

The Destruction of Jerusalem, Part 2

Luke 21 :20-24

April 28, 2024

Well, we are steadily making our way through the Olivet Discourse in Luke 21, and we have come to, you want to turn there in your Bibles. But we've come to the portion in Luke 21 in which Jesus predicts the desolation of Jerusalem. So dark times, dark themes, ominous warnings abound in this section. The desolation of Jerusalem is a judgement upon the unbelieving and upon the Christ rejecting.

And it's out of that judgement that Jesus shepherds his people. He does not leave his people, Christians disciples, in the midst of Jerusalem, for, to receive the judgement that's coming, but he takes them out of it. And God is pleased to do that often, as we see the testimony of Scripture showing that believers do not receive the judgment and wrath of God, because that has been taken from us by Christ. And Christ, our Good Shepherd, leads us

out of judgment. It is noteworthy actually to see the shepherding concern of our Lord Jesus Christ in this passage and see how he ministered calm to the troubled hearts of his disciples, who were picking up on these ominous tones.

And we've been pointing this out as we've been going through the Olivet Discourse. This discourse is not a dispassionate, academic treatise on eschatology. It's not merely theoretical. Certainly it wasn't for these men, as they heard the Lord give this prophetic address. But in this prophetic address, with its predictions and with its look to the future, it's also a pastoral address. It's exhortation to true disciples.

We can see as we go through the Olivet Discourse that Jesus uses more than a dozen imperatival verbs to address his people. These disciples, standing with him, receive these imperatival verbs, as well as all disciples, throughout the ages, who will experience the actual events that he predicts, both near fulfilment and far fulfilment.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

His commands provide his people with protection, with calm and encouragement, and he exhorts them to fidelity. He says in verse 8, "See that you're not deceived by false messiahs. Don't go after them." That's a spiritual protection that he provides. He also, as we're seeing in our passage, as we're going through, he's also providing physical protection. "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies," verse 20, it's time to get away. Time to get away and stay away. That's physical protection.

He's also commanding them with, giving them commands and imperatives about staying calm. Staying calm. Don't be alarmed by the turmoil that's coming on the earth. Verse 9, he says, Even when you're arrested, in verse 14, because of my name's sake, settle in your minds not to prepare your defense beforehand. Christ's disciples can and should live in a state of calm.

We don't live as worried creatures, anxious because we don't have a God above us who cares for us, who's sovereign over all things. We don't live in that state. For everything, including these times of the Gentiles, that Israel's going to live

through; even these times are under his sovereign control and sovereign care. We do not live like the heathen live. We don't worry as they do. We don't. We're not anxious about the same things. We don't fret.

That's exactly what Jesus is commanding here, even as terrifying signs begin to take place, verses 25 and following, already alluded to in verses 8 to 11. Jesus encourages his disciples again, when these terrifying signs begin to take place and he again commands them, in verse 28, you don't be afraid. "Straighten up. Lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." What is coming upon the entire earth, that come upon, upon, the unbelieving people of the world, that doesn't concern you, "because your redemption is drawing near."

And at the conclusion of his address, Jesus exhorts his disciples yet again, shepherding them to the safety of fidelity, that they would stay faithful, that they would walk with perseverance and endurance to live through whatever he leads them through. So all of his commands throughout the Olivet Discourse and really in all of Scripture, but all of his

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

commands protect his disciples, calm his disciples, settle their hearts and minds, and encourage them, and exhort them. That's the purpose of the commands of Scripture.

And I just want to make this note here. This is called good shepherding. This is the Good Shepherd being a good shepherd, and all Christians do well not only to heed his commands, but to exhort one another by sharing his commands. Because his commands and obedience to his commands means life for us: Protection, calm, encouragement, strength. We should never, in sharing Christ's commands, God's commands, with one another, which we should be doing, exhorting one another daily, right? We should never be afraid of the imperative mood.

We should never become afraid of the commands of Scripture. I know that commands, they really rub against the, the, grain of American independent individualism, but that's okay. We all need to break out of sinful culture, don't we? It's the commands given by our Lord, given by our God; they come to us in the imperative mood. They, they, they demand that our will submits to his will, that our lives, our priorities, line up under his

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

priorities and it's, that which protects us, calms our hearts, encourages us, strengthens us. And as we share those commands with one another, as we exhort one another through the word of God, we encourage and strengthen each other.

Now let's read the Olivet Discourse again, with that in mind, in its entirety. We'll start with our Lord's prediction of the desolation on Jerusalem. That's the subject of our study this morning, going back to verse 5. "While some were talking about the Temple, that it had been adorned with beautiful stones and dedicated gifts, Jesus said, 'As for these things which you're looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another, which will not be torn down.' And so they questioned him, saying, 'Teacher, when, therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?'

"And he said, 'See to it that you are not deceived, for many will come in my name, saying, "I am he!", that is, I'm the Christ, "And the time is in hand!", Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified, for

these things must take place first. But the end does not follow immediately.'

"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. 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 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 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 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, 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.’

“And 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. For 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 and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

"Then he told them a parable: 'Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves and you see it for yourselves, 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 upon you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who inhabit the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying earnestly that you may have strength to escape. All these things are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.'"

For today we are looking, as I said, at verses 20 to 24 and we divide that section into two halves. First, in verses 20 to 22, Jesus provides protection for believers. And then second, in

verses 23 and 24, Jesus predicts retribution for the Jews of Jerusalem; those who rejected him as their Messiah, those who did not recognize the time of God's gracious visitation to them, to their land, to their city, in Christ.

So Jesus protects his flock. In verses 20 to 22, he shepherds his people into safety. And then he informs his flock, in verses 23 to 24, to help them to understand the reason for the desolation of the city, that this is divine justice, this is divine vengeance, this is retributive justice to pay them back for their sins against Christ. So in verses 20 to 22, as Jesus protects his flock, he's telling them first what to look for and then what to do. What to look for and what to do.

So we said the first point is point number one. We started into this last week. We'll finish it today. Point number one: How to see the desolation coming. Point number one: How to see the desolation coming. And we'll notice here how simple Jesus' instruction is. Simple instruction. When facing a time of crisis, a time of battle, a time of war, a time of distress, simple instruction is most needed. When facing times of trial

and distress, complex instructions lead people to failure and slaughter.

Simple instructions like, the, in distressing circumstances, like this impending siege of the land, it's utter devastation; simple instructions, that's the order of the day. Look at verse 20, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that it's desolation is at hand." Simple, concise instruction. There's a specific concrete sign, easy to spot, impossible to miss. That's exactly what people facing distress need most, and especially when it's distress at this level. Invading army, a siege and utter destruction, this is what they need to hear. This is what they need to look for, something simple, concrete, specific.

Now we understand Jerusalem had been attacked throughout history numerous times. Not like this though. Even the Babylonian invasion wasn't, didn't even seem to be this destructive. So what are the disciples here to look for? The keyword that Jesus uses to set apart the coming siege of Jerusalem is the word, surrounded. It's the verb, *kykloo*. *Kykloo*, which means to encircle, to encompass, and when it

refers, specifically, in the context to city walls, as it does here, it means to go around, such as when troops are on the march and they circle around and finally surround an area, surround a region.

Jesus used, back in Luke 19:43, Jesus used an augmented form of the verb, this verb *kykloo*. It's *Perikykloo*. *Perikykloo*, *perikykloo*, around, to encircle around. So it's an emphasis there and it has a specific reference to a siege. Jesus said in Luke 19:43, "The days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you and surround you." There is *perikykloo*, "and hem you in on every side." That is, it's cutting off every avenue of escape and also governing who goes into the city. The aim there is to choke out the city, cut off all its supply lines, break the will of resistance, induce surrender, take away their will to fight.

In the absence of any surrender, the siege is going to have an effect of weakening the city's defenders. It's going to make them easier to kill and or capture because they will be starving inside. A military campaign on this level represents significant

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

investment and total commitment on the part of an invading force, and that is the language that Jesus is using here. That which surrounds the city is called a *stratopedon*. Literally, an army, *stratos* and on the ground, *pedon*. So infantry, troops, boots on the ground. This is the only use of this word in the New Testament, by the way, but it is an older technical term for a military encampment, and that's what he's talking about here.

The significance of this *Stratopedon* is that an army doesn't merely intend to attack, doesn't merely intend to harass, inflict damage, send a message, perhaps plunder whatever they can. This is not a halfhearted attempt on the city. These troops are all in. They're well supplied. They're commanded from the top down and all their, all their generals and all their commanders, they're ready to lay siege on a city and be there until the end and fight to the death. They are fully committed to the task. They're not going to retreat if things don't go well. They'll just regroup and come at you again. Once there, they are not going home until they've achieved total victory.

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

So, Jesus says, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies," and that's present tense, by the way. So it's when you see Jerusalem being surrounded, that is when you see this preparation for a long term siege coming. As A.T. Robertson says, "It'll be too late after the city's surrounded." So while it's being; get out, get out. This encirclement by the Roman legions, these military encampments that are set up, they are the, tell, telltale signs of the, the, disciples are to look for.

Notice verse 20. It's not, when you see, then you will know. As in, think about it, once you start to see this. No. This is not a future indicative; it's an aorist imperative. It's calling for urgent summary action. He is forceful here. He is insistent. When you see, it's not about contemplating, it's not about figuring it out. When you see, know! And the knowing is a knowledge that demands the action of verse 21.

So basically, he's saying this: when you see Jerusalem being surrounded, when you see it being encircled, troops setting up encampments, getting ready for a siege, I'm not leaving this to

you to interpret what you're seeing there. I'm telling you what to think. I'm interpreting this for you right now. And we're doing this in the pleasant shade of the olive groves and the trees on the Mount of Olives. We're doing this in peace. When you can think clearly, when the lights are on, when it's calm, when it's cool, when we're well fed, the fires are cooking up our dinner. We're enjoying one another's company. And I'm telling you now, well before this happens, the desolation of Jerusalem is at hand. When you see that happening, it's happening now, so it's time to act.

So that's how they're gonna see the desolation coming. Now what to do about it. What should they do about it? Second point number two: How to flee the coming desolation. Number two: How to flee the coming desolation. Basically, how to flee; let your little legs run you right out of there as quickly as you can. That is, be all in. Don't look back. Don't be like Lot's wife who turned and looked back. Be like Lot and his daughters who followed the angel.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

Get out. Destruction. Desolation is coming. That's what he says. First, in verse 21, take action, get away, stay away. "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." This is comprehensive, isn't it? This is not just an urban warning. It is a regional warning, reaching out beyond the Jerusalem metropolitan area, beyond, out beyond its suburbs, out to the most rural and remote parts of the region of this entire province called Judea.

The warning is to all Judea, those living in the midst of the city or out on the countryside. Same command: Get out, get away, stay away. This isn't conventional wisdom, by the way, Philip Ryken points this out. He says, quote, "Cities were places of safety and security. Ordinarily, the sensible thing to do in a time of danger was to run from the surrounding countryside to the defense of a city. But Jesus told his disciples to do exactly the opposite. Jerusalem was doomed to destruction. So as soon as they saw the first warning sign of the coming desolation, they're supposed to head for the hills." End Quote.

The first verb we see there, flee. It's the verb *pheugo*. *Pheugo* is translated into Latin as *fugio*, from which we get our word, fugitive. So be a fugitive, flee. Go on the run. Take flight. Simply run away. Consider Jerusalem to be the epicenter of destruction and get away. It is the epicenter of desolation, so it's toxic. No matter where you are in Judea, get as far away as possible.

Second verb, leave: The verb, where he says, "Those who are in the midst of the city must leave," the verb, *ekchoreo*. *Choreo*, means to move from one position to another. The preposition, *ek*, is, out of. So it's picturing those who live in Jerusalem, who are in Jerusalem, whether they're on business or they're on travel, or they're for the festivals or feasts, or to come to the temple for sacrifice. Whatever you're doing there, when this is happening, get out. Move out, *ekchoreo*. If you're in the midst of the city, whether just living, whether just visiting, it is time to leave.

Third verb, forbids entrance into the city. Those who are in the countryside *must not* enter into the city. So anyone planning

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

to visit, anyone who needs to conduct business there, it can wait. In fact, no business is going to be happening there, so don't worry about it. Put that in the loss column and move on. Start a new business. If you're coming there to attend a feast or offer sacrifice, even those noble concerns of faithful Jews, don't do it. This is an end to the temple, an end to sacrifice. Don't wait and see what happens. Don't think you're going to wait until the dust clears. Just stay away. Far away. Don't even think about coming near.

We're going to hear more about this in a moment, but there's a reason that Jesus gives this regional warning that it's not just vengeance coming upon the residents of the city of Jerusalem. It's a concern for all Judea, the entire province. The early church historian Eusebius writes this. He says, "The number of calamities which everywhere fell upon the nation at that time; the extreme misfortunes to which the inhabitants of Judea," which was a province of Rome, governed by a governor, Roman governor, procurator, whatever. "The extreme misfortunes to which the inhabitants of Judea were especially subjected—the thousands of men as well as women and children, that perished by the sword, by famine, and by other forms of death innumerable—

all these things, as well as the great many sieges which were carried on against the cities of Judea, the excessive sufferings endured by those that fled to Jerusalem itself, as to a city of perfect safety, and finally the general course of the whole war." End Quote.

This entire region is going to suffer because of the desolation coming upon Jerusalem. The entire region inside Jerusalem and outside of Jerusalem. "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by the armies," know that it's happening. So get to safety and get there. Now what to do? Flee. Stay away. Get away. Stay away. Don't come anywhere near it.

Second, Jesus says verse 22, don't second guess the coming desolation. Don't second guess this. Don't think there might be another outcome, when you see this happening, do not doubt what I'm saying here. This is going to happen for sure. Verse 22, "because these are days of vengeance in order that"; purpose statement, "in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled." In other words: may be fulfilled. That's a passive form of the verb. The fulfillment of Scripture shows the

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

sovereignty of God here. This is God's intention. This is what he has written. It's what he has written down in, in, in, the Word of God. It's revealed. It's in black and white, and it's going to happen. Do not second guess; this is the time, Jesus says.

He needed to say that, didn't he? Because you can imagine that there are some sensitive souls among the disciples, as there always will be. Sensitive, but often misguided in their compassion, misguided in their always wanting to see the bright side. I love people like that. But in time, when times of crisis come, it's time for the people who always see the bright side not to look for the silver lining in the dark cloud. It's a dark cloud, and there's nothing but darkness and pain and trouble ahead. So you need to listen to us, more pessimistic folks, when times like that come.

There are going to be those who may be tempted to look in vain for any hopeful sign that God may relent from executing this vengeance. Because after all, in Scripture, he's done that in the past, right? Maybe he'll show mercy. Maybe he'll extend his

patience just a little farther. There was an occasion for just such a temptation in the way that this history actually unfolded before Jerusalem's final destruction in AD 70. And that's why this caution here, this verse, "Because these are days of vengeance in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Such an important verse, because Jesus saying, don't look behind you when you see this happening, know this is the case, get out and don't second guess. Don't waffle between two opinions. I'm telling you what to think and, you're, that thinking should drive your action and not cause you to second guess.

This all started with the Jewish revolt of AD 66 when Nero was Emperor of Rome. The revolutionary spirit took hold of Jerusalem due to a weakened central authority, starting from Rome and, come, moving out to the extension, far reaches of the Empire. I should tell you here, before I say all this, that to avoid turning this sermon into a history lecture, I'm going to summarize the history of the Jewish revolt. And that means I'm going to have to treat some of the complex details with great brevity. I'm going to have to oversimplify, which means I run the risk of distorting the picture. I don't mean to do that. I

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

don't want to do that. But it is unavoidable in a setting like this. This is not a history lecture. This is a sermon. There's a purpose to this.

So I'd encourage you, though, to go and read more about this history on your own. Josephus is all over the Internet. Well, not him personally, but his writings are there. He's no longer posting, I think. But, but you can, but you can read because it's on the Internet. You can read Josephus, *The Jewish War*, *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, as well as portions of the Roman historian Tacitus. You can pick up a little book by Suetonius called, *The Twelve Caesars*. All these are primary documents that get you into the history. There's also, a, at Josephus.org, Gary Goldberg is the editor at Josephus.org, and he compiled relevant passages from Josephus into a chronology that I found very helpful, and I think you will, too.

Now, Nero's immorality, his capriciousness, his arbitrariness, his brutality, all of that is legendary about Nero, and all of that kind of eclipses the effect of his bad administration and bad leadership throughout the Empire. Well documented, also, is

his incompetence as a leader. Obviously, someone who is so given to his filthy immorality, delusions of grandeur, thinking he's a poet and a songwriter and all that stuff, instead of just being king. That's bound to affect the administration and the governance of everything around the world that Rome touches. His corruption did weaken the empire. It spread from Rome out to the provinces, out to the client kingdoms, and it affected the governance of Roman administrators. Corruption at the top. And we know this, don't we?

Corruption at the top trickles down always. The corruption spread to Judea as well. It was a very important province for the Roman Empire. It was at the crossroads of the world, a crossroads of trade. And so it provided a reliable stream of tax revenue. As long as Judea and Jerusalem remained relatively stable, as long as the people were happy, as long as they're at peace, the tax revenues continue to flow back to Rome. And it was a very profitable part of the world, because so much trade, so much commerce happened, coming through that area.

But the peace and stability of the region were under threat, in no small part due to the corruption of Rome that spread out to the provinces and affected Roman rule in Judea. The administrators of Rome in Judea and Jerusalem were not only corrupt, but they were cruel. They were criminals. Criminals actually were employed by these administrators, sometimes as tax collectors, sometimes as thugs of the tax collectors, and sometimes just doing crime for themselves, seeing that crime was not being punished in the streets. And so, hey, why not do some beating on my own and get my own paycheck.

So people were thinking crime ran rampant on the streets of Jerusalem and we have a multitude of illustrations happening in our own time, in our own country, in different states, and different cities around our country, where blue left-leaning Democrat leaders refused to punish crime, lightening the sentences of criminals. And so criminals are emboldened. That was happening in Jerusalem as well. Nothing new under the sun is there.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

So the incompetent, immoral, if ineffective governance at the top filtered down into the regions and the provinces, stoked the flames of revolution. And there was, there was a spirit of revolution already in the land of Galilee, in the land of Judea. It had been present in Galilee all through the ministry of Jesus, really, since the census of Corinius that sent Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to be registered when she was pregnant.

It was in those days, in that census time of Corinius, that Judas the Galilean raised a rebel army. He was joined by another revolutionary leader named Matthias, and Judas and Matthias led revolutionaries to attack Herod's fortress. Herod the Great quelled that uprising violently. Judas the Galilean, Matthias, they were both burned alive. You can read Gamaliel's recollection of those days in Acts 5:37. But even though those rebel leaders were dead, Judas and Matthias, that revolutionary spirit, didn't go away, remained very much alive in Galilee. And it spread down into Judea as well.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

The aristocratic ruling class: we've talked about this with the Sadducees, the blue Bloods, the aristocrats, they were in league with Rome and as this is happening, as the corruption from the top filters down into the bottom, into the reaches of the empire, this corruption exposes that aristocratic ruling class as in league with Rome, not having the best interests of the people in mind. There were also moderates, as there always are; moderates in, in the city who advised caution and compromise with Rome, and trying to bring both sides together by, by, advising, a middle way.

Josephus was one of those. He tried to hold the whole, all, everything together. But people like that lose their influence as corruption increase, as things become more and more obvious. The revolutionaries, even if they're not in the majority, they had the will and the resolve to act, to revolt and to lead people in revolution. And one of them happened to be a descendant of Judas the Galilean, his grandson Menahem. He led a group of rebels down to Masada in August of AD 66 to attack the Roman Garrison there.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

At the same time as he's attacking the Roman Garrison in Masada, back in Jerusalem, King Agrippa, who's in league with Rome, he gave up resisting this revolutionary faction in Jerusalem and pulled back. He ruled the surrounding regions, not Judea itself, that was ruled by a governor, but he was a puppet of Rome. He was a client king and he ran out of influence. He ran out of ability to muster troops and send him down to Jerusalem.

One of the Jerusalem factions was led by a former temple treasurer named Eleazer. He was also the captain of the Temple Guard. Because of the social unrest and political heat that he and others were stoking in the city, the Roman procurator Florus, acting governor, he left Jerusalem and made his escape; walks off the pages of history.

The turn of events, the attack at Masada, Herod Agrippa pulling back, Florus leaving, Eleazar rising up, this is greatly troubling the aristocratic class and the elites of Jerusalem. They had maintained their power and their wealth by currying faythor, favor with Rome, not opposing it. And so they are

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

becoming unsettled. They're seeing the upheaval around them, and they're becoming worried. That included, by the way, as I said, a young man named Josephus, a friend of King Agrippa. This is the same Agrippa by the way you read about in your Bibles. Paul appeared before him in Acts 25.

Residents of Jerusalem, common people, they're eager to see the rebel cause succeed. They want to see the Romans driven out of the city. And at the same time, very understandably, they're afraid of the Roman response. They know the Roman response is of iron crushing pottery. They've seen it before. They're worried. They're perplexed. They know the response is gonna come. So they're caught in two minds: Follow the revolutionaries, we want Rome gone; worried about the revolutionaries because Rome is coming.

Now back to Menahem and his rebel forces. After they slaughtered the Roman Garrison at Masada, they broke into the Armory there to get all the weapons and the arms, supplies. They marched back to Jerusalem. Menahem came into the city to declare himself its king. He took command of the anti-Roman forces and

drove pro-Roman supporters out of the temple and out of the city. He threw the Roman soldiers out of Herod's palace.

But then, after he did all that and took up residence there, he turned into something of a tyrant, right away. Josephus said he became puffed up and barbarously cruel. So Eleazar, the leader of a different anti-Roman faction, he came against Menahem, defeated him and his forces. And I'll just put a footnote here, that this faction thing in Jerusalem was happening in the walls of the city, while the Roman legions are starting to surround the city in AD 69, leading up to AD 70, the eventual destruction of Jerusalem.

They're warring against one another. Criminals carrying on criminal enterprises, robbing people, beating people up, rape, pillaging, plundering one another in the city. Obviously, God turning the people against one another, causing great infighting. Nothing, nothing congealed into a unified response, even though they did, at times, as a faction-warring-factions, come together to fight: the, the enemy of my enemy is my friend, kind of a deal.

So Eleazar stood up against Menahem the tyrant, stood up against his forces, defeated him, drove him from the city. Later they captured Menahem as he tried to run away; Eleazar tortured him, killed him. King Agrippa, still in support of Rome, but at a safe distance, sent troops to go quell the rebellion. But Eleazar's men drove them away as well. The soldiers of the Roman Garrison who'd surrendered, he had them put to death.

So Eleazar and his rebels are making quite a nuisance of themselves. Gary Goldberg writes this. He says, "The report of the loss went up the chain of command to the governor of the Roman province of Syria." And really, he didn't say this, but it goes all the way up to the emperor Nero, but "it goes up to the chain of command to the governor of the pro-Roman province of Syria, Cestius Gallus, upon whom fell the responsibility to smother the rebellion." End Quote.

So this man, Cestius, he's called Cestius, but it's Gaius Cestius Gallus. In mid-October of AD 66, Cestius marched from Antioch with the 12th Legion, about 30,000 troops, infantry,

cavalry, augmented by an additional 14,000 troops from Herod Agrippa. As he moved from Antioch up in the north, down the Mediterranean coast, Cestius pursued something of a terror campaign against the land. He conquered cities, he burned villages, he took everything. He plundered the land before turning inland to approach Jerusalem in early November. He's punishing them. This is the kind of, all the terror that was coming upon Judea at this time.

The campaign of Cestius took place during the Feast of Booths, so he assumed the Jews would stay put in the city to be near the temple, that they'd be occupied with their religious duties. But some of them, rebels led by Simon Bar Giora, left Jerusalem to conduct a sneak attack on the Roman encampment at Beth Haran, killing 515 men, stealing weapons, supplies. He escaped back to Jerusalem with minimal losses of his own forces, and then Cestius pursued those rebels back to Jerusalem, setting fire all along the way to suburban districts. He advanced on the city of Jerusalem. He laid siege for about five days and on the verge of penetrating the wall, inexplicably, Josephus says Cestius retreated from the city. Quote, "Without any reason in the world." End Quote.

If he'd only pressed his attack, he would have taken the city. When he retreated, when he pulled back, Cestius was no military genius, by the way, there's, there's, a whole lot of history that shows all the mistakes he made in this campaign. But when he pulled back, the rebels counter attacked. Simon pursued Cestius back to Beth Haran. He slaughtered 5300 infantry troops and another 480 Cavalry. They chased the Romans back to Antipatris; along the way collecting the war engines and the weapons and the supplies that the Romans were abandoning as they fled.

By the end of November and early December of AD 66, the Jewish revolutionary cause looked promising, looked like they had crushed the Roman advance, broken the will of Rome. That hopefulness that the Jews had at that time, it ended up turning out very badly. Josephus writes this, he says, "This disgrace which Cestius received became the calamity of our whole nation, for those fond of the war were so far-elevated with this success that they had hopes of finally conquering the Romans." End Quote.

In other words, they became proud. They became arrogant. They were filled with false and foolish hopes that this would be it, that Rome was so weakened, that its central authority was so corrupt, that they were so immoral, they were so ineffectual and ineffective, there was gonna be no response. And the fact that they defeated the Roman legions at Beth Haran, that's a strategic pass by the way, that was used by Israel's enemies to attack them historically.

And for the Jews, Beth Haran had historic significance. Beth Haran is where the Lord, through Joshua defeated the Amorites. Remember, on that long day of battle, defeated the Amorites with hailstones. That's the day the sun stood still. Joshua 10:10 talks about that. During Saul's lifetime, Beth Haran was held by the Philistines. It was the pass that they used to come back and forth and harass Israel and raid Israel.

It was controlled by the Philistines during Saul's time. But ever since David, his victories over the Philistines throughout Solomon's reign, Beth Haran was controlled by Israel. Later in

166 BC, Judas Maccabeus defeated the Seleucid General Seron at the Battle of Beth Haran famous place. So for them to again defeat the Roman legions at Beth Haran the Jews interpreted the route of the legions as a favorable omen as evidence of divine blessing that God would give them victory over the Romans.

I caution this all the time, speaking pastorally to people and giving counsel. Do not try to read providence in front of you as a sign of God's favor or disfavor. Providence is read looking backward, not looking in the present and forward. So don't look at something happening and say, oh, open door or oh, closed door shouldn't do that. Be careful about reading providence forward.

That's what the Jews did. Even though they'd rejected their Messiah, even though they'd crucified their king, they still think that God is going to bless them. Even though, in spite of all that, Messianic hopes, expectations revived. They became messianic in their thinking. Eschatological in their thinking. Rome is about to be destroyed. It's about to fall.

Now this larger story is going to be continued. Nero's going to deploy his general Flavius Vespasian. Flavius, by the way, is Vespasian's family name. And because he adopted Josephus, which is another story in and of itself, that's why Josephus is called Flavius Josephus; took on Vespasian, the emperor's family name.

But he's, he's, going to, Nero's going to deploy General Flavius Vespasian to suppress the Jewish revolt. As the people begin to tire of Nero's insanity, he's going to be assassinated. That's going to lead to the eventual ascension of emperor Vespasian, and that means that Vespasian will be too busy with larger affairs, and he needs to deploy his own son, Titus, to be the one chosen to deal with the Jewish revolution in Judea.

That's how it all pans out in AD 70, and we're going to get to that. For now it's enough to see how Jesus here protected his disciples from any false hopes of a Jewish revival, of a messianic fervor, of expectations of eschatological hope that Jerusalem's not going to be destroyed. God's going to save us, yet again. That there's going to be an evidential overthrow of the Romans in the victory of, over Cestius and his legions

failing to take notice of Cestius' incompetency and his military blunders, which he committed, which led to this defeat.

The Jews who rejected Jesus as Messiah, they saw the, in the defeat of Cestius, a favorable omen. They continued their rebellion in the blindness of nationalistic pride. They were being set up for the vengeance that God planned to bring upon them. They were kept blind. They were kept hardened in their hearts because God intended their destruction. And at the same time, God is using these same events to provide the disciples of Jesus Christ with an early warning. Everything that I said to you is about to happen.

He sent Cestius in there, but not according to the prophecies given here. He sent Cestius in to give them an early warning of coming events, a preview of coming events, knowing what Jesus said, knowing what he told them to look for, knowing what he told them to conclude by the surrounding. Christians are not going to be frightened at the approach of Cestius, not going to be frightened at the coming legions coming with him. Nor would they be heartened by the Jewish victory over those Roman

legions, at that time in AD 66. Might God relent from his decision to visit retribution on Jerusalem and Judea? Might there be a reprieve? Another chance to repent? Might God grant mercy yet again? No, says Jesus, and he says it definitively, "because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled."

This judgement is coming as a matter of righteousness, as a matter of justice, as a matter of God's sovereign will. Look there the verb *for, for, days of vengeance, that word vengeance.* It's *ekdikesis*, which refers to retributive justice. Retributive meaning retribution. This is God exacting satisfaction of his justice which has been violated, his righteousness which has been violated in Jesus the Messiah, killing him. This is God exacting satisfaction for their wrongdoing.

Jesus tells the disciples that God is carrying out his justice. The focus here is on the penalty phase, the sentence, the passing of sentence. So this is punishment. This word means revenge; retribution for the sins of the Jews. Same word by the way that Paul used in Romans 12:19, where Paul says, "never take

your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written. Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord."

Writer the Hebrews repeats this idea. Hebrews 10:30, "For we know the one who said vengeance is mine, I will repay." Same word *ekdikesis*. In other words, Jesus is saying, don't delude yourselves, no victory is coming over the Romans. This is going to end in utter destruction, total desolation. And the first reason is this: Righteousness demands it, justice requires it.

Just to get a little clearer insight into the crimes of the Jews against God and his Christ, how terrible they were, here's what John Calvin had to say. Quote, "Now the true cause of such an awful punishment was that the desperate wickedness of that nation had reached its height. For not only had they haughtily despised, but even disdainfully rejected the medicine which was brought for their diseases. And what was worse, like persons who were mad or possessed by the devil, they wreaked their cruelty on the physician himself.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

"Since the Lord executed his vengeance on those men for their inveterate contempt of the gospel, accompanied by incorrigible rage, let their punishment be always before our eyes, and let us learn from it that no offence is more heinous in the sight of God than obstinacy in despising His grace." Calvin goes on to say this, "For no words can express the baseness of their criminality in putting to death the Son of God, who has been sent to them as the author of life.

"Having committed this execrable sacrilege, they did not cease to incur the guilt of one crime after another, and thus to draw down upon themselves every ground of utter destruction. For as the rejection of Christ, viewed in itself, and especially as attended by so many circumstances of detestable obstinacy and ingratitude, was worthy of abhorrence above all the sins committed," I'll, "in all the ages, so it was proper that in the severity of punishment with which it was visited, it should go beyond all others." End Quote.

It's the worst judgment coming upon the Jews. And you know, coming upon the Jews, as a people, there will never be a

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

judgment to fall on them like this again. Because the future people of Israel, as we see in the Book of Revelation, as we see in Jesus' own testimony, they're going to be a people as according to Zechariah, who will look upon him whom they've pierced; and they will mourn and they will weep and repent because they've rejected their Messiah. And they'll put their faith in him and repent and turn to the Lord. And all of a sudden, they're brought underneath the umbrella of the Lord's protection. That's for the future. For AD 70, AD 66 to 70, it's vengeance. And the vengeance is coming because it is right. It is righteous. But also vengeance is coming because it is written and God is sovereign. The judgement is a settled matter of recorded Scripture, written prophecy from the Law to the prophets.

You can go back to, if you'd like to follow along with me as I read, you can go back to Leviticus 26:31-33 and see there that God warned Israel through Moses against future apostasy. Leviticus 26:31 and following, God told Israel even back then, standing at the foot of Sinai, receiving the law from God through the mouth of Moses. "I will give your cities over as a waste, will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell

your soothing aromas. I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who inhabit it will themselves feel desolate because of it. You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out of sword after you as your land becomes desolate and your cities, become waste."

By the way, that language of desolation in Leviticus 26, that's one evidence that the desolation of which Jesus speaks in Luke 21:20, a desolation that comes upon Jerusalem. This is not the specific technical desolation. This is what Jesus is speaking about in Luke 21:20. And there does remain a future, Abomination of Desolation, that is perpetrated by the Antichrist. We'll come back to that point of clarification another time.

Another prediction which is written and fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, that came when God warned Solomon 1 Kings 9. You can turn up to 1 Kings 9, warning him against apostasy. This is right after Solomon had built the temple, took all the provisions that David had given to him, he built the temple for the Lord and dedicated the temple with a prayer in 1 Kings 8 and then God visits Solomon, in an answer in 1 Kings 9.

And in that revelation, special revelation of Yahweh to Solomon the king, he warned about apostasy. There's a section of warning and this apostasy that God warned Solomon about, it did happen. And not only among the people, but as in the palace as well. The kings of Israel, Northern Kingdoms, not one king was righteous in God's eyes, all of them corrupt. In the Southern Kingdom, just a few stars were shining bright against the darkness of its apostasy. All that apostasy did result in the Assyrian invasion for the Northern Kingdom, the Babylonian invasion for the Southern Kingdom, and that's what destroyed the temple that Solomon had just built and dedicated to God.

Terrible times drove the people into exile, but here's what God said to Solomon. 1 Kings 9 verse 6, "When he appeared to Solomon immediately after Solomon dedicated the temple. God warned of apostasy. He says, "If you or your sons indeed turn away from following me, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes which I've given before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut Israel from the land which I have given them. And the house which I've set apart is holy for my name." That is, the temple, "I will cast out of my presence.'

“So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples, and this house will become a heap of ruins. And everyone who passes by will feel desolate and hiss and say, ‘why has God done this to this land and to this house? And they will say, ‘Because they forsook Yahweh, their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and took hold” other “of other gods, and worshipped them and served them. Therefore, Yahweh has brought all this calamity upon them.’”

What God predicted through Moses, then Solomon, Jeremiah witnessed for himself. He saw the full extent of Jewish apostasy. He watched helplessly as the predictions came to pass, landing full force in his time on his people. For the sake of time, I'm not going to read it now, but you can check out Jeremiah. Just write this down. Jeremiah 5 and 6, and you want to look at that and read through that not only for the predictions that are there, but to see how accurately they were fulfilled in Jerusalem's, let's call it Jerusalem's first desolation; the first destruction of Jerusalem under the Babylonians.

The prediction and its fulfillment becomes yet another prediction of what would befall Jerusalem in AD 70, for the judgment against the Jews' apostasy, because they rejected their Messiah, especially in light of God's mercy and favor sending Jesus to them. Their apostasy and rejection demands retribution, demands vengeance.

One more text you can turn to Zechariah Chapter 11. Zechariah Chapter 11. Just a sampling, by the way, of the prophetic predictions of divine judgment to illustrate what Jesus is saying when he says, "all things which are written will be fulfilled." Just giving you a sampling of this post Exilic prophet Zechariah, he pointed ahead to yet another time of God's judgment that would come upon Israel. And in this case, based on what we've already studied in Luke and what we've observed in Jesus' ministry, Zechariah predicts the demise of the Jews who were content to stay under false shepherds, bad leadership, following false religion which caused them to reject the Good Shepherd whom God so graciously sent to them.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

Zechariah 11 starting verse 4. "Thus says Yahweh my God, "Shepherd the flock *doomed* to slaughter. Those who by them slaughter them and are not held guilty, and each of those who sells them says, 'Blessed be Yahweh. Indeed, I have become rich!'" This is the Sadducees, this is the Pharisees, this is the scribes, this is the Herodians, these are the leadership, the political and religious leadership of Jerusalem. "'Blessed be Yahweh.'" because I have become rich off the people. "'Their own shepherds don't spare them. Now I will no longer spare the inhabitants of the land,' declares Yahweh; 'but behold, I will cause the men to fall, each into another's hand and into the hand of his king; and they will crush the land, and I will not deliver *them* from their hand.'"

When we come back next time, we're going to get a closer look at the horrors of the destruction of Jerusalem. And before we read from the historic extra biblical accounts, we're going to read what Moses predicted 1500 years before it happened, so we can see how precisely the biblical predictions are fulfilled. But for now, as we close, I want to draw out several implications of the text and its warnings and its instructions for you and me living now.

First, my hope and prayer is that you yourself will learn to fear the Lord, that you'll learn to fear the Lord. If you're a believer, I pray that you will examine yourself, examine your life, your lifestyle, your priorities, and that you'll make some adjustments, do some repentance, if necessary, that you'll give yourselves wholly unto God, to fear him only, to love him, to serve him, to obey God's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. These people failed to do that. They were very religious. Don't let that happen to you.

May the fear of the Lord increasingly govern your heart and your life. If you're here and you're not a believer, I pray that you'll see the signs of judgment coming, that you'll flee the coming judgment and take refuge in Jesus Christ, that there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved.

The second implication of the text or exhortation, is that, heed the warnings here. I mean, we'll, we're gonna see this, especially next week, in the, I don't know how long it's gonna take, here: In a week, next week, two weeks, I don't know. But

heed the warnings, because as we look at the destruction of Jerusalem and we see what God ordained in the vengeance that fell upon this people, it is horrific.

In fact, there are some things, there's some language that I would use if I were talking to men only, maybe. There's some language I just won't use from the pulpit to describe, just from the annals of history and how bad it was, how horrible it was. Listen, if that judgement, this vengeance, was fulfilled literally as it was in AD 70, testimony of extra biblical history and the Bible itself attests to it. If this was fulfilled literally in AD 70, think about what's coming in the future that has yet to be fulfilled and heed that warning.

I say this to believer and unbeliever alike. Go back to Luke 17, Luke 17, in verse 26, Jesus says, the, "the Son of Man, in his day, it'll be just as it was in the days of Noah, so it'll be also in the days of the Son of Man." What happened in the days of Noah? Well, verse 27, "They were eating and they were drinking and they were marrying and they were being given in marriage." And they were doing all these regular things of life,

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

living life, going to school, going to work, enjoying the community activities, celebrations, festivals, feast parties, enjoying entertainment, enjoying one another's company, until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.

It was the same as in the days of Lot. They were eating and they were drinking and they were buying and they were selling and they were planting, they were building. But on the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Look around. Can you find Sodom and Gomorrah today? No. It's buried beneath the Dead Sea. Destroyed. Utterly gone. Verse 30, "It'll be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, the one who's on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down and take them out. Likewise, the one who's in the field must not turn back."

Remember Lot's wife. "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night, there will be two in one bed. One will be taken, the

other will be left. There'll be two women grinding in the grain at the same place and one will be taken and the other will be left." Heed the warnings, beloved. All the things that are written, that have taken place in the past, that have been fulfilled, predicted, and then fulfilled literally as God has written them, all those things happen to them to provide examples for us upon whom the ends of the ages has come.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, "Take heed that you do not fall under the same judgement." Listen to Scripture. If you believe God's word is true, that it's inerrant, it's divinely inspired, then, then believe it enough to change your life over it.

Thirdly, let me encourage you to look closely at the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at him in light of his warnings and in view of the very strong language that he uses, and look through that to see how he speaks to his disciples. How does he speak to them? Note the heart of kindness and love that he has for his people.

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

If you're in Christ, you should take great comfort in this that you have a Good Shepherd who knows the father who has sovereignly planned all this destruction. And he's telling you, here's how to thread the needle, here's how you get through this. I'm going to shepherd you safely to the end. I'm gonna preserve your life. "Not one hair of your head will perish." You're gonna preserve your souls. Just trust me. Obey me. Follow me.

These warnings that he gives are based on grace. Warnings of judgement are based on his grace. Grace is such a terribly misunderstood, highly abused term, by the way. Grace means unmerited favor and by unmerited, it means you can't earn it. You don't merit it. You don't deserve it. So that is to say, God's grace is not, a right for you to claim. God's grace is a kindness that you receive.

Since the warnings of Jesus Christ are grounded in divine grace, look at the kind of Savior that he is. Let your heart be encouraged to come to him without any demands, without any reservations, but in humility and repentance. Let your heart be

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

full of hope that this Jesus reaches out to you and offers you a salvation and says, "Come to me, all you are weary and heavy laden. I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you. Learn from me, from gentle and humble in heart, and you'll find rest for your souls." For my burden, "my yoke is easy, my burden is light." As we read earlier, behold the kindness and the severity of the Lord. Let both of them drive you to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Our God, we are so grateful for the, not only the, the, gospel of Scripture, but the warnings in the gospel of Scripture. It is the warnings of Scripture that drive us to the gospel. In fact, the gospel is not complete without the warnings. There's both law and grace. There's justice and mercy, all of it fulfilled in the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In fact, it's as we consider such a horrific judgment coming upon the city of Jerusalem, that came upon it in AD 70, a judgment that's coming upon the world in the future. When we take all the judgments of all of history, even out into the far reaches of the future, and we ball all of those judgments up

GRACE CHURCH

Grace

into one thing, it does not compare with the judgment that befell Jesus Christ on the cross. When weighed in the balances, that judgment is lighter than what Jesus Christ fulfilled, suffering the full wrath of a holy God for our sins.

Even all these judgments of, his, history and time and on this earth, they don't compare to the eternal judgments of eternal wrath, conscious torment for every soul that does not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we pray that you would work in every heart believing and unbelieving alike. You work in all of us to produce in us fear of God, that only you, God, by your Holy Spirit can produce. Regenerate sinners to new life. Let them put their faith in Christ and find salvation, rescue from coming judgment.

Let those of us who are, have been regenerated and are believers in Christ, let us order our lives rightly, appropriately, that we live lives of joyful gratitude, knowing what we've escaped from, knowing what you intend us for. Let us follow step by step, the instructions of our Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, the

GRACE CHURCH

Greeley

Lord Jesus Christ, and follow him to safety into our eternal home. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.