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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me please to the passage we read, or part of the passage we read, in Luke 21, continuing our studies in this gospel. I'd like to consider with you verses 20 to 24, verses 20 to 24, in which Jesus speaks about the destruction of Jerusalem.

And in point of fact, I wish really to focus particularly this morning on the last phrase of verse 24, but verse 20, When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.

Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing mothers in those days, for there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations.

And Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And particularly that last phrase, and Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

[1 : 24] Now Jesus, as we know, has made a dramatic statement about Jerusalem and the temple in verse 6. And by saying that, that this temple will not stand one stone of it upon another, by saying that, certainly Jesus got the ear of the people.

They were all ears. Where will these things be? What will be the sign that these things are going to take place? This is something absolutely dramatic and unprecedented, just to think that the temple would be destroyed.

It seems unthinkable, especially when they had been speaking of it in such glowing terms, about how beautiful were its stones. And so that was the question that would be on their minds, and which was on their minds, as we see in verse 7, and a reasonable question.

I mean, if I were to say, this building here, our building here is going to be demolished. And if I were to put a notice up in the post office, or outside the railings of the church to say, this building is going to be demolished.

I'd be surprised if people didn't inquire and say, what are you talking about? When is that going to happen? And why is it going to happen? And that's the sort of thing, you see, that the people would feel when Jesus said this.

[2 : 51] That the temple was going to be destroyed. Now Jesus, in verses 8 to 19, as we saw last week, those who were here began to answer this query about when it was going to be, by giving signs of what would happen at or around that time before the destruction of the temple.

There is the sign of religious deceivers in verse 8. Take heed that you be not deceived. Many will come saying, I am he, and so on.

And so this is the first sign. The sign that there will be religious deceivers towards the end. People trying to turn folks away from the true God and from the true salvation as it is found in Jesus.

And then there's the sign in verses 9 to 11 of natural or international turmoil. There is the sign of wars and rumors of wars amongst nations.

And there's the sign in nature itself. Earthquakes in various places and pestilences and so on. And we in our age, of course, are familiar with these sorts of things.

[4 : 01] But even before that, there is the sign, as Jesus says in verse 12, of persecution. Persecution from outside, from those who are in authority, you will be persecuted, you will be delivered up to synagogues and prisons for my name's sake and so on.

And then there will be persecution from within. In verses 16 and 17, he refers to being betrayed by one's own family. And that this would be even unto death.

So there are these signs that Jesus begins to tell them all. And he says that notwithstanding this, there are opportunities. There is opportunity, he says in verse 13, for witness.

It will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. In connection with this, you need not have anxiety because of the promise that he says of help.

In verses 14 and 15, he says, settle it in your heart, not to meditate beforehand, but you will answer because the Holy Spirit will help you. I will give you mouth and wisdom.

[5 : 10] So you needn't be anxious about that. And then there is this promise of protection. Not a hair of your head shall be lost. That is to say, you have to persevere and not to lose heart.

Possess your souls in patience. But now Jesus goes on in verse 20 here, in developing the signs in connection with what he said earlier in verse 7.

And from verse 20 to 24, these verses that I've just read, he turns attention specifically, and of course prophetically, to the literal destruction of the literal temple in Jerusalem.

There will be military action against the city. That's what he's saying in verse 20. We assume from verse 22 that this destruction is really rooted in the divine judgment on account of the forsaking on the part of the people widely of truth and righteousness.

He says there, those are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. And Jesus in verse 22 indicates in effect that this is a fulfillment of what had previously been written.

[6 : 44] That is, of what had previously been prophesied. And it must be seen as a punishment for willful departure from the Lord and from his ways.

It would be seen as that, in connection with the hardness of their hearts against the Messiah who had come amongst them.

And that itself is a solitary thought. What keeps the church from disappearing? Well, of course, it is the presence of the Lord.

But it is the allegiance of men and women to the Lord. It is their faithfulness to the Lord. It is regard for truth and righteousness that keeps the church from disappearing.

It is submission to the will of God on the part of a people. It is the devotion and the prayer and the piety of a people.

[7 : 52] Because that is what constitutes a church. It is the mortification for sin that is evident. It is repentance and faith.

We notice in the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 Jesus warns concerning the disappearance of these things which would mean by consequence the disappearance of the church itself.

in view of this forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem what was the reaction of Christians to be?

Well, Jesus says here in verse 21 He says flee the place. Now, let's understand this happened in 70 AD the Romans destroyed the temple and they destroyed Jerusalem and we are told by ancient historians that the Christians in Jerusalem did what Jesus encouraged them to do but the point here is that Jesus what Jesus prophesied here concerning the destruction of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem actually came to pass there was tremendous violence against the place we are told that in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD under the Romans there were one million people killed or thereabouts apparently we are told not a Jew was left in the city Jerusalem as we read here in prophecy given by Jesus

Jerusalem was trampled by the Gentiles and this is why Jesus says what he does in verse 23 these words may sound strange woe to those who are with child who are pregnant in those days and who are nursing mothers for there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people now he's not pronouncing a woe upon pregnant women themselves he's saying that there will be woe and particularly to such because of such distress and affliction on account of the events and we can understand this you see amongst other things in the face of all that sort of destruction that was going on it would be pregnant mothers above all who would say what sort of world am I bringing my child into and that is the force of what

[10 : 44] Jesus says in verse 23 people will be saying then what sort of what sort of world is this what sort of world are we bringing our children into and up in that will be a response of what is happening and what would happen concerning Jerusalem we can understand that however as we consider these verses this morning we have to notice particularly as I suggested earlier what we find here at the end of verse 24 because it's all very well to say right here is a prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem there were the circumstances of the destruction of Jerusalem it came to pass Jesus prophesied it but then we can ask what does that mean for us well I think it means a lot for us particularly in view of what we have at the end of verse 24 because he says there

Jerusalem will be trampled till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled and we ask the question what does that mean because that brings this whole passage into relevance for us who are Gentiles we Gentiles must obviously be concerned at what is involved in the times of the fulfilment of the Gentiles now to understand this let me remind you of what happened in the New Testament era as you're aware before the New Testament times it was the Jewish people who had the oracles of God it was to them that God had revealed himself they were his chosen people the Jewish people had the law and the prophets these were theirs they received

God's revelation and through them the message was preserved including the prophecies of the Messiah to come and of the New Testament age now of course although that was true of the Jews that they had the oracles they had the revelation of God it was open for Gentiles to join with them they were called proselytes but with the coming of Jesus Christ the picture changed the message became universal the gospel of an incarnate son of God who became a crucified and resurrected saviour was to be preached not within the confines of Jewry but it was to be preached to the whole world in terms of the great commission Matthew chapter 28 go therefore into all the world with the gospel as recorded practically in the first chapter of Acts of the Apostles where the command and commission is given to go from

Jerusalem to Judea or Samaria and to the ends of the earth and that was the distinctiveness of the New Testament era that the revelation of God was no longer confined to the Jewish people but went out to all the worlds now we see something of the struggle that people had with this in the Acts of the Apostles people like Peter they had a struggle with that because they felt that the revelation of God was restricted to the Jewish people and somehow the ordinances of the Jewish people had to be maintained and they had struggled with this but before his crucifixion Jesus made it clear that this had to happen this expansion had to happen in chapter 24 he says the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations and the end will come and so even before his crucifixion resurrection

Jesus said that that had to be the case and then we have this verse here in chapter 21 of Luke Jerusalem will be trampled until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled now some take this to refer to a possible future restoration of the Jews or conversion of the Jews that is when God has done all that he is going to do with the Gentiles when their time is fulfilled then there will be some restoration he will then have to do with the Jews again and there will be a conversion of the Jews to the Messiah at which point it may be said that Jerusalem will no longer be trampled by the Gentiles and some people point to Romans chapter 11 as supporting that and I'm not denying that possibility I think there are good grounds for maintaining that but whilst not denying the gathering of Jews towards the end of time

[16:00] I don't believe that's in view here in verse 24 particularly Jesus here I believe is speaking of something that will persist between the destruction of Jerusalem which is prophesied and the end of history and the end of history will be the time when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled so when will this fulfilment of the time of the Gentiles be it will be when the gospel I mean it will be the end of time but when will that be Jesus is speaking about signs it will surely be when the gospel has gone out to every nation throughout the world and it seems to me that we are getting very near to that point and that will coincide as Jesus says

Matthew 24 14 with the end of the world and the coming of the Lord the second coming of Jesus so as we reflect this morning on verse 24 here this phrase what should be our response well I'd like to make one or two applications of it and the first is this it should fill us with confidence about the authority of Jesus Christ this is a simple point and I mentioned it earlier what Jesus prophesied here concerning the concerning the destruction of Jerusalem actually came to pass and so what we have in this passage in this whole chapter is another evidence of the lordship of Jesus Christ it is an evidence that Jesus Christ is a sovereign lord of this universe who controls this universe and its history he is able to predict because he knew and he knew because he is in control he has all authority in heaven and upon the earth because he is the perfect sovereign and eternal son of

God let me ask you this morning what confidence do you have about the future what confidence about the future and on what is any confidence about the future based it is not properly based if it is not founded upon the person and the work and the word of the lord Jesus Christ that is the foundation for any confidence you me or any man can have about the future where it is based upon the person and the word and the work of the lord Jesus Christ without Jesus without his words we can have no confidence nobody can have confidence about anything and people are only building their life on sand if they don't hear the word of Christ and do it so this is the first thing I would suggest that these verses fill us with confidence in the authority of the lord

Jesus Christ because what he predicted was fulfilled and what he predicts verse 24 will be fulfilled but secondly this should fill us with a missionary zeal until the times of the gentiles are fulfilled when the gospel has gone out to all the nations and this means for Christians let's get the gospel out let's persuade and let's preach and let's pray and let's plead and let's love people into the kingdom because this is the times of the gentiles that we are in and when this is what we are doing we are hastening the kingdom we are hastening the end we are hastening the fulfilment and we want the fulfilment because the times of the gentiles being fulfilled will mean the end the second coming of the lord Jesus

Christ and so we should be filled beloved friends we should be filled with zeal for the kingdom of the lord Jesus Christ it must consume us it must occupy us it must bring us to our knees before god it must embolden us and what is the church worth if it is not filled with missionary zeal in these times of the gentiles well didn't Jesus say to the church in Laodicea I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot I would wish you were cold or hot like a refrigerator or like a cooker so then because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot I will spew you out of my mouth god forbid that that should be so therefore be zealous he says and repent as we reflect upon the fact that the times of the gentiles is not yet fulfilled it should fill us with missionary zeal but then it should fill us also with this with a privilege the sense of such great privilege as having the gospel here we are gentiles and the gospel has come to us all the way from

[22:10] Jerusalem Judea Samaria the ends of the earth right up to Burkhead we have the gospel the gospel has been here for 180 200 years or more for a privilege and it brings home the question to us how much do I appreciate the gospel what is it to me we have the gospel what a privilege we are part of the fulfilling in this time of the gentiles that in the mercy and the grace and the loving kindness of God it has reached us and it is a great privilege to have the gospel to hear the gospel and also to respond to the gospel and the gospel of course calls for response but what a great privilege it is what a sense of privilege we should have that we possess the gospel that we hear it and that we can respond but then

I would suggest another thing that this should remind us of is this or should give us a response concerning is this it should fill us with concern over judgment to come you see why did destruction come upon Jerusalem it came upon Jerusalem as we read in verse 22 because the things which were written might be fulfilled and in this case also what is written will be fulfilled the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled and that will mean judgment day now in this context here what was Jesus' encouragement in view of the literal destruction of the temple and Jerusalem it was this that people had to flee that place and surely there is there for us a direct application and appeal in terms of this a call to separate from sin a call to mortify sin a call to flee as the

New Testament encourages us from the wrath which is to come to flee from leaving ourselves open to the wrath of God and to the judgment of God you see we're in a society broadly speaking we're in a society pretty much as bad as the worst days of the flood pretty much as bad as Sodom and Gomorrah we live in a society in which there is a plague of unbelief and of immorality we are faced with a godless situation and Christians are to respond to this by fleeing I don't mean in any monastic way but fleeing from such things from the entrapments from the ensnarements of the world not a compromise godlessness with godless lifestyle dominated by godless ideas we are to be discerning and we are to flee such things for our spiritual health for the spiritual health of a church and community

Christians are to let the whole word of god predominate Christians are to let the word of god have its way whatever inconvenience whatever discomfort it may cause or whatever persecution it may bring Christians are to be holy people in the light of the judgment that is to come that's what Peter says in his second letter chapter 3 and that is an implication here if we are not separated that way if we have more from Sodom we will be caught up in all the consuming flames of divine judgment and so as we reflect upon this it should fill us with concern over the reality of judgment to come the reality that there is a coming day in which the times of the

Gentiles will be fulfilled will be over which brings me to a conclusion on this this morning because when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled that will be the end and that has not yet come because we are still here and judgment day has not yet arrived and we are still in a day of opportunity a day of grace and we still have the privilege of the gospel and the opportunity of the gospel going out amongst all nations amongst all people near and far we still have this gospel which tells us of our sins and of their consequences which tells us of the guilt and their consequences that they bring in terms of eternal judgment and death we still have this gospel which tells us that

[28 : 01] Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners it tells us that through his cross the penalty has been paid by Jesus as a substitute for all who will come to faith in him it is no different today as it was then it tells us this gospel that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus no condemnation to those who are saved by Christ and this gospel tells us that there is a judgment to come a judgment to face a Christ to face it may be that this times of the Gentiles will not be fulfilled before we leave this world and death and that will be the point at which we must meet our maker and if we are not standing upon him then it will be for condemnation but not for those who are saved by Jesus

Christ when the times of the Gentiles is finished fulfilled gospel work is at an end the day of opportunity is over judgment day those outside will remain outside those who never came to Christ in their lives will be outside forever those who are outside when death comes or when the end comes will remain outside and that is a question for you me all men today because we don't know that the times of the Gentiles will not be fulfilled tonight have you flown for refuge to Jesus Christ have you flown to Jesus Christ the only place of safety and security for eternity have you flown to that place and are you in that condition of which it can be said no condemnation condemnation oh dear friends happy are you when that is true happy are you when you have

Jesus for yourself happy are you when through him you have found that wonderful peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ may the Lord give us grace to be responsive to his word and may the Lord bless these thoughts upon his word to our hearts let us pray heavenly father we pray for blessing upon us from thy word we pray oh Lord that we might recognize afresh today the wonderful authority that is in Jesus Christ and we pray oh Lord that as we hear his teaching it might go home to his heart to our hearts and so will thou bless us from it Lord that in our lives and by our testimony Jesus Christ might be glorified that others may see that we have been with Jesus and know him and rejoice in him so will thou bless us

Lord with gospel blessings until the day break and the shadows flee away and the Lord returns hasten that day forgive us our sins bless us Lord in Jesus name Amen