to hear this, like that. I want you to hear this as a poignant picture, of just a physical, devastating judgment that came upon these people, because they rejected Jesus Christ.



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Because they didn't immediately bow the knee, and reorient every priority, and every decision in their life to his will alone, this judgment came upon them. If you are floating through life doing your own thing and you're not bowing your knee with every decision to Jesus Christ, if you're not measuring every priority in your life, and how you spend your money, and how you spend your time, if you're not giving that before Jesus Christ and asking him to approve of it or disapprove of it; if he disapproves, you don't do it. You don't live that way.

Be concerned, my friend. Repent. There's time. These armies haven't surrounded us yet, because this is just a picture of a final, inescapable, eternal judgment in hell, that every, every religious person who doesn't really bow the knee and live like that, will live, will face, that will go on in eternity in conscious torment, because they have defied the king. Don't do that. Repent now. There's retribution coming upon the Jews. This retribution came upon the Jews. And you know what? The Jews are still living in it, as we see, as we speak. They're surrounded on all sides and everybody wants to drive them off the map. That's gonna get worse.

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For his people, though, for us, for those who truly know him, who love him, who long for his coming and long for his return, who long that God's justice rules over the land, for those people, they are the flock of God and Jesus protects his flock. In verses 20 to 22, he shepherds them to safety. Then he tells his flock in verses 23 to 24, about the fate of the city, about the vengeance that is gonna fall on the rest. And why is he telling them that? They need to know, that his word is true, that what he says does come to pass, that the predictions of prophecy are true and right. And when they do come to pass, as they see it, many of them; this is written, by this, by the way, in like 61-62. This is just, not less than a decade away from this actually happening.

As they emerge from this, and as they leave, and as they move to different places in the world, you know what's going to be on their lips: Listen, Jesus said, there's judgement coming. It, it, was coming on Jerusalem. I was there, I saw it, it happened. You need to believe his word. By the way, he also said, he would rise from the dead. He did rise from the dead and he has paid for the sins of all who believe. Will you believe? It's a very, very powerful object lesson for them, of the trustworthiness of

Jesus words. And it arms them as they go forward with the gospel. Let it arm you too, beloved. Let it arm you, and strengthen you in your witness.

So we'll start into verses 20 to 22 today, as Jesus is protecting his flock. First, he tells them what to look for, and then he tells them what to do when they see the signs. So point number one, is how to see the coming desolation. Point number two will be, how to flee the coming desolation. How to see it and how to flee from it. We'll get to point one, today, mostly.

Okay, how to see the coming desolation. "But when you see," verse 20, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that it's desolation is at hand." Know that its desolation is at hand. Now many believe, and mistakenly so, they believe, that the word desolation is just an abbreviated form of similar language, that's used in apparently parallel accounts; that is Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, both of which refer to what is; they use the word desolation, but they call it the Abomination of Desolation.

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So many people think the desolation used here is parallel and totally equal with the, Abomination of Desolation, in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. Now if you'd like to read along, you can turn over to those texts. I think it's only appropriate that I read them to you. Mark or let's start with Matthew 24:15 to 22, "Therefore, when you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Who's ever on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. And whoever's in the field must not turn back to get his garment.

"But woe to those who are pregnant and those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter or on a Sabbath." But "then there will be a great tribulation. Such has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. And unless those days have been cut short, no life," would have been, "would have been "saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short."

Okay, got that in mind. Let's turn over. Keep a finger there, but turn over to Mark 13. Mark 13, starting in verse 14. You're going to hear very similar. "But when you see the Abomination of Desolation standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those who are in," who are in, "Judea must flee to the mountains. And the one who is on the housetop must not go down, or go in to get anything out of his house; and the one who's in the field must not turn back to get his garment.

"But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! Pray that it may not happen in the winter. For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now and never will. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened those days."

Those, Matthew, Mark, sound very similar; a little different than Luke, but you can hear the similar wording, similar themes. So go ahead and return to Luke's Gospel now. Go back there. Keep your fingers in the other two, if you'd like to refer back to

them, but turn back to Luke. The expression, the Abomination of Desolation, is what we would call a technical expression in Scripture, because it refers to something very specific. The language comes from the prophecy of Daniel. Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31, Daniel 12:11 and all three cite this Abomination of Desolation.

One of those references, Daniel 11:31, refers to an event that was, that was future to, to, Daniel. It was already past history for Jesus and his disciples. The Abomination of Desolation in Daniel 11:31, refers to the conquest of a Greek ruler by the name of, Antioch, ah, Antiochus Epiphanes. He conquered Jerusalem in 167 BC. He came into the temple, and intending to defile the altar in the temple, and humiliate the Jews, and demonstrate the superiority of his gods. Antiochus slaughtered a pig, as an offering to Zeus, on the altar in the temple. That was the abomination that desolated.

That was a preview of coming attractions, so to speak, because the other two references in Daniel, Daniel 9:27, Daniel 12:11, both of those references connect the Abomination of Desolation

to the Antichrist. That's why Matthew and Mark are using the exact same language, the Abomination of Desolation, because that's exactly what they intend. They intend to refer to the Antichrist, who comes, enters into a covenant with the Jews, then breaks that covenant, the midpoint of the tribulation. Then he abominates the temple of God by, not by sacrificing a pig on the altar, but by calling the world to worship himself, as their God. That's abominable.

So yes, Matthew and Mark use that technical expression, the Abomination of Desolation, in order that the readers of their gospels "(let the reader understand)" can draw the clear comparison to the prophecies of Daniel and understand that Jesus is talking about the Antichrist whom Daniel had predicted. But Luke, Luke does not use the term desolation in that way. He stopped short of calling Jerusalem's destruction the Abomination of Desolation, because it's not.

Luke's account records Jesus' warning to believers about the coming destruction of Jerusalem that happens in AD 70. The assault from the Romans starts in AD 66, and there's kind of the

Jewish war that leads all the way up to AD 70 and culminates in the destruction of the city; destruction of the temple.

But as I said, there are many commentators who believe that, u, Luke is using the word desolation as an abbreviation for the longer expression, the Abomination of Desolation. So why would they think that? And why do I believe they are very mistaken in doing so? First, it is crucial to recognize, that in New Testament studies, in most seminaries over the past 200 years have been heavily influenced by European New Testament scholarship; specifically German liberal higher critical scholarship, that across the board holds to a literary dependence theory of the development of the synoptic Gospels. You're like, say what? I'll slow down and I'll say this again.

There are two theological schools in Germany, the University of Göttingen and the University of Tübingen. And those two theological schools at those universities applied the Darwinian evolutionary hypothesis started in biology, that more complex things like humans have been developed from simple things like fish or amoeba. Professors at those two theological schools took



that principle of simple to complex, they swallowed it hook, line and sinker, and they applied Darwin's hypothesis to literary criticism, to literary texts, assuming that the Bible developed in exactly the same way. Specifically, and I'm oversimplifying this for the sake of getting through it, but specifically they believe that the Gospels and the synoptic gospels, in particular Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they developed from the simple to the more complex.

So what is the shortest of the three synoptic gospels? The gospel of Mark, right? To them, shortest meant simplest, which means Mark is written first. Mark is the earliest of the gospels in their view. After Mark was Matthew and Matthew borrowed from Mark, who built up, developed his gospel from Mark's gospel. Some would say he, he, Matthew improved on Mark's more simple gospel. And then after Mark and Matthew, Luke came along and he used the two of them to write his gospel, which is of vast improvement over the previous two. And you say, are you serious? I am dead serious. It really was that superficial, shortest is simplest, therefore, shortest is first. Longer gospels develop from shorter gospels.

I mean, it seems as I speak it this way, I mean, I'm obviously trying to teach you, this is bad. But in the seminaries, it sounds so sophisticated, so attractive, but it seems so soft headed and simple minded, when you state the basic principles plainly. But it's no different than Darwinian biology, right? Small things are simple things. Therefore, small things came first and big things came from small things. That's how the world works. Oh, but Darwin didn't have the kind of microscopes we have. He didn't know about DNA. He didn't know about the most, the simplest looking things are actually incredibly complex; as complex and sophisticated and machine like, as the solar system. He had no idea. He was ignorant. But it's inexcusable to apply that same ignorance to New Testament studies.

As New Testament studies continued down this evolutionary hypothesis that's applied to literary criticism, as they refused to accept what had been handed down over centuries of verified history and faithful tradition, these German New Testament scholars started to see that even Mark was too complex to have developed as it did. And so, they went searching for a source that Mark used, and lo and behold, they found it.

So they made-up a name for this mythical document, that does not exist. They're too smart, too smart for their own good. So smart that they believed they were able to find evidence of a document that doesn't exist and see what no one else has ever seen, namely that the source beneath Mark's gospel, beneath the text is this, is this source.

It's like this verified thing. It's only on paper, so it's a theoretical source, but it's a source. They gave this source a name, very original name, quite catchy too. They called the document Mark used to develop his gospel, *Source*. In German it sounds more erudite. In German, it's *Quelle*, which means source. You may see the abbreviation in New Testament commentary and scholarly journals simply as Q. Incidentally, if you've heard the reference today to QAnon, Q means source, Anon, short for anonymous. So QAnon is simply anonymous source.

Anyway, generation after generation of New Testament students learn this view, that gospel tradition spread orally at first, word of mouth eventually was coalesced and became codified,

written in documents scattered here and there. And these various documents, little stories about miracles and such, little ditties, little, little anecdotes, little things of, I was just, [little], Jesus; when this happened.

Little bits and pieces of Jesus teaching; all that was gathered together, compiled in this primitive document, which is really the first gospel in their minds. Technically speaking, it's known as Q. Mark used Q, Matthew used Mark and Q, Luke came along later used all three. And I'll tell you, as, as time goes by, it's kind of like the LGBTQ plus plus plus plus plus plus plus. They keep finding more Qs, more sources, more stuff.

One reason that this is important to our discussion here is because of the effect that this has had on many generations of Bible students and pastors and New Testament scholars and commentary authors and professors. They had learned to read the synoptic Gospels, as saying, basically, exactly the same thing in different ways. They learned to see all the similarities and highlight the similarities and either ignore or minimize the

differences. And they understood the differences between synoptic Gospel authors is merely a function of style.

Or diehard liberals, diehard liberal scholars, they held a more cynical view of the text. They believed differences had to do with some theological agenda that each Gospel author pursued to deal with some particular theological controversy or challenge in his specific Christian community. Even worse, they, some of them teach that that Gospel author, with his own agenda, brought his own theology into his Gospel and it was an attempt to marginalized and silence any dissenting voices, such as the Gospel of Thomas and other spurious gospels like that.

Oh, the liberals just love the narrative of oppression. They just love the, the, oppression of the Gnostics by those who were in power in the early church. Anyway, long held traditional view of authorship for the synoptic Gospels, this is the long held, faithful view, that Matthew wrote first in the early 50s, Mark, rokes, wrote second, in the early 50s or the mid-50s, and Luke wrote third in the early 60s. And each Gospel author wrote independently of the other. He made no mistakes. He had no

errors in the text. No human agenda drove his writing process. Each author wrote, as Peter says, He was moved along by the holy Spirit of the, what he wrote is nothing short of the inspired, breathed out Word of God.

I can tell you in New Testament studies today, Old Testament studies too, are also, that view is in the minority. Inspiration, divine inspiration is in the minority. It's seen as quaint. It's outright scorned in most New Testament departments of colleges, universities, seminaries, and this has been going on for 200 years. They are the ones who get the publishing contracts. They are the ones who make the money off their commentaries. They are the ones who get the teaching posts in the big Ivy League schools. They are the ones who have influence and influence means all of us have been influenced by this.

This seriously effects how many have learned to read their Bibles by highlighting the similarities, by explaining away the differences, or overlooking them, or by seeing the differences in each of the synoptic Gospels, as each author's version of what the other, other, author has written. Seeing the

differences of, as each author's personality or twists, or, on the same story.

So what I'm going to do for you is read some of these commentary authors and I want you to listen out for that influence. Most of them see Matthew, Mark, and Luke as in perfect agreement in this text. Luke 21:20-24 is the same as Matthew 24:15-22 and the same as Mark 13:14-20. They see them agreeing. They see that basically Jesus is not talking about the end of the world in Matthew and Mark, but about Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. They superimposed Luke on top of Matthew and Mark.

To use a term that we have explained in the past number of weeks, most of these commentary authors are partial preterists. Many of them don't even care at all, though, they just write. According to one commentator, he said this, "Luke adopts a version." Adopts a version? "Of Jesus' 'abomination' oracle" from Mark 13:14 and following, "that has been restated for a generation that is experiencing its fulfillment. This type of pesher-ing," pesher, a pesher is an interpretation, Jewish interpretation. So this type of inter, interpreting, "probably

has its origin in the activity of early Christian prophets. It is not uncommon to regard this passage as an historicizing of Mark. That is, Luke's alteration turns the Jewish war into an ordinary event in history." End Quote.

You heard that right? Luke has adopted and restated what Mark wrote in Mark 13:14. He's restated what Mark wrote, reinterpreting it for his own purposes, which according to this author, was common among the early Christian prophets. Luke historicized Mark, altered what he wrote, fit the Jewish War into the same scheme.

There's another commentator. He presupposes a spirit of Jewish nationalism is behind Mark, referring to the Abomination of Desolation. So it can't refer to the end of the age. For he says, "How does one escape the final catastrophes? By fleeing Judea? Seems ridiculous." Still another one writes, "Mark's mysterious phrase, '(Let the reader understand)' probably refers to a matter about which it is dangerous to speak openly. This could hardly apply to an 'end of the world' prediction. But in the context of Jewish nationalism, it would be very true of a



prediction of Jerusalem's destruction by the Romans." End Quote.  
No textual evidence cited, no exegetical data provided. Just speculation and bold assertion of scholarly certitude. An attitude that is more common than you might think, unfortunately.

Another commentator who believes Luke wrote after the fall of Jerusalem, so after AD 70. He believes Luke's gospel is built from, and developed from, and arranged from, Mark's Gospel and here's what he says. Quote. "Mark 13:14 and Matthew 24:15 refer to an enigmatic 'abomination that causes desolation,' which signifies the fall of Jerusalem. In place of this cryptic reference Luke supplies lurid details of the Roman siege, the embers of which were still glowing in the memory of his readers." End Quote.

This author clearly believes that Luke wrote his Gospel after AD 70 and not before. He wants to make Matthew and Mark's references to the Abomination of Desolation conform to Luke, and he also calls them enigmatic. Like nobody can understand this, even though Matthew and Mark said, "let the reader understand",

that he wants to make Matthew and Mark conform to Luke, the one who writes of Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. In other words, the writer believes the synoptic Gospel authors, in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 are perfectly parallel. Luke got his material from Mark, so he's rewritten it to suit his purposes, for the Christians who live after this destruction.

I'll just give you one more example of this, because our time is running short and because you're like sick of it already. I understand. This commentator, though, is well respected in New Testament studies, New Testament scholarship. He also believes that Luke rewrote Mark to fit his own agenda. He starts noting verbal parallels between Mark and Luke, which and he's basically just comparing those two, Mark and Luke. He acknowledges the verbal parallels are very few, but then listen as he explains the differences. He calls them changes.

I'm quoting now, "These changes can be explained in terms of the rewriting of Mark by Luke. He will have clarified the allusion to the events of AD 66-70 in light of history. He has removed the apocalyptic language which might make the fall of

Jerusalem seem to be closely associated with the End, and he has replaced it by prophetic language, thereby bringing out more strongly the element of divine judgement upon the Jews. Thus, he has pronounced the final verdict upon Jerusalem.(...) Other scholars argue that the rewriting of Mark could have been carried out by Luke before AD 70 in order to make Mark's cryptic language intelligible to the Gentiles." End Quote.

Well, that is a rather low view of the one to whom writes, that is the most excellent, Theophilus, a learned man, student of Scripture. He was not stymied by Mark's cryptic language. He didn't find it unintelligible. He was a learned man. Many Gentiles were in fact God fearers, regular attenders of the synagogue, actually quite familiar with Moses and the prophets. So let's not treat these men like simpletons and rubes who can't make intelligent sense of Mark's so-called cryptic language about an Abomination of Desolation. You can totally understand that.

Continuing with the same author, just a bit more. Quote, "The passage has links of thought," this passage we're in, Luke

21:20-24, "has links of thought with," Luke, "19:41-44 and," Luke, "23:28-31," which it does, "and it is unlikely that all these passages come from Luke's own pen. Rather they reflect a stream of tradition of pre-Lucan origin, which can also be seen in the Q saying of 11:49-51 [which is parallel to] Matthew 23:34-36." He goes on. "It thus seems probable that Luke has made use of traditional material in rewriting this paragraph from Mark. The close parallelism in structure with Mark suggests either Luke has simply rewritten Mark or he's used an alternative form of the tradition found in Mark. The latter view implies tradition had already undergone development before it," ever, "reached Luke." End Quote.

Listen, whenever you hear this kind of questioning of authorship, whenever you hear language about streams of tradition that supposedly flow into the biblical document, whenever you hear about the development of said tradition and constant reference to rewriting, repurposing; Well, Houston, we have a problem. And now I have a problem with the time. So I'm going to have to wrap this up for now.

# GRACE CHURCH

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But what I'm trying to point out for you is how the prevailing assumption in New Testament scholarship has affected the way people read the New Testament and the Old Testament as well. But it's, it affects how they read the Gospels, the synoptic Gospels in particular, and for what's relevant to our own study today, how they read the Olivet Discourse. Listen, I believe that Matthew 24:15-22, which we read, and Mark 13:14-20 which we read, I believe that those are parallel to one another. Certainly, I believe those two passages refer to the rise of Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. We'll talk more about that.

I believe Matthew and Mark, though related to Luke's account here, Luke 21:20-24, but they're not parallel to Luke's account. Let me give you a few examples. If you have your fingers in the text, you can compare and contrast, as you will, as you wish. In Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14, they say the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, and this figure is portrayed, as you'll see, as standing in the holy place.

But in Luke 21:20, the reader can know the desolation has come near, when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies. You don't have one figure standing, you have a surrounding of armies. In Matthew 24:21-22, Mark 13:19-20, great tribulation is described.

Worldwide tribulation, such an intensity and a severity that, "If the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved but the for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days." We read though, in Luke 21:23 that the distress, though great, is not global, it is local, it is regional, it's not on every human being. It's only on those who live in the land of Israel, because the wrath is targeted against this people.

One more observation. There are more, we'll get to those, but this is just a sampling. Though the language is similar in all three synoptic Gospels about the need to get out of harm's way, there is no warning to those inside the city in Matthew and Mark. In Luke, however, Jesus says let those who are inside the city depart and then Matthew and Mark, add a final warning, a prayer, "that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath." A note that clearly indicates a concern for Jews. But there's no such language in Luke.

Obviously, we're going to come back and explain these things in weeks to come. But what I wanted to leave you with is this: gotta go back to where we started. Jesus does not shepherd these disciples by simply giving them brute facts drawn from his perfect omniscience, drawn from his absolute sovereignty; a brute sovereignty over their lives to predict what's coming in the future, as if all this is academic. Clearly, he sees the future perfectly. Clearly, he's sovereign over past, present, future, and all things in between and any other time dimension. He is sovereign over it all. He's planned it.

He tells them what his purpose is, but he makes use of the knowledge that he has, perfect knowledge, omniscience, as a divine Son of God. He uses that knowledge wisely to shepherd these anxious men in a loving and tender way. He comes to his people and he calms their fears by starting with a broad perspective and orienting their minds in a biblical framework. He assures them of God's purpose and his own presence during the coming trials of persecution. It's going to be an opportunity for their testimony, and only then does he start unpacking what's about to happen in the near future with the destruction

of their beloved city, Jerusalem, and tell them how to escape it.

Beloved, I hope that you will do the, the, prayerful work of reflecting on all of that for yourself, because you need to understand, as the writer of Hebrews said, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes, and forever." There are implications in this text for you and the way you should apply this to your life, and I'll leave that to you and the Holy Spirit to work out in your heart and your mind.

Do the hard work of thinking through the implications of the text for yourself. Do the hard work of applying it to your life, so that you align yourself with Him. You bow your knee before the Lord Jesus Christ and live your life as if this is happening tomorrow.

When we come back, we're going to finish up that first point, how to see the coming desolation; hopefully get to the second point, too, how to flee the coming desolation. But that's for next time.



Let's pray. Our Father, we thank You for the clarity of Your Word. We ask that you would help us to navigate through those who try to obfuscate your Word. They sound sophisticated, scholarly, academic, erudite, and yet they're very superficial. They really don't deal with the text itself. And pray that you would help us to be those who fear you and honor your word and make every word count. We understand this text in its context and we understand the purpose of each author, that you would lead us like the Good Shepherd. Lead us through the text and help us to come to clarity, so we can see the true, use, usefulness of this text, to orient our minds rightly, that we would render to you a good account of the stewardship of this gospel and this life that you've given us. We pray this for your glory, Father. In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen.