

**The  
Destruction of Jerusalem:  
Its Important Place in the Divine Plan**

BY  
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An Important Place in the Divine Plan

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## PREFACE

TO BETTY,  
my faithful wife, who has always encouraged me to  
preach the gospel, this volume is lovingly dedicated.

## PREFACE

The destruction of Jerusalem is an event that deserves careful investigation by students of the Bible. There are many passages in God's Word which deal directly with this theme and demand our attention. Other passages, related indirectly to Jerusalem's fall, depend upon this relationship for correct interpretation.

The fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. brought to an end the civil-religious system founded by Jehovah fifteen centuries earlier. It was during the last days of this system that the promises of God to bless mankind with a Saviour were fulfilled. During these last days the Son of God was manifested in the Flesh (1 Pet. 1:20), God spoke to mankind through his Son (Heb. 1:2), the Spirit of God was poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16-17), and the church of Christ was established (Isa. 2:2). The last days of the old system saw the inauguration of a completely new religion which will endure until the Lord's second coming.

The catastrophic occurrence at Jerusalem was the ultimate sign that all the claims made by Jesus Christ were true, and it was proof that the gospel being preached by Christians was divine in origin. This sign was not something newly introduced to the people of the first century. It was described by Moses as punishment for the nation if it did not adhere to God's standards. Daniel set the approximate time of the destruction in his Seventy Weeks Prophecy. And the Lord Jesus Christ pronounced impending doom on the nation during the short time he spent on earth as the Son of Man. In the first fifty years after the establishment of the church inspired men wrote of this event and warned it was soon to come. It is the purpose of this book to examine some of the Bible evidence relating to the destruction of Jerusalem in the hope of promoting a better understanding of the Word of God.

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## Chapter One

### THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

Marching feet raised the dust on roads leading to Jerusalem as the Roman legions moved to fulfill a destiny determined by the events of past centuries. The soldiers of four full legions: the fifth, the tenth, the twelfth, and fifteenth, plus parts of the twenty-second and twenty-third legions, augmented by twenty cohorts of auxiliaries and eight troops of horsemen, marched on the city. The army commanded by Titus came in the usual Roman marching order. First, lightly armed auxiliaries who served as scouts and searched out possible places of ambush. Next came a contingent of footmen and horsemen completely armed and ready to battle should an enemy force present itself. Then, a group of workman whose task it was to measure out and establish a camp when such a site was selected. Following these workers came the engineers to make or repair the roads for those heavy pieces of equipment yet to come. Then came the baggage of the commanders guarded by horsemen. Titus the commanding general, accompanied by a select group of footmen, horsemen, and pikemen, was next in line. Then came the cavalry with the special task of guarding Titus. The heavy war machines were next in line accompanied by mules laden with supplies for the machines. The officers of lesser rank were next in the procession with their own selected group of soldiers as companions and guards. In the middle of the parade was the ensign of the army, the

eagle, the strongest of all birds, and the sign of Roman dominion. The ensign was followed by the trumpeters, and then the main army came arranged in squadrons and battalions. After the main army came the servants of the soldiers with the baggage of the soldiers loaded on mules and other beasts of burden. The mercenaries in general disarray were next, and finally, the rear guard of footmen and horsemen. This mass of humanity, 60,000 strong, moved with determination toward the capitol city of Israel. The intent of this army was to subdue the rebellion of the Jews and restore Roman authority.

Jerusalem had become a Roman possession in the summer of B.C. 63, when it was taken by Pompey. From this time the Jews considered themselves to be under the yoke of Rome. In some ways the city had prospered under Roman rule, and in the last few decades before the Lord's birth Jerusalem was elevated to the more magnificent aspects that it had when our Lord walked its streets. Herod rebuilt the city and renovated the temple with a richness and splendor exceeding that of Solomon. In spite of the renewed richness of the physical surroundings, the Jews lived in a state of vexation under the Roman rule and longed for the day when the Roman hold would be broken.

The Romans had granted some important concessions to the Jews. They were exempted from military service, their sabbath was respected, and a Roman soldier who tore a book of the Law was subject to death. But the Jewish religion interfered with the conduct of Roman government. Socially, it kept the Jews distinct and exclusive. Any Roman decree or arrangement that seemed to infringe on the religion of the Jew's aroused fanatical opposition. On one occasion Caligula ordered his statue erected in the temple and sacrifice offered to it. Only the efforts of King Agrippa avoided open warfare at that time. In the time of Claudius the

Romans siezed the vestments of the high priest and had to resort to violence to subdue the protests made. In the best of times under Roman rule only an uneasy peace existed in Jerusalem.

### The Roman Governors

After the death of the grandson of Herod the Great, Judea had been ruled by Procurators. None of these governors were held in high esteem by the Jews, but in years just prior to the Jewish revolt there were some who by their cruelty, greed, and arrogance aroused the deepest anti-Roman feelings of the Hebrews. Following Festus, mentioned in Acts of the Apostles, came Albinus. He imposed heavy taxes with the purpose in mind of enriching himself, and accepted bribes from criminals and those formenting sedition in return for favors.

As bad as Albinus was, his successor Gessius Florus made Albinus look good in comparison. Albinus had carried on his dealings in secret, while Florus conducted his evil work openly. He is described as barbarous, a liar, an extortioner, a partner of robbers, and a murderer. In 66 A.D., the hatred of the Jews erupted into open battle. The bitterness of past confrontations between Florus and the Jews was brought to a head by the theft of seventeen talents of silver from the temple by Florus as payment of past due taxes. The civil disorder of the Jews brought retaliation by Florus. He ordered his soldiers to plunder the Upper Market Place of the city. The soldiers not only plundered the Market Place, but also entered into private homes killing and looting. Over 3600 men, women, and children were slain in this particular incident. Appeals to Cestius Gallus, the President of Syria and the superior of Florus, went unheeded. An appeal by Bernice, the sister of King Agrippa, to halt the violence only caused her own life to be put in danger. The Zealots, the national party of

freedom, finally gathered enough public support to force the Roman garrison to retreat to the Fortress of Antonia. Later, when the garrison tried to surrender, the Roman soldiers were massacred. Thus the rebellion began, and the soldiers of Rome were forced to retreat from the cities and towns of Palestine.

### The Failure of Gallus

Cestius Gallus, the President of Syria, not fully aware of the seriousness of the proceedings, set out in October of 66 with an army of 30,000 to subdue the rebellion. He was successful in his attempts to capture several smaller cities of Judea, and in due time moved against Jerusalem. Here were a great many people who still did not want war. Some of these even decided to open a gate of the city to Gallus, but for some reason unknown, Gallus decided to withdraw from the city leaving it in the hands of the rebels. The Zealots called his retreat a miracle equal to the defeat of Sennacherib centuries before; it was Jehovah saving his temple and causing the defeat of the heathen. The withdrawal of Gallus became a rout which gave the Jewish rebels a boost in morale, and also, a large amount of materials of war to furnish their army.

### Vespasian Comes

In February of 67 A.D., Nero sent Vespasian with an army of 50,000 to punish the rebellious Jews. The Jews stoutly defended several smaller cities in Galilee and Judea, but force of numbers and lack of supplies eventually led to their defeat. The conquest of Galilee and Judea, excepting Jerusalem and its vicinity, occupied Vespasian's forces during most of the years of 67 and 68. He was preparing to attack Jerusalem when news reached him that Nero was dead. He delayed his attack

awaiting the outcome of the struggle for control of the Empire. In July of 69, Vespasian was hailed Emperor by his legions and he set out for Rome to secure the throne. Thus the attack upon Jerusalem was delayed for a time.

### A Divided City

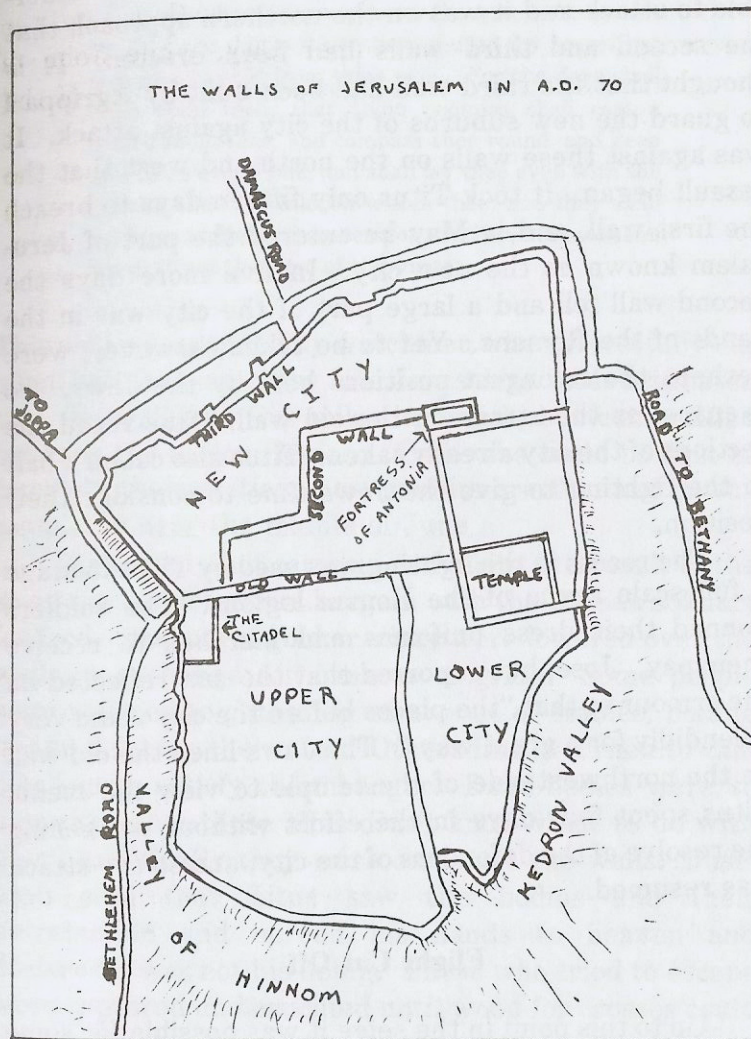
In April of 70 A.D., Titus, Vespasian's son, brought his army against a city that was badly divided. There was first of all a sharp difference of opinion between those who wanted war and those who wanted peace. The wealthy and the intellectuals who controlled the Sanhedrin did not want war. This group, at first, represented the majority of the people. They lost the confidence of the masses, however, due to the defeat of their armies in Galilee and Judea. The Zealots, the war party, made up of younger men, threatened and intimidated those who wanted peace. A third party, led by John of Giscala, was somewhere between the moderates and the Zealots. John, the commander of Giscala, had fled to Jerusalem after the fall of Giscala, and by his bragging of his own abilities, and description of the weakness of the Romans, had become the leader of this third party. He is described by Josephus as ambitious, cunning, and bloodthirsty. Complicating the picture yet further was the influx of bands of robbers called *Sicarii*, or men of the knife, who fled to Jerusalem to escape the Romans. These bandits were guilty of all sorts of wickedness and barbarity, murdering and kidnapping wealthy individuals in their desire for gain. To strengthen his position against the moderates, John called in the Idumeans, the half-wild descendents of Esau. The Idumeans, however, ran amuck and aroused the opposition of both the Zealots and the moderates with their acts of violence. In response to this, the moderates called upon Simon bar Geora, a leader of one of the bands of the *Sacarii* to

defend them. The smaller party of the Zealots, under the command of Eleazar, was finally forced to retire to the temple and its surroundings and held this position until Passover week of 70 A.D. Simon bar Geora and the moderates controlled the Upper City, while John of Giscala and his followers were in control of most of the Lower City.

The struggle between these rival parties is described by Josephus. Terrible miseries were inflicted upon the inhabitants of the city. Plunder and murder, hatred and madness so much so that Josephus likened the city unto a "wild beast grown mad, which, for want of food from abroad, fell now upon eating its own flesh." Josephus describes worshippers, coming to the temple to sacrifice, being murdered, and human blood sprinkling the altar. The city was "like a great body threatened to be torn in pieces by the struggle of these rival parties." So severe were the conditions that many of the older men were led to wish for the war with the Romans to begin to deliver them from the distresses of the internal conflict. It was during the progress of the fighting between these competing groups that a vast amount of supplies of food was burned. It was the loss of this food that was the direct occasion of the terrible famine which killed so many, and caused so much suffering during the seige by the Romans. The rage of these rival parties was so great that even after the attack by the Romans had begun, they continued their attacks on each other as lulls in the fighting allowed.

### The Struggle Begins

Titus came upon a city whose population had been greatly enlarged by those fleeing from the Romans in other parts of the nation, and also by worshippers who had come to celebrate the Passover. Exact details of the





city and its walls seem to be impossible to determine, but Josephus describes three walls which the Romans penetrated. The north side of the city was the most vulnerable to attack and it was on the northern approach that the second and third walls had been erected. It is thought that the third wall had been built by Agrippa I to guard the new suburbs of the city against attack. It was against these walls on the north and west that the assault began. It took Titus only fifteen days to breach the first wall, and in May he entered the part of Jerusalem known as the new city. In five more days the second wall fell and a large part of the city was in the hands of the Romans. Yet to be taken, however, were perhaps the strongest positions held by the Jews. To prepare for the attack on the old wall, Titus razed the sections of the city already taken. Titus also called a halt to the fighting to give the Jews time to consider their position.

The recess in the fighting was used by Titus to stage a full scale revue of the Roman legions. The soldiers donned their dress uniforms and marched to receive their pay. Josephus reported that the sun reflected on the armour so that "the places before the city shine very splendidly for a great way." The Jews lined the old wall on the northwest side of the temple to view the scene. Titus spent four days in the effort without weakening the resolve of the defenders of the city, and so the attack was resumed.

### Flight Cut Off

Up to this point in the siege it was possible for some small number of people to leave or enter the city under cover of darkness. Titus resolved to halt this travel and its benefits of small amounts of food and water to the city. He ordered a wall of earth to be built to completely

surround the city. The Lord mentioned this wall in Luke 19:42-44. He said:

If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

This wall was manned by watchmen who successfully cut off all exit from an entry into Jerusalem. It is estimated that the wall was five miles in length, but competition between the various legions to see who could be first to complete their sections hastened its erection and it was completed near the middle of June.

The famine that came upon the city as a result of the siege saw its defenders bargain with the Roman soldiers for food. Baskets of gold or silver were lowered over the walls in exchange for baskets of grain. Some people were reduced to gathering straw out of stables, boiling it, and drinking the water. Others finally turned to cannibalism to satisfy their hunger. Dead bodies were so numerous that those alive didn't know what to do with them, and finally they were cast over the walls. Josephus said that Titus saw the bodies and their putrefaction and spread his hands to heaven and declared it was not his doing. Those who tried to escape were captured and crucified until wood for crosses could not be found.

### The Temple Destroyed

With the resumption of fighting the Tower of

Antonia came under attack. It fell in June and the stronghold was razed and its foundations dug up. Next the temple itself came under attack. Battering rams beat on the gates and the walls. Sometime in August the temple was set on fire by a Roman soldier. Josephus says that Titus tried to stop the destruction, but the rage of the soldiers was out of control, and neither commands, persuasion, or threats could restrain the legionneers. Many Jews had fled to the interior of the temple for protection, and 10,000 people were slain with no pity shown to any because of age, station, or sex. Josephus describes the noise as being beyond imagination. The flames roaring, the shouts of the soldiers, the groans of the wounded, the shrieks of those being put to death, and the sad moans of those watching from nearby walls all contributed to the terrible sound. After the fighting was over the soldiers razed the foundations of the temple which had stood for 1137 years. They hoped to find silver or gold melted in the fire and run under the foundations.

### **The Upper City Falls**

Now only the Citadel or Upper City remained to be taken. The fighting for this section drug on through August, and finally reached its end on September 7, A.D. 70. The fighting ended with a terrible slaughter with the Romans giving no quarter to the defenders. Even after the battle was completed, the religious ardor that had led to the war caused many Zealot prisoners to shout obscenities against their captors until their throats were cut. It is estimated that 1,100,000 died in the siege and 97,000 more were sold as slaves. Only a few of the citizens that had made up the Jewish nation were left to populate the land that once had been blessed by God. Jerusalem now was nothing more than the camp of the Tenth Legion.

## **Chapter Two**

### **DEUTERONOMY TWENTY-EIGHT**

Fifteen hundred years before the calamity at Jerusalem God through Moses laid down the rules that would determine the fate of the Jewish nation. Deuteronomy chapter twenty-eight is an amazing part of God's word in which the whole future of the Hebrew nation is outlined in general terms. Both the Babylonian Captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies are pictured. Placed along side the history of the Jews, this chapter constitutes an indisputable proof of the inspiration of the Bible.

### **The Blessings Promised**

The many blessings God promised Israel were based on the condition that the nation remain faithful to God. These promises intimate that God, then as always, was ready to bless, swift to show mercy, and slow to anger. As long as the people were hearing God speak, and obeying his commands, they would be blessed. The first fourteen verses of the chapter stress this point several times. They were warned not to go either to the right or the left in seeking other Gods. Jehovah has always demanded obedience from his people, and has always promised blessings to those who obey.

The blessings of obedience were outlined by Moses. Blessings were to be such that the individual, the family,

and the nation would prosper. The blessings on the nation included the promise, "And ye shall be the head and not the tail" (Deut. 28:13). This was a promise to prosper them over surrounding nations, to keep them free from the domination of others, to help them to be victorious over their enemies, and to be lawgivers instead of slaves.

### **The Curse of Disobedience**

Failure to harken to God's word was to bring a curse upon the people. The curse was not imposed for some light cause, but for persistent refusal to hear and obey God's commands. God does not give up on men easily, as the history of this people demonstrates, but he punishes after men have repeatedly spurned his will.

Moses warned that there would be no escape from the consequences of disobedience. The scope of the various curses was very broad, ranging from disease, to famine, to captivity, to despair of mind. The latter curse is graphically described by Moses. Prophesying of the selling of sons and daughters as slaves to strangers, Moses said, "So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see" (Deut. 28:34). After describing the various torments that would come upon them, Moses said they would have no peace of mind at all, and described their feelings in these words found in Deuteronomy 28:65-67:

And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for

the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

They were to be bewildered and paralyzed with terror at the extent of their calamities. Dreadful consequences indeed, but they demonstrate how vital it is to be obedient to God's will.

### **The Babylonian Captivity**

Verses thirty-six through forty-four describe the seventy year captivity in Babylon.

The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee.... He shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

This was accomplished when the ten northern tribes first were carried into Assyria, and 135 years later, the two southern tribes into Babylon.

In Babylon they were captives of a people whose language and customs they did not know. Verse thirty-six says that "there thou shalt serve other gods, wood and stone," or "there thou shalt serve those who worship gods of wood and stone." Idolaters became their masters and oppressors. It was near the end of this captivity that Daniel was given the Seventy Weeks Prophecy and other information about the final fall of Israel as God's chosen nation.

### **Destruction by the Romans**

Verses forty-five through sixty-eight describe the

destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Verse forty-six depicts the importance of this event. Moses said, "And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed forever." A people who had been so long the favorites of God, his peculiar treasure, were to be abandoned and cast off.

Verse forty-nine describes a nation from afar, and the Roman armies meet this description. Some of the members of the invading Roman army were taken from France, Spain, and Britain. At that time these areas were considered the ends of the earth.

The army was "as swift as an eagle flieth" (verse 49). It is interesting to note that the ensign of the Roman army was the eagle. Our Lord in foretelling of destruction said, "that where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24:28).

The nation was to be of a fierce countenance according to verse fifty. This was an indication of the fierce nature and savage courage of the Roman army. Daniel in his description of Rome in Daniel 7:7, said, "...And, behold a fourth beast, terrible and powerful, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet...." This is a fitting description of the Romans who were ruthless and implacable.

The siege of Jerusalem is described in verses fifty-one through fifty-eight.

And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks or thy sheep, until they have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land which the Lord thy God hath given thee. And

thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee: So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave: so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.

The results of that siege was a miserable famine. The famine caused people to act in unaccustomed ways, and to commit terrible crimes. Parental affection was extinguished, and men refused to give their own children food, keeping what little they had for themselves. The women, though civilized and living, would kill and eat their own children. Verses fifty-six and fifty-seven describe the situation.

The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.

Josephus tells us that during the seige of Jerusalem that a certain noble woman, driven by hunger, killed her own child and ate part of the body. The mob roaming the streets looking for food smelled the meat, and broke into her house demanding a share. That poor woman then offered to share the remainder of the grisly meal with

them, but it was too ghastly for even such a group as they were, and they withdrew.

Moses in verse sixty-four prophesied their dispersal from the land to one end of the earth to the other, and in verse sixty-eight says that they would be taken again as captives to Egypt. When delivered from Egypt by Moses they were told they would see it "no more again," but because of their rebellion against God, they were to be taken there again as captives. These prophecies were remarkably fulfilled in the events of AD. 70, with Jews being scattered over the then known world, some even being sold by Titus as slaves into Egypt.

Deuteronomy twenty-eight stands as a monument to the truth of God's word and the inspiration of Moses. It also points out the awfulness of refusing to hear God. The terrible consequences endured in the destruction of Jerusalem will be forever a "sign and a wonder" of the sureness of God's word.

### Chapter Three

#### THE COVENANT WITH DEATH

The prophet Isaiah is quoted in the New Testament more times than any other prophet. He has much to say about the kingdom that was established by Jesus Christ, and also much to say about the destiny of the Jewish nation. He prophesied for over forty years, beginning his work in approximately 740 B.C. The first verse in chapter one of Isaiah tells us that he served God during the reigns of "Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." His prophecies were primarily for Jerusalem and Judah, but he mentions and pronounces judgment upon many peoples whose destinies were in some way connected with the Jews. One prophecy applying to the Jews was Isaiah 28:14-18.

Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with

death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

### **Kings of Judah**

The kings who ruled Judah differed greatly in their devotion to God. Uzziah's reign of fifty-three years was the second longest in the history of Judah. He seemed to be mindful of his true place as servant of God and the nation prospered under him. Isaiah began his work in the last year of Uzziah's life. Uzziah's son Jotham also enjoyed a prosperous rule, although there were some corrupt practices participated in by the people which Jotham seemed unable to correct. The next king, Ahaz, was greatly influenced by the Assyrians, and introduced idolatry into Judah. He sacrificed one of his sons to Moloch, and ordered incense and sacrifices to be offered in high places and groves. He was perhaps the most corrupt monarch to occupy the throne of Judah to this point. He had little respect for Jehovah, the law, or the prophets of Jehovah. He not only introduced idolatry into Jerusalem, but altered the temple in many respects and finally shut it up altogether.

### **The Nation of Israel**

The northern kingdom had experienced an earlier and a more serious decline in both religious and moral standards. After the death of Solomon the ten northern tribes had defected from the two southern tribes and established the nation called Israel. Their leader, Jeroboam, in order to keep the ten tribes from going to Jerusalem for worship, introduced calf worship in Israel. The kings who followed Jeroboam agreed such worship was essential to keep their nation separate from Judah.

This false worship was the underlying cause for the gradual spiritual degeneration of the people, until in 721 B.C., Jehovah allowed Assyria to bring the nation of Israel to an end. The Jews of the northern tribes were deported to other areas within the Assyrian Empire.

### **The Threat From Assyria**

Assyria had been constituted into a monarchy over a thousand years before the time of Isaiah. In the century and one-half before Isaiah lived, the Assyrian Empire had been expanding and subduing neighboring nations. Now, in Isaiah's day, Assyria was an immediate threat to both Samaria and Jerusalem. Attempts were made to resist the aggression of Assyria. It seems that during Ahab's reign over Israel, he joined with Benhadad of the Syrians in an alliance to oppose Assyria. Later Jewish kings also formed alliances in the hope of successfully defending themselves against Assyrian leaders such as Tiglath-Pileser II, Shalmaneser IV, and Sargon II.

### **The First Application**

Chapters twenty-eight through thirty-three of Isaiah are a series of prophetic warnings to the Jews against relying on such alliances for help. Specifically mentioned is Egypt. Chapter thirty, verses one through three, says:

Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be

your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.

The rulers of Jerusalem were scornful of the warnings of Isaiah. They felt they had everything worked out and needed no help from God. They had no fear of being conquered because they had an agreement with Egypt for help against Assyria. This treaty is described in Isaiah twenty-eight as a "covenant with death and hell." Instead of trusting in treaties based on lies and falsehoods, Isaiah's message was that they should have been relying on God and his promises. God said:

Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the water shall overflow the hiding place (Isa. 28:17).

Trust in human alliances would prove unfounded.

And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it (Isa. 28:18).

God promised to allow Assyria, in spite of alliances, to "take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets" (Isa. 28:6).

### Hezekiah

It was the last of the four kings mentioned in Isaiah 1:1, Hezekiah, who helped Judah to avoid destruction by Assyria. From the beginning of his reign he made reforms of the grievous errors of those kings who preceded him. The Temple was cleared and purified, and forms of service were restored to their ancient order. Monuments of idolatry were destroyed, and the great annual festivals were revived. And sacrifices were offered to expiate for past irregularities made. The good

effects of Hezekiah's reforms kindled zeal among many of the people for the Lord and his ways, and true religion flourished as it had not since the days of David. Thus God's judgment against Judah was delayed until the time of the Babylonians.

### The Second Application

It can be seen then that the prophecy of Isaiah 28:14-18 had its first application to the situation of Isaiah's day as just described. But that it has a second application much more important than the first is a fact that every Bible reader must admit. New Testament writers did not hesitate to declare it was a prophecy fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Peter quoted part of it in I Peter 2:5. Paul also referred to the prophecy in Romans 9:33 and Romans 10:11 and applied it to Christ. He is the sure foundation, tested and true, a precious corner stone upon which the structure of God has been raised by true builders using the line of righteousness and the plummet of judgment.

The Lord in his ministry was greatly opposed by the Jewish rulers in Jerusalem. They were jealous of his success, fearful of his plans, and unable to meet him in discussion, public or private. Failing to rid themselves of their enemy by peaceful means, they finally decided that the only way out of their dilemma was to kill Jesus Christ. Witnesses were set forth who, by lies and falsehoods, persuaded the Gentile ruler Pilate to agree to put the Saviour to death. And thus the covenant with death was made, and the agreement with hades (which meant to consign the Christ to the hadean world) was concluded. And Jesus Christ died for all men.

But the prophet had said, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled and your agreement with hell shall not stand." The plan to rid themselves of Jesus

Christ and his new religion by killing him was not going to work! Peter on Pentecost said of Christ:

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it (Acts 2:24).

Later in the same sermon Peter quoted David who said:

Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (Acts 2:27).

When Christ arose from the dead the covenant with death and the agreement with hades was destroyed.

### The Overflowing Scourge

Isaiah describes the judgment to come upon Jerusalem by the phrase "overflowing scourge."

And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it (Isa. 28:18).

The word "scourge" is associated with punishment. The noun "scourge" means a whip. Figuratively, the word is taken for any instrument which God makes use of for executing His judgments. Under the first application of the prophecy, Assyria was to be the instrument of God to punish the Jews. In chapter ten Assyria is called the "rod of mine anger."

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets (verses 5 and 6)

The Jews of Isaiah's time were threatened with defeat and destruction at the hands of the Assyrian army. Under the second application of the prophecy we would expect Jerusalem of the first century to be punished in like manner by an army. This scourge was to cause the Jews to be trodden down for Isaiah said "then ye shall be trodden down by it" (Isa. 28:18). Jesus said in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army:

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

Isaiah compared the scourge to the overflowing of water when he said in Isaiah 28:17, "And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." Daniel, in Daniel 9:26, used similar terms to describe the destruction of the city.

...and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

The overflowing scourge was to destroy Jerusalem. The Lord said in Luke 21:22-23:

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled...for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon the people.

Isaiah's prophecy concerning Christ and the nation then was that the rulers of the Jews in Jerusalem would try to do away with Christ by putting him to death. That plan would fail, and he would become the great foundation upon which God's new religion would rest. And the guilty nation would be swept away by the army of judgment appointed by the Lord.



## Chapter Four

### THE SEVENTY WEEKS PROPHECY

The destruction of Jerusalem is connected with the most important time prophecy in the Old Testament—the Seventy Weeks Prophecy of Daniel. Its author was carried to Babylon in 606 B.C., and remained there until at least the third year of Cyrus the Persian, or 534 B.C. Daniel was adviser to several of the rulers in Babylon, and for over seventy years was God's witness in the palace of those who ruled the world. The seventy years of captivity were drawing to a close when Daniel turned his face unto the Lord God, and by earnest prayer, fasting, sackcloth, and ashes pleaded with Jehovah to restore the nation again to Jerusalem. In answer to Daniel's supplications, God sent Gabriel who gave him the information found in verses twenty-four through twenty-seven of Daniel nine.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Known therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the

people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Since the destruction of Jerusalem is associated with this time prophecy, it will be helpful to discuss these verses briefly and note the relationship of the prophecy to the destruction of the city.

### A Messianic Prophecy

This prophecy is sometimes held to be one of the most difficult of interpretation in the Old Testament. It must be admitted that there are various explanations offered by Bible commentators as to its general meaning, but the most common rendering is to make it Messianic in nature. Among those who are anti-Messianic in interpretation are those who say Daniel's prophecy was never fulfilled, that verses twenty-five through twenty-seven were added by a later scribe, and several writers who make an application of the prophecy to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. The objection to these interpretations are that they are not historically or Biblically accurate. Verse twenty-four clearly sets forth the blessings that the coming of the Lord entailed. The fulfilling of the prophecy was to see an end made of sins: the sins of men were to be removed out of God's sight so as never more to be declared against them. Under Moses' Law they were remembered again every year, but the time was coming when sins forgiven would be sins forgotten. There was to be reconciliation for

iniquity made: the sacrifice of our Lord was the atonement for sin, the price paid for our being able to stand on friendly terms with Jehovah. And everlasting righteousness was to be brought in: a positive unfolding of God's plan allowing men to stand justified in his sight. Jesus Christ accomplished all this by his redemptive work. In addition, verses twenty-five and twenty-six expressly mention the Messiah. Daniel nine associates the time of the Messiah with the destruction of Jerusalem, and the last days of our Lord's life on earth he referred to Daniel nine and the destruction of Jerusalem and said, "This generation shall not pass until all be fulfilled" (Matt. 24:15, 34). Thus the Saviour himself points out that the prophecy is Messianic in nature.

### The Time Period

This being true, it will be helpful to note the time period involved. Gabriel said, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the holy city...." Seventy sevens is the literal translation of the original language, the word "sevens" being usually translated "weeks." The number of weeks multiplied by the number of days in each week equals 490 days. But it is obvious that such a short period could have nothing to do with rebuilding the city or the coming of the Messiah. The seventy weeks then, are to be counted as seventy weeks of years, each day of the 490 day period counting for a year. This is the standard application of Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 in the day for a year theory of time prophecy interpretation. A 490 year period is to be counted somewhere between Gabriel's message and the sealing up or fulfilling of the prophecy. This time is broken into three separate periods. A seven week or forty-nine year period in which the building and restoring of Jerusalem is completed. This is followed by

sixty-two weeks or 434 years to the time when Messiah appears to begin his ministry. The last week of this prophecy contained important events. Verse twenty-six of Daniel nine says the Messiah was to be "cut off" or put to death after the passing of 483 years. Verse twenty-seven sets the time of his death more precisely. Gabriel said, "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the middle of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease...." In the middle of the last week of the seventy weeks, or three and one-half years after the Lord began his personal ministry, he was to die for many. The sacrifice and oblation, or the worship rendered under Moses' law, would no longer be recognized by Jehovah as acceptable acts of worship.

### **The Beginning of the 490 Years**

A difficulty encountered in the interpretation of this prophecy is determining the starting time of the 490 years. Gabriel said in verse twenty-five, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks...." But when did the commandment go forth? There are several dates mentioned as the time of the issuing forth of the order to build and restore Jerusalem. Of these, four dates are considered by the majority of scholars to be possible starting times of the prophecy. They are as follows: (1) Issued by Cyrus in B.C. 536, see Ezra chapter one, (2) Issued by Darius in B.C. 519, see Ezra, chapter six, (3) Issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus in B.C. 457, see Ezra, chapter seven, (4) Issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus in B.C. 445, see Nehemiah, chapter two. It is to be noted that only ninety-one years divide the first of these dates from the last, and that in itself is enough to put the coming of the Messiah in the correct time period. The

period spanned by the ninety-one years would be B.C. 46 to 45 A.D. This would allow those dating from each of the proposed starting times to know the appearing of the Messiah was near. The point is that it is not necessary to know the exact year of the beginning of the 490 year period. Nor is it necessary to know the exact year in which Jesus Christ was baptized, or when he was crucified, or the exact year when Jerusalem was destroyed. It is enough to see the prophecy was fulfilled in the life and the death of our Lord. No amount of twisting or turning can make any other person in any other time period the fulfillment of this prophecy.

At the same time it is true that people living today can easily see which of the dates is the correct starting time. It was to be 483 years from the issuance of the decree to Messiah the Prince. "To Messiah the Prince" is understood to be his baptism, or the beginning of his public ministry. Our Lord was baptized in A.D. 30. That there is a four year mistake in our received calendar is common information, and so, that number is subtracted from A.D. 30, bringing the count to A.D. 26. Moving back in time the sixty-nine weeks or 483 years shows the third decree issued in B.C. 457 by Artaxerxes Longimanus to be the starting time of the Seventy Weeks Prophecy.

### **Punishment for Israel**

The national disobedience of Israel is also noted in Daniel's prophecy. The expression, "To finish the transgression," in verse twenty-four, is translated, "Rebellion shall be stopped." The time was coming when the persistent rebellion of the nation would end.

Verse twenty-seven of Daniel nine says, "...and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate...." The literal translation of the word rendered "overspreading" in the Authorized Version is "wing."

Some say the word carries in it the idea of extension, and so may be applied to the wing of a building, in this case the temple at Jerusalem. Others translate it "pinnacle," meaning "roof," and also apply the word to the temple. A literal reading would be, "Upon the temple shall come the abominations of desolation."

Abominations are things hated, loathed, and dispised. In the religious realm the term applies to those things that men do that are against the will of God. The sum of the ideas expressed by various translations seems to be that because of abominations, that desolation was to come upon the city and temple. There is nothing more evident in the study of the history of the Jews, than that they persisted in disobedience to, and rebellion against the divine mandate. In the last generation of this nation, the people who had slain God's son, persisted in offering in the temple their bloody sacrifices. Such actions could only have been loathed and dispised by Jehovah.

The prophets were scathing in their rebukes of the Jewish nation. The last of the Old Testament prophets summed up for us the attitude of the Jews as a nation when he said, "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them...." (Malachi 3:7). The generation of Jews to which our Lord belonged was especially wicked. Notice John's words to the Pharisees and Sadducees. He said, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7). In Matthew, chapter eight, the Lord praised the faith of the Roman Centurion and said, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom [Jewish nation] shall be cast out into outer darkness: and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:11-12).

The parable of Matthew 21:33-43 shows the

rejection of Israel was near. In the parable a certain householder [God] planted a vineyard [nation of Israel] and hedged it around, and let it out to the husbandmen [Jews]. When the householder sent his servants [the prophets], they were beaten, stoned, and killed. The householder said, "I will send my son [Jesus Christ]; they will reverence my Son." The husbandmen said, "This is the heir, come let us kill him and seize on the inheritance." The Lord asked his listeners a question at this point in the story. "When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh what will he do unto the husbandmen?" The answer was, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen [Christians] which shall render the fruits thereof in their season. By these words the Lord indicated the destruction of the nation and the ending of his covenant which had been in force for 1500 years. No longer would fleshly Israel be God's chosen people, but those who would produce the fruits of righteousness would belong to God. The wickedness of the nation, culminating in the murder of the Son of God, would bring on this destruction.

In Matthew 22:1-10 is more proof that the time of retribution was near for Israel. The Lord said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king [God], which made a marriage for his son [Jesus Christ]. And sent forth his servants [Apostles and others] to call them that were bidden [the Jews] to the wedding: and they would not come." In verses five through seven the record says, "They [the Jews] made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants [Apostles and others], and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." This is an accurate description of the fate

of many disciples of Christ. The Scriptures bear witness of the ill treatment the Jews heaped on Christians. Paul said,

For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men (I Thess. 2:14-15).

The abuse heaped on the Lord's servants was part of the reason for the nation's destruction.

In Matthew twenty-three our Lord severely denounced the wickedness of that generation. After pronouncing woes on them, he pictures the Jews as saying, "If we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." The Lord said, "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets." He then said, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers" (Matt. 23:30-32). The picture is of a cup, the "national cup of iniquity" of Israel. The slaying of the prophets had partially filled the cup. Other sins had added to the content. The Lord was saying, "You will fill it up completely." By the murder of the Lord, the subsequent killing of the apostles and preachers of the gospel, the national iniquity was complete, as much as God could bear. The sentence was, "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you all these things shall come upon this generation" (Matt. 23:35-36).

This sentence was carried out, according to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24, by the "people of the prince that shall come." The Romans, as is indicated in chapter one

of this volume, completely destroyed the temple and the city. Daniel said the "end thereof shall be with a flood," implying the completeness of the catastrophe. The destruction was to overwhelming, and our Lord characterized this feature by saying of the temple that not one stone would be left on another. The curse of Deuteronomy twenty-eight, referred to in Daniel 9:27, "And that determined shall be poured upon the desolate," was pronounced by the Lord shortly before his death.

### What Can Be Learned?

And so this remarkable prophecy allows us to learn, as did Daniel, (1) of the building and restoration of Jerusalem, (2) of the 434 year period that was to follow the building and restoration of Jerusalem that would bring the Jews to the Messiah, (3) the final week of the prophecy was to be marked by the Lord's anointing at its beginning, and his death midway through the week, (4) his death would seal up or fulfill the prophecy, (5) a new covenant would be inaugurated bringing in everlasting righteousness with blessings for many, and (6) it foretold of the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the Jewish state. The association of the destruction of Jerusalem with this vital Messianic prophecy demonstrates the importance of the event in God's scheme. It was an indisputable sign that Messiah the Prince had come and that the prophecy of his coming had been fulfilled.

## Chapter Five

### MATTHEW TWENTY-FOUR

The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew can be more readily understood when we study it in the correct context. The discourse of this chapter, given on Mount Olivet, follows immediately our Lord's denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees. In chapter twenty-three our Lord had used plain language in his condemnation of the Jewish leaders. "You are the children of your fathers," he said in verse thirty-two. The fathers killed the prophets, and Jesus was saying, "You will fill up the cup." That cup was the "cup of the nation's iniquity." Added to the crimes already committed would be the murder of the Lord and the persecution of his servants. Paul referred to this in I Thess. 2:15-16 when he said of the Jews:

Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Because of that, the patience of God would be exhausted. The judgment was, "Upon you will come the blood of righteous men shed on the earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias... (Matt. 23:36). Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation" (Matt. 23:36). The temporal

punishment of a murderous generation was soon coming. A further statement of ominous tone is found in Matthew 23:38. "Behold," Jesus said, "Your house is left unto you desolate." The "house" stood for the Jewish nation. Jesus Christ was saying, "God is abandoning the nation to allow it to walk in its own counsel; He is withdrawing his protection."

It was then, as the Lord and his disciples were leaving the temple grounds, that the disciples pointed out the beauty and strength of the temple. It was indeed one of the wonders of the world. No cost had been spared and no art untried to make it sumptuous. The Lord's prophecy was, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down" (Matt. 24:2). That statement fits in well with the context of chapter twenty-three. It was a further statement of destruction coming upon the city and nation.

The idea of such destruction coming upon the nation brought perplexity to the minds of the disciples, and evoked the questions of verse three. Those questions as stated by Matthew are (1) tell us when shall these things be, (2) and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and (3) of the end of the world?" Now the disciples were not asking unrelated questions about two different events. The exchange with the Scribes and Pharisees brought to light the impending doom of the nation. The destruction of the temple would be part of that desolation, and the disciples asked questions desiring to know when those events would occur. Question three is correctly understood and translated, "And the end of the Age?" This expression is so used in other places. For example, Hebrews 9:26 says, "But now once in the end of the world [or age] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." It would be the visible end of a system that had stood for 1500 years. The parallel gospels make clear the intent of the disciples' questions.

Mark says in chapter 13:4, "Tell us when shall these things be and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" Luke 21:7 says, "But when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" The disciples addressed the questions they asked to the subject under discussion—the fall of the Jewish state and the sign of that fall. Since no signs have been revealed concerning the end of time, then the end of time is not under consideration here. The scope of this teaching was to make the disciples understand that the coming of Christ's kingdom was to be followed, not with the exaltation of the Jews to universal empire, but with the destruction of their nation.

### The Remote Signs

The disciples had asked the Lord for a sign of the coming destruction. The Saviour answered their question in two parts, indicating events that would occur before the time had arrived for the nation's fall, and then giving them a definite sign that would immediately proceed the unhappy event. The remote signs might trouble the minds of those looking for the calamity and cause them to feel it was near. The purpose of our Lord's mention of these events was to put their minds at ease. These omens would not indicate the destruction was imminent, but still sometime in the future. These signs have definite meaning if they are viewed as happening in the time of that generation. If they are taken out of that context, as some are wont to do, they become meaningless, for they have reoccurred at various times and in other generations since the first century. Less than forty years separated our Lord's words in Matthew twenty-four from the coming of the Roman army, and these events would stand out in the disciples' minds as they occurred.

The first of the remote signs was false Christs.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many (Matt. 24:4-5).

The Jews knew that the time had come for Christ to appear, and it was a natural thing for some to try and capitalize on that fact. The names of some of these men are preserved for us. Simon Magus of Acts eight claimed to be the Christ, or so says Irenaeus. Another, according to Josephus, was a man named Dositheus, a contemporary of Simon, an Egyptian who led 30,000 men into the wilderness. So in the period before the fall there were to be false Christ's making appearances.

Another remote sign was "wars and rumors of wars."

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet (Matthew 24:6).

When the Lord spoke these words the doors to the temple of Janus in Rome, which were closed in peace time and open in war, were closed. But they were not too long hence to be opened, for revolts and insurrections were to break out in the Empire. Josephus indicates that in Syria and Selucia thousands of Jews were slain in wars, and the reports could not but have had an impact on the Jews at home in Palestine. But the Lord said, "The end is not yet" (Luke 21:19). Mark has the Lord saying, "The end shall not be yet" (Mark 13:7).

Famines, pestlences, and earthquakes were to appear.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestlences, and earthquakes, in divers places (Matt. 24:7).

There was a famine in the reign of Claudius which affected Judea in particular and is mentioned in Acts 11:28. Josephus mentions pestilence and earthquakes in various places during this period. These signs had meaning for that generation of Christians who were looking for the destruction of the nation and who knew that the Lord had mentioned these events as occurring before the fall of the city.

In verse eight the Lord said these were the beginning of sorrows. The events mentioned so far were to have an impact on Christians. But that impact would be slight in comparison to those that were yet to fall. In verses nine and ten the Lord mentions persecution.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

His disciples would be afflicted, beaten, betrayed, and put to death. The New Testament record bears witness that the church suffered all these things.

Another item mentioned by both Mark and Luke, and which definitely places the events of this chapter in the first century, was their divine inspiration. Our Lord's instructions to the disciples were:

But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak but the Holy Ghost (Mark 13:11).

Luke says:

Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist (Luke 21:14-15).



This agrees with what the Lord told the Apostles in Matthew 10:19-20.

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

These men were to speak with the Holy Spirit's supernatural guidance, and no man has had that power since the first century.

Another indication of coming doom was that iniquity was to abound. John the Baptist and our Lord both castigated the Jews as a "generation of vipers." But the people were to fall to even lower depths of barbarity, cruelty, and vice. Josephus said, "For that time among the abounded with all manner of iniquity, so that none was left undone. Yea, though one endeavored to invent some new evil, yet could none be invented that was not then yet practiced."

Before Jerusalem fell the gospel was to be preached to all the world.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come (Matt. 24:14).

The "world" was the Roman Empire or the then known world. Luke 2:1 indicates this to be true for "there went out a decree from Ceasar Augustus that all the world should be taxed." Acts 2:5 informs us, "There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." It is evident that "all the world" meant the known world or Roman Empire. In this regard, before Jerusalem was destroyed, Paul wrote that the sound of the gospel had "gone forth into all the world and their word to the end of the earth" (Rom. 10:18). Mark 16:20 and Colossians 1:6 present the same

idea. This preaching to all the world would include the Lord's prophecy of Jerusalem's downfall, a sign of divine judgment, and of the truth of our Lord's claims. Acts 6:13-14 mentions the false witnesses brought against Stephen who accused him of speaking blasphemous words against the temple and the law. They also said, "We have heard him say, that This Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

After these remote signs had been fulfilled "then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). Then would be the time for the destruction mentioned by the Lord.

### The Immediate Sign

Having described some of the remote signs that would occur, the Lord then gave a sign that would announce the immediate ruin of the city. In Matthew 25:15 he said, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place...." This was the sign that the disciples should flee for the avenging prince with his armies had come. The expression "holy place" refers to Jerusalem. When you see armies around Jerusalem, this is the sign that the time has come. Luke leaves no doubt as to the immediate sign. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (Luke 21:20).

What were the disciples to do when they saw the sign? Flee! "Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains" (Matt. 24:16). It is a fact of history that the Roman armies under Titus allowed some egress from Jerusalem until the dirt bank was built.

The Lord emphasized the need for urgency when the immediate sign appeared. Verses seventeen and eighteen say, "Let him which is on the housetop not come

down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Verses nineteen and twenty mention other problems that the disciples might face. "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." Pregnant women, or those with young children might suffer by being forced to leave home and belongings. If the news that Titus and his army was near came on the Sabbath day, there would be the problem of the gates of the city being closed. Winter also would cause inconvenience.

Verses twenty-one and twenty-two mention the tribulation—the misery or distress of the time. The Lord said there never was any suffering in the history of the world up to that time that compared with the misery of Jerusalem's destruction.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

This is obviously a reference to the intensity of the suffering. Not only was there the problem of the Roman army, and famine, but the Jews were divided into factions fighting among themselves. Approximately 1,100,000 men, women, and children died in a relatively short period of months from April to September. Luke 21:22 says, "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." The shortness of the siege allowed many to survive, and of those left alive when the destruction was complete, 97,000 were carried away or sold as slaves into other nations. It was indeed a time of tribulation for the Hebrew people.

In verses twenty-three through twenty-six the Lord

mentions false prophets who would be active at the time of the siege.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

The stress of the time would cause these men to surface and claim to have the solution to the problems of the people. One such individual, according to Josephus, advised the Jews to take refuge in the temple; they would find safety there. Some thousands did so, and died in the final onslaught of the Romans. The Lord, however, compared the coming of the Roman attack and destruction to lightning flashing from one side of the heavens to the other. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (verse 27). The Lord's coming, through the agency of the Romans, would allow no solutions to those trapped in the city if the Lord's sign was ignored; the destruction would be swift and unstoppable. In verse twenty-eight the Lord described the city as a carcass to which the eagles [the Romans] would gather.

### Figurative Language

The Lord up to this point in his teaching had used some figurative language to describe the events of the time. He spoke of lightning, his coming, a carcass, and eagles. He continues to use symbolic language to the end of the chapter. The use of this language has caused many to place interpretations on the text that remove

his teaching from the context of chapters twenty-three and twenty-four, and make application of verses twenty-nine to the end of the chapter to the second coming, or worse, to premillennial theories. This is a mistake, and a careful investigation of these verses, and a comparison of them to what Luke says on the same subject will prove the Lord only continued his discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem and events connected with that fall.

Notice verse twenty-nine says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days...." Not at the end of the world or 1900 or more years later, but immediately after. This in itself connects what the Lord says next to the events of A.D. 70.

The language of verse twenty-nine is not uncommon in the Old Testament. Such language—sun darkened, moon failing to give light, stars fallen, and the heavens shaken—is used to describe the fall of nations and the fall of the leaders of those nations. For example, Isaiah thirteen describes the fall of Babylon. Notice the language of verse ten.

For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

In Isaiah 34:4 the fall of Idumea is described and once again such figures are employed.

And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

And when Ezekiel prophesied the defeat of Egypt in a particular cause he said in Ezekiel 32:7-8:

And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover

the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. And the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God.

Albert Barnes in his commentary on the New Testament says the images used in Matthew twenty-four are often used by sacred writers to denote great calamities including overturning of kingdoms and the dethroning of kings and princes. These symbols indicate that the glory and prosperity of the nation shall end and universal sadness and confusion shall result. This is exactly what the Lord was saying would happen to Israel as a result of the Roman invasion.

Verse thirty speaks of the "sign of the Son of man in heaven." The Son of man is in heaven; the sign is the fall of the nation. It was such a remarkable proof of divine intervention, and was so well publicized among the Jews by the preachers of the gospel, that no mistake could be made as to its meaning. It was a signal manifestation of the truth of Christ's claim to be the Messiah. In connection with this sign the tribes of the earth the twelve tribes of the Jews would mourn.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (verse 30).

What else could be expected but that those Jews surviving in various parts of the world would mourn at the downfall of their nation and the destruction of their capital city.

This sign was such a powerful proof of our Lord's claims that he said, "And they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Again, this language is not unknown in the

Scriptures. There are many examples that speak of divine visitation of a providential nature. Exodus 3:8 speaks of God "come down" to deliver the Jews out of Egypt. God, of course, used Moses as his instrument in that deliverance and did not come in person. To show the folly of trusting in Egypt rather than in trusting in God, Isaiah said in Isaiah 31:4:

For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.

In the New Testament we find similar language used in reference to the establishment of the Lord's kingdom.

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Mark 9:1).

Christ did not come in person on the day of Pentecost when the kingdom was established, but was present through or in the events of that day. Just so, in the events of A.D. 70, the Jews could "see the Son of man" proven to be what he claimed to be by those occurrences that fulfilled his promises.

Verse thirty-one describes the gospel messengers going forth to preach after the Jewish opposition had ended.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The Jews had opposed the gospel everywhere, and hindered its spread, but now, such opposition would

cease. The metaphor of the trumpet abounds in the Scriptures, and here stands for the gospel call. That call was to reach the four corners of the earth summoning those to be saved into the kingdom.

The fig tree illustration of verses thirty-two and thirty-three is the Lord's urging the disciples to be alert to the fulfilling of his words.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

The disciples could tell that summer was near by the fig tree's activities. In like manner they could tell when Jerusalem's fall was near by the sign given.

In verse thirty-four Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Some have mistakenly thought that this verse indicates the close of the Lord's remarks on the destruction of Jerusalem, but this phrase does not mark the introduction of a new subject. It is rather a truism used to intensify the fact that the fulfillment is certain. A careful comparison of Luke seventeen and Luke twenty-one with Matthew twenty-four will show that the whole of Matthew twenty-four refers to A.D. 70.

In verse thirty-six then, the Lord still has the future of Jerusalem in mind. When he says, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only," he is not saying the Son of God did not know the time, but rather, as McKnight renders it, "None maketh you to know." It is not reasonable to think that our Lord did not know the time. Rather this verse has the same idea as expressed in Matthew 20:23 when the Lord said, "It is not mine to give." It was not in the divine plan to reveal the exact time of the destruc-

tion, but rather men were to be looking at the signs of the time, and especially for the immediate sign.

In verses thirty-seven through thirty-nine the Lord uses the days of Noah as an illustration of the attitude of the people prior to the disaster.

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Then, they did not consider Noah's warning until it was too late. Notice the account in Luke seventeen puts this illustration in the description of the destruction of Jerusalem. And so the account of Matthew, after verse thirty-four, still pertains to that destruction.

Verses forty and forty-one mention the activities of people in the field, and grinding at the mill.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

When the immediate sign appears—the Roman army around Jerusalem—one in each case flees according to the Lord's command. Hence one is taken and one is left. Again Luke's account in chapter seventeen shows this illustration applies to the destruction of Jerusalem. The remainder of Matthew twenty-four also seems to be further exhortation for patience and preparedness looking for that day of destruction to come.

This chapter then, has no application, as far as the signs therein are concerned, to any time period after the first century. The oft quoted verses of this chapter that are applied to our time, are but a misapplication of scripture. They were signs to a generation of people

living when our Lord was on the earth, and especially to those people who had obeyed the gospel, knew of the coming destruction, and were watching the signs so that they might, in the Lord's words, "Look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

## Chapter Six

### THE TESTIMONY OF INSPIRED MEN

The words of our Lord recorded in Matthew twenty-four were spoken some forty years before the fall of the nation of Israel. Our Lord was crucified shortly after he uttered these words, but he conquered his enemies and arose from the grave. On Pentecost after his resurrection the Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles, and the preaching of the gospel began. It was in the period from Pentecost to the destruction of Jerusalem that most of the epistles of the New Testament were written. We might expect that in these writings there would be mention of the catastrophe that was to come upon the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. It is the purpose of this chapter to take a look at some of the passages in the epistles that may refer to this event.

#### I Thessalonians 2:14-16

The first letter to the Thessalonians was written by Paul in the year 52 A.D. The Christians at Thessalonica were suffering at the hands of persecutors just as Christians in Judea were suffering. Verse fourteen says:

For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.

In Palestine the Jews persecuted Christians directly. Outside of Palestine they caused others to be the persecutors. Luke illustrates this fact in his account in Acts 17:5-8.

But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

The Jews of Thessalonica were so Zealous in their persecution that when Paul went on to Berea they followed him there.

But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people (Acts 17:13).

Acts 14:2 states the matter in exact terms. "But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren." Hence the Jews were the prime-movers of Gentile peoples in inflicting suffering on Christians.

In verse fifteen of First Thessalonians two Paul repeats the terrible charges that the Lord made against that generation.

Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men.

It was not strange that Christians were being persecuted by Jews since the Jews had slain their own Messiah and those who told of his coming into the world. The plain fact was that, although the Jews clung to a form of worship, they did not seek to please God.

The phrase of I Thessalonians 2:16, "To fill up their sins away," is a reference to our Lord's statement in Matthew 23:32. Because the cup of their iniquity was full, wrath was to come upon them to the uttermost. This is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. Barnes says that although the fall of the city and destruction of the temple was yet future, they were in fact, abandoned by God, and "their destruction was so certain that it might be spoken of as an indubitable fact." So far as God was concerned the certainty of the punishment was as sure as if it had already happened. The extremity of the clamity is indicated in the expression, "to the uttermost."

### I Thessalonians 5:1-11

It is the opinion of several commentators, Adam Clarke among them, that these verses also refer to the downfall of the nation.

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are

of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

The expression "times and seasons" of verse one is the same expression used in Acts 1:6-7, and refers, not to the second coming of Christ, but to events near at hand. Moreover, I Thessalonians 5:2 describes the event in the same terms used by our Lord in Matthew twenty-four to describe the destruction of Jerusalem. In verse three Paul describes the Jews as saying "peace and safety," and that seemed to be the way the Jews in Jerusalem felt about their situation just prior to Jerusalem's fall. The destruction that came was sudden. Paul said to the church, "Ye brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." He used the illustration of a pregnant woman to point out they were aware of the impending destruction. Such a woman knows the birth of the child is impending even if the exact date of birth is not known. The brethren were aware of what was coming even if they did not know the exact time. They were exhorted to "watch and be sober." The warning was that the wicked "shall not escape." The destruction of the Jewish government would erase much of the persecution they were suffering.

### Hebrews 8:13

A brief analysis of the Hebrew letter shows that it was the purpose of the writer to demonstrate that the New Testament is better than and takes the place of the Law of Moses. Christ Jesus is better than prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, and Aaron. The New Testament

is better than the Old Testament because it was prophesied to be better, it is actual, while the First Testament was only typical, and it is sealed with a better sacrifice. Moreover, the priesthood of Christ is better than the Aaronic because Christ has ascended into the heavens, he was not taken from among men, he is sinless, and his priesthood is endless. With these and other arguments the writer demonstrates why the Hebrew Christians should not abandon Christianity and return to Judaism. The new religion is the reality of which the Mosaic religion was only the type.

That there was danger of Jewish Christians going back to the Levitical system of animal sacrifices is evident from the warnings against letting the truth slip away (2:1-4), against hardening the heart against the Holy Spirit's teaching (3:7-19), against falling away (5:11-12), and against treading underfoot the Son of God and counting his blood unholy (10:26-29).

Among the exhortations given is Hebrews 8:13.

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

In this verse Paul points out a well known truth, that is, the coming of Christ's covenant made Moses' covenant "old." It was not old necessarily from the standpoint of age, but the making of another covenant made the first old. But Paul adds more information about Moses' Law when he says "that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." The death of our Lord "blotted out" the Law as a system under which God's people could be accepted and by which they could be judged. After the establishment of the church on Pentecost however, the large majority of the Jews continued to support the public rites of Judaism. Now the time has come for even the outward observance of those rites to cease. Paul is



saying to those who might be considering deserting Christ that soon even the public observance of those ancient rites will cease. It is an obvious reference to the destruction of the temple and the cessation of that service. As far as heaven is concerned the worship under Moses' Law ended with our Lord's death. Now even the outward observance would soon cease with Jerusalem's destruction.

### Hebrews 10:25-37

In this passage is found still another exhortation not to abandon Christ in favor of Judaism.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much more as ye see the day approaching.

Following this verse is a warning about the consequences of abandoning Christ.

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

The "day" of verse twenty-five refers to an event which was anticipated by Christians and was so well understood by them that no attempt is made to explain it

in detail. Albert Barnes makes these comments on the verse:

In support of the opinion that it refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and not to the coming of the Lord Jesus to set up a visible kingdom, we may adduce the following considerations: (1) The term used—"day"—will as properly refer to that event as any other. It is a word which would be *likely* to suggest the idea of distress, calamity, or judgment of some kind, for so it is often used in the Scriptures. (2) Such a period was distinctly predicted by the Saviour, and the indications which would precede it were clearly pointed out, see Matt. xxiv. (3) The destruction of Jerusalem was an event of great importance to the Hebrews, and to the Hebrew Christians to whom this epistle was directed; and it might be reasonable to suppose that the apostle Paul would refer to it. (4) It is not improbable that at the time of writing this epistle, there were indications that that day was approaching. Those indications were of so marked a character, that when the time approached they could not well be mistaken and it is probable that they had already begun to appear. (5) There were no such indications that the Lord Jesus was about to appear and to set up a visible kingdom.... (6) The expectation that the destruction of Jerusalem was referred to, and was about to occur, was just that which might be expected to produce the effect on the minds of the Hebrew Christians which the apostle here refers to. It was to be a solemn and fearful event. It would be a remarkable manifestation of God. It would break up the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the nation, and would scatter them abroad.

In verse thirty-five and thirty-six Paul says:

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

"Don't throw away your hope of heaven for the fading

pomp and splendor of the Jewish system," he exhorts, but rather, "be steadfast so that you may receive the promises." In verse thirty-seven he refers to the fact that destruction was not to be long in coming. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Adam Clarke paraphrased the verse in this way: "In a very short space of time the Messiah will come and execute judgment upon your rebellious country." The book of Hebrews was written in sixty-two or sixty-three and God's vengeance would soon fall on their persecutors.

### Hebrews 12:26-28

The last passage from Hebrews to be considered in this chapter draws a contrast between the eternal arrangements made by Christ and those temporary arrangements of the Law. Paul quotes the prophet Haggai to show that God promised to bring about revolutionary changes when Messiah came. Paul's wording of Haggai 2:6 is found in verse twenty-six.

Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

To the Jews the changes were startling. The Law was fulfilled and the old system of worship ended. Gentiles were accepted as equals with Jews in their standing before God as Christians. God not only "shook" or changed the whole system of religion with the coming of Christ, but Paul points out that these things shaken were to be removed.

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain (12:27).

This is a reference to the destruction of the nation and temple and the total abolition of the Jewish constitution both civil and religious. They were soon to be gone, but Christians have received a "kingdom which cannot be moved" (verse twenty-eight). With this fact in mind they were exhorted to continue to serve God by Christ.

### James 5:1-11

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasures together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering afflictions, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

The sentiments expressed by James in this chapter are applicable in a general way to people of all time. That the rich oppress the poor seems to be true of every

generation. It is the view of many expositors, however, that the remarks made by James in this chapter have a special application to the Jews about to suffer in the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. The writer exhorts them to be patient "unto the coming of the Lord," and says, "Behold the judge standeth at the door." In verse eight James says, "For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." It is not to be understood that James mistakenly looked for the second coming as near. Rather his reference is to the Lord's coming through the instrument of the Roman armies to destroy the city. Adam Clarke paraphrases it thusly: "He is already on his way to destroy this wicked people and to raze their city and temple."

### I Peter 4:17-18

Persecution is on Peter's mind as his pen, guided by the Holy Spirit, spreads ink on parchment. In verses twelve through sixteen he says:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

This suffering, as has been indicated previously, was inspired by the Jews. But Peter now makes this observation.

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

If this affliction and distress is to be endured by God's people, what will be the end of those who are not Christians? James McKnight in his expanded commentary words these verses this way:

*Indeed the time is come, that the punishment to be inflicted on the Jews as a nation, for their crimes from first to last, must begin at you Jewish Christians, now become the house of God. And if it begin first at us, who are so dear to God on account of our faith in his son, what will the end be of those Jews who obey not the gospel of God? And when God thus punishes the nation, if the righteous Jews who believe in Christ with difficulty can be saved, where will the ungodly and the sinful part of the nation shew themselves saved from the divine vengeance?*

### Others

Other passages are also held by some to be included as applying to the destruction of Jerusalem. Among them are Romans 13:11-12, Philippians 4:5, II Peter 2, II Peter 3, I John 2:8, and perhaps others. It is left to the reader to rightly divide God's word in regard to these passages.

## Chapter Seven

### THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

The destruction of Jerusalem was a sign that the Hebrew nation had lost its singular relationship with God as a chosen people. God's people today are not selected on the basis of flesh, but on the basis of faith in Christ. All men of every race can receive the blessings of God found in Christ Jesus. As the Apostle Paul put it in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew or Greek, male or female, bond or free, but we are all one in Christ Jesus." "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26).

#### The Return To Palestine

In spite of the clear teaching of God's word in regard to this matter, the idea is popular in this year that God has special plans for the Jewish people. Many believe that the establishment of the independent state of Israel in 1948 was a fulfillment of prophecy. Moreover, they predict a miraculous conversion of the whole nation of Israel to Christ, followed by a series of earthshaking events. It is not the purpose of this book to examine in detail each of the passages used in this way. But a brief look at a few examples will illustrate the error of such ideas.

Those who say the return to Palestine and the establishment of Israel is a fulfillment of prophecy refer to Old Testament passages such as Jeremiah 29:14.

And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you saith the Lord, and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

This passage is illustrative of many often quoted to try to show that the Bible prophesied the modern day return. But it can easily be demonstrated that this passage has no application to recent events, but was uttered to foretell the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. Daniel in his time applied this passage to the return which was shortly to take place.

In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:2).

Notice also that the context of Jeremiah 29:14 refers to a return after seventy years. Verse ten says:

For this saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform of my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

It can be seen that Jeremiah 29:14 must apply to the return accomplished after seventy years in Babylon. Moreover, the twenty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah tells us that all the things Jeremiah prophesied about the captivity and return of Israel were accomplished in the return from Babylon.

And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass when

seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations (Jeremiah 25:11-13).

It is evident that such passages as Jeremiah 29:14 have no application to modern day events.

But it is argued that Isaiah 11:11 says that "the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people." The first time, it is stated, was the return from Babylon, the second time is the modern day return. In connection with this verse, however, the Philistines, as well as Edom, Moab, and Ammon are mentioned. They no longer exist as nations or peoples demonstrating that the prophecy applied to the return from Babylon. Verse sixteen of Isaiah eleven shows the first return was from Egyptian bondage.

And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

The first return was from Egypt, hence the second return of Isaiah 11:11 was the return from Babylon.

Sometimes arguments are advanced concerning the land promises. But the Bible clearly states all such promises were fulfilled in the days of long ago. Note Joshua 21:43-45.

And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass.

Also consider Joshua 23:14.

Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

And so the land promises were all fulfilled, not one thing failed to come to pass which God promised. A close examination of every passage offered as proof of modern theories will convince the student that there is no Old Testament prophecy which sets forth any hope for the revival of the Jewish nation as God's special instrument.

### Romans Chapter Nine

Most of what is given for proof from the New Testament for the theory that the Jews will as a nation become God's chosen people again is found in Romans chapter eleven. Chapter eleven is a part of Paul's discussion of his fellow Jews, a unit which he begins with Romans nine. Paul begins chapter nine on a sad note; the Jews are not saved.

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Romans 9:1-3).

Most of the Jews were lost, but it was not because God had failed to bless them. They had so many benefits others did not enjoy, and Paul mentions these blessings in verses four and five.

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the law, and the services of God, and the

promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.

In spite of these blessings they had rejected Christ.

Paul points out in Romans 9:6 that God is now bestowing blessings on the basis of grace and not of race. He says, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." In verses seven and eight of the same chapter he explains that being a fleshly descendant of Abraham never was in itself reason for God to give special blessings.

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Israel was blessed, not because they were descendants of Abraham, but because God selected them to be blessed. Who could say that God doesn't have the right to choose whom he will bless? Paul illustrates God's right by the case of Ishmael and Isaac. Abraham offered his son Ishmael to God as the heir of the promises. He said, "O that Ishmael might live before thee" (Gen. 17:18). Abraham tried to help God out, but the covenant blessings were reserved for Isaac. "But in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Rom. 9:7). So in this case we have two sons of Abraham; one was selected for the special blessing, the other was not. Ishmael and Hagar were sent away, and from Ishmael came nations not included in the covenant with God.

In Paul's day the Jews as a nation had been rejected as God's special people. The apostle shows they had no right to complain because God had rejected them as a nation, and had accepted other people as his own. In working out his will in the past God had rejected the

other sons of Abraham and had selected Isaac. If being children of the flesh counted in God's dealings, why weren't all of Abraham's children included? They were not, for Isaac was selected and the others rejected. "If God had the right to select whom he would bless then, why doesn't he have the right today?" is Paul's argument.

In Romans 9:10-13 Paul anticipates the reply of the Jews to this argument. They might say, "It was only right that Isaac be selected since he was the only son of Sarah." So Paul goes on with a further argument. Isaac had twins by Rebecca. Before the birth of these boys, Jacob and Esau, God selected the younger to be the recipient of the blessings.

And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Now Esau was the first born and natural heir of the promises. Yet God rejected Esau and selected Jacob. Paul is saying God chose his own instruments to work out his plans. And who could say God had no right to do so? The Jews glorified in these selections of the past. Now, why would the Jews think it would be out of harmony with God's nature to reject the nation of the Jews, because of unbelief, and accept the Gentiles who believed in Christ?

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion (Rom. 9:15).

The conclusion of Paul's argument to this point is that in bringing to maturity his plans to bless all nations God has followed the council of his own will. He used the Jewish nation to bless the world, but the blessing was not the Jewish nation, but Christ Jesus. And so the blessings of Christ are not bestowed on the basis of racial lines, but on the basis of faith, as in the case of Abraham. And it made no difference to God that the Jews strived earnestly to make it otherwise. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). The remainder of chapter nine is Paul's enlargement on this topic.

### Romans Chapter Ten

In this chapter Paul demonstrates that the Jews as individuals have not been rejected. He says in verse one, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." He then shows that every Jew can be saved by submitting unto the righteousness of God. What is that righteousness? "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4). That righteousness was not hidden to the Jews. Paul quotes Moses to point out that the salvation of Christ was accessible to the Jews.

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:8-10).

To make it very plain that Jews were included in the blessings Paul said, "For there is no difference between

Jew and Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 10:12). He then said, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). There is no difference between Jew and Greek under the Gospel; all men can be saved. Had the Jews an opportunity to hear? In verse eighteen Paul stresses the fact they had heard. "But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." What had been the response of the nation as a whole to the gospel message? Paul says they had rejected it. "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Romans 10:21). The gospel could save the Jew, they had heard it, but as a nation they had rejected it.

### Romans Chapter Eleven

As chapter eleven begins Paul again states God has not rejected Jews from receiving his blessings.

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew (Romans 11:1-2).

The nation had lost its special standing with God, but individual Jews could be saved. Paul's example was himself; he was a Jew and he was saved.

The apostle compares the situation in his day to the time of Elijah. When Ahab was king Elijah thought he was alone, but there were 7000 others who had not bowed the knee to Baal. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5). The rejection of Christ by the Jews wasn't complete for a remnant had obeyed the gospel.

The fact remained that only a small number of Jews had accepted Christ. The majority of the people of Israel had rejected their Saviour. Paul gives the testimony of the prophets who foretold this attitude of the Jews toward Christ. Isaiah said:

God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day (Romans 11:8).

David is quoted in verses nine and ten.

Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and stumbling block, and a recompense unto them; Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back away.

In keeping with this only a small part of the nation had accepted Christ; the greatest part of the people refused to believe.

In verse twelve Paul speaks of the "fall" of the Jews.

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness.

This verse has always been difficult for interpreters. One reason for this has been the desire of concerned men to foresee the Jews as a people accept Christ as Saviour. But the conversion of Israel is not the topic under consideration here. Rather it is the "fall" of that nation. The word "fall" means to blunder or trespass. They had blundered in rejecting Christ Jesus and in putting him to death. Except for a remnant the entire nation was trespassing against God. As a result of the rejection of the gospel by the majority of the Jews, gospel preachers turned their preaching toward the Gentiles. An example of this is found in Acts 13:46. The Jews of Antioch of



Pisidia were first approached by Paul and his companions. These Jews rejected the good news and so Paul told them:

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, the judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Thus the Jewish "fall" was the riches of the world. The "diminishing of them," or their lack of faith in Christ, the riches of the Gentiles.

The expression, "How much more their fulness?" is usually applied to some future time when the nation will accept Christ and obey the gospel. But once again, their conversion to Christ is not under consideration. Rather their blindness (verse 7), their slumber (verse 8), their failure to see and hear (verse 8), their failure to use the national privileges heaped on them as God's people for 1500 years (verse 9), and their insensibility and blindness (verse 10). If what had happened to the Jews to the time of Paul's writing had helped to spread the true religion, what would the "filling up," or completing of God's plans for the nation do for Christianity? God's plan included the destruction of the nation and its capital city of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, the stopping of the performance of their ceremonial rites, and the dispersion of the Jewish peoples by the Romans into foreign nations. When this would be done the biggest hinderance to the gospel at that time, the opposition of the Jews, would be removed. Again, notice I Thesalonians 2:14-16:

For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both

killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

With Jerusalem destroyed, the temple gone, the ceremonial rites stopped, and the people dispersed, the gospel could be preached unhampered. The Lord described the spread of the gospel when these things were accomplished in Matthew 24:31:

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The spread of the gospel was so rapid after the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the Jewish state, that even mighty Rome shuddered and eventually fell under its impact.

In verses thirteen through twenty-one Paul warns the Gentiles about becoming high minded at the present predominance of Gentiles in the church. Using the olive tree to illustrate his point, he said in verses twenty and twenty-one:

Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

The Jews as natural branches were broken off and Gentiles were grafted into the tree. The Jews could be grafted back in again, as Paul had indicated in chapter ten and states in verse twenty-three. "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again."

In verses twenty-five and twenty-six Paul sums up his teaching.

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Blindness or hardness has happened in part (only a remnant of the Jews had obeyed the gospel) to Israel. The expression, "blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," suggests that a change was coming. Instead of speaking of the national conversion of Israel in future times, as many believe, it fits in with what Paul has been saying, and with historical facts, to believe Paul indicated that the the time was coming when the hardness of Israel would be complete. That is, the church of Christ would be composed almost entirely of Gentiles, and then the "fulness of the Gentiles" would be come in. The past and the present demonstrate this to be true. After the first century those who professed to be Christians came overwhelmingly to be Gentiles, and even in our modern day, Jews who profess Christianity are as scarce as the proverbial "hen's teeth." The "hardness in part" would last "until" the hardness became complete. Then the church would be almost entirely Gentile and the fulness of the Gentiles would have come to pass.

In verse twenty-six Paul reiterates what he has already stressed over and over, namely that Jews as individuals can be saved just like Gentiles through Jesus Christ. The word "so" in this verse is an adverb of manner. The apostle is saying Jews can be saved in this manner.

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Here Paul refers to the words of the prophets who foretold of Christ's first coming to save men. And this is the hope of Israel. Their hope is found in this Deliverer, the man Christ Jesus who came into this world to save men. It is evident from Paul's remarks that there will be no special pleading with, or miraculous conversion of, Jews. They, to be saved, must believe and obey Christ.

The fall of the Jewish nation with the destruction of its capital city in A.D. 70 stands as one of the most important events of all times. The words of the prophets and of the Master in this matter were completely fulfilled. This sign of the truth of the Lord's claims could not be denied. The Jewish house of worship lay desolate, a charred ruin; its glory was gone. And the gospel of Christ was now freely preached without the desperate opposition of those to whom it was first announced. As the centuries pass the happenings of those summer days of long ago testify to the reliability of God's word and to the sureness of his promises. The Jews can do no better than to rest their hopes entirely upon Jesus Christ and upon the word of truth which he brought to men.

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