

LUKE

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Chapter Twenty One

Luke 21:1-4

And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. (2) And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. (3) And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; (4) for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

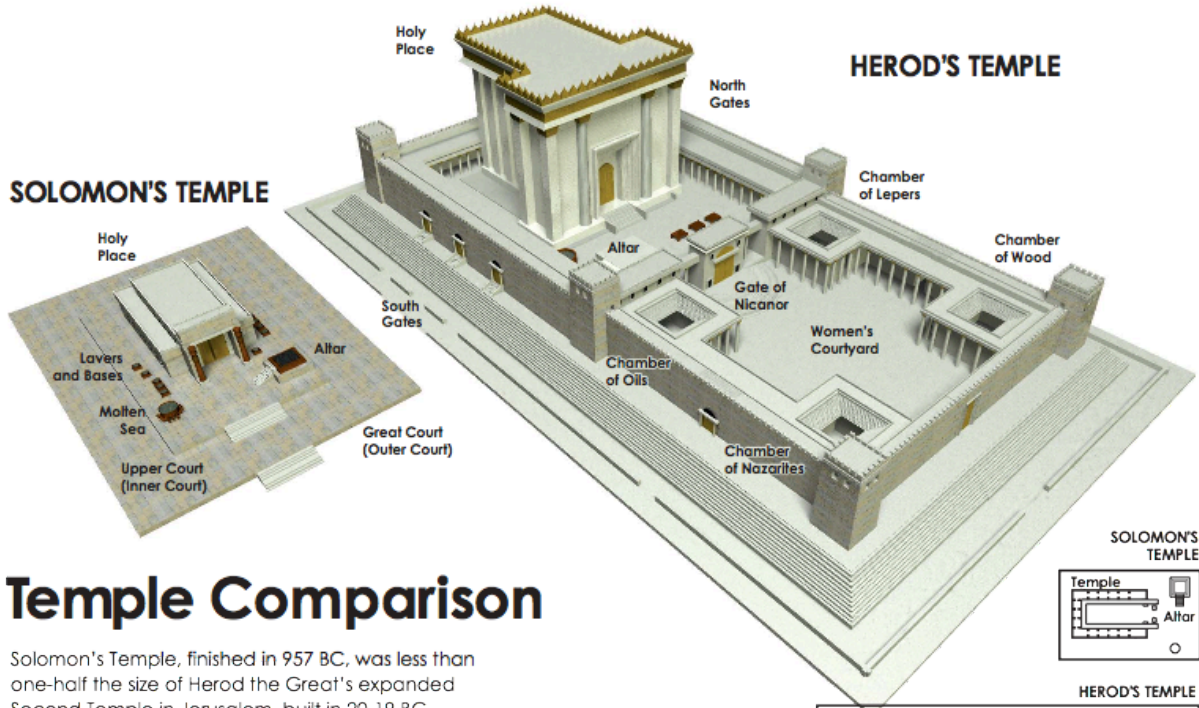
Jesus looked up from His teaching and saw some rich people putting their gifts into the receptacles in the treasury room. There were thirteen of these horn-shaped containers in the room. They were broad at the bottom and narrow at the top to retard possible cheating. There is a similar warning in Matthew: *"So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (Matt 6:2)* There were probably no real trumpets sounding but the rich might put their large gifts in the containers in such a manner that they made a loud sound as they rattled into them. The money put into the container by the widow consisted of the smallest coins available, approximately 1/132 of a denarius that was the daily wage of a laborer. If this was all that she had, she was indeed more than simply poor. Jesus extols the offering of the widow for she was left with nothing. The rich gave from their surplus so they were still rich. The contrast is extreme as the widow demonstrated her total devotion to God and His provisions. The rich still depend upon themselves for their livelihood. Her giving demonstrates a selfless devotion to God and what it means to give back to God what is His:

- Luke 2:36-38 *And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, (37) and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. (38) At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.*
- Luke 20:25 *And He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

Luke 21:5

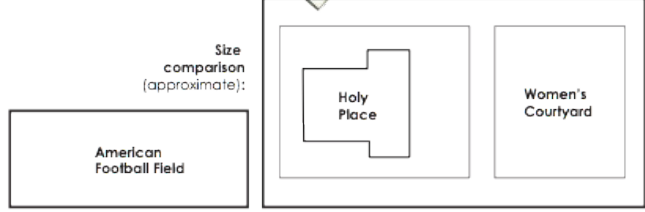
And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts,

The votive gifts are ritualistic gifts. The crowd was admiring the new temple construction. The sanctuary was rather modest and by law could not be changed so King Herod enhanced the temple's size of its setting:



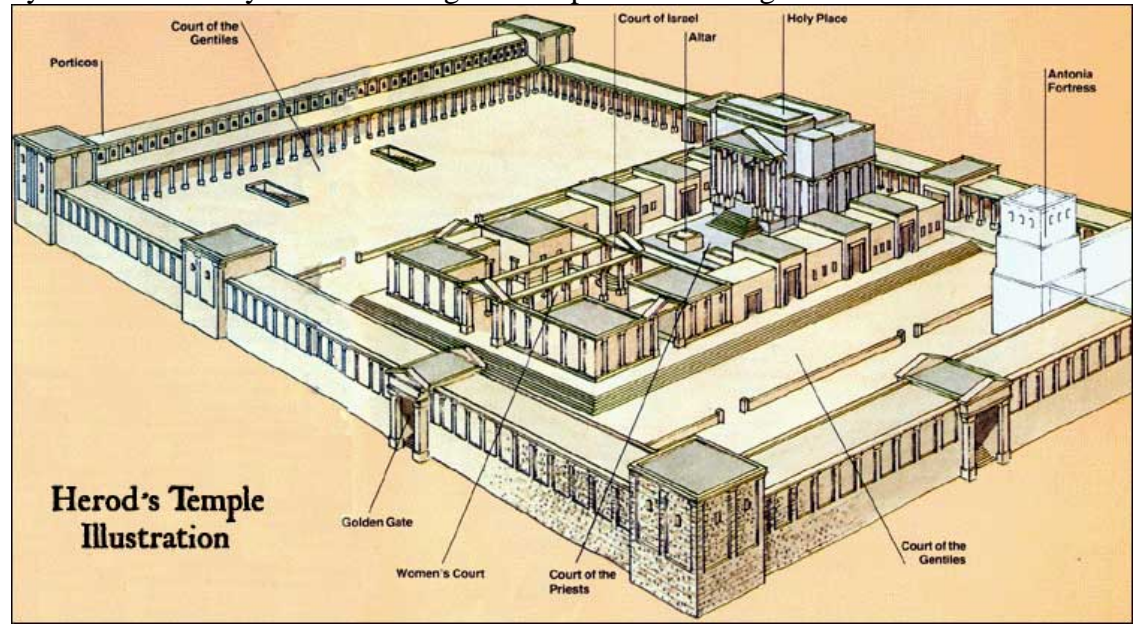
Temple Comparison

Solomon's Temple, finished in 957 BC, was less than one-half the size of Herod the Great's expanded Second Temple in Jerusalem, built in 20-19 BC.



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King Herod also continued work that was not finished until AD 62, just eight years before it was destroyed. It was widely heralded as a great complex of buildings:



Herod's Temple Illustration

Luke 21:6-8

He said, (6) "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down." (7) They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" (8) And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.

The people were blinded by the magnificence of the structure and not mindful of the person to whom they were listening (Col 2:9 *For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.* We all need to be mindful of the temporary nature of all things that have been built by man or that now exist by the grace of God. All creation is by Him and maintained by Him:

Col 1:16-17 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. (17) He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

His prophecy is a repeat as was recorded by Luke: *and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.*" (Luke 19:44) This prophecy is not intended as a distant eschatological event but one for the near future, and we know it occurred in AD 70 precisely as Jesus stated.

The people then asked Jesus when this terrible event would occur. The questions are stated somewhat differently by Mark: *"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?"* (Mark 13:4) The people questioning Jesus were probably not His disciples for Luke only records people addressing Him as "Teacher" to be those outside the circle. They want to know what sign to look for so as to give them some warning of the coming destruction. People often search for a sign today also but that will not be given them for it is the responsibility of His disciples to always be prepared for that day. Jesus did warn them that false prophets would come telling the people that the day had come or that they were even He. Luke also told them of such events in his second epistle:

- Acts 5:36-39 *"For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. (37) "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. (38) "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; (39) but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."*
- Acts 21:38 *"Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"*

There have been many similar events centered around some particularly eloquent person in the past 2000 years and undoubtedly there will be more.

Luke 21:9-15

"When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately." Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, (11) and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. (12) "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. (13) "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. (14) "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; (15) for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

Remember the context as Jesus has been talking about the temple being destroyed so this “end” to which He refers in verse nine is the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and not the End Times. Jesus is referring to the beginning of the doom of the temple and not of the whole world. Such destruction has occurred in the past without bringing on the end of the world and so it will be again. The destruction of the temple will come as a result of the malfeasance of its leaders and some revolutionists who will engage in a futile war against Rome. Jesus tells them to just let such occurrences take their course and trust that God is in control of all events. He continues to tell them that there will be nations and kingdoms in conflict and He has reference to Israel revolting against Rome that will lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The kingdoms in conflict will be the war between heaven and Satan’s realm. Jesus is here concerned only with Israel so the sign is that when Israel rises against Rome, the demolition of the temple is near. The natural earthquakes will lead to plagues and famines but He does not clarify as to the meaning of the terrors and signs from heaven.

Jesus then warns them that, before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, they will be persecuted and brought before various leaders because of their allegiance to Him. Luke has previously told of such: *"Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. (Luke 6:22)* Luke places this persecution before the preceding signs of the destruction of the temple (8-11) and the desolation of Jerusalem (20-24) during the war against Rome in AD 66-70. As such events unfold, they should be uplifted spiritually knowing that all is proceeding according to God’s plan:

Luke 11:49-51 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, (50) so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, (51) from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'

Jesus then tells them the reason for this persecution as it will be an opportunity for them to be bold witnesses for the gospel. Luke spells out such events clearly in his second epistle such as:

- Acts 4:33 *And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.*

- Acts 23:11 *But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."*

The disciples are told to not prepare some eloquent defense to help them get out of persecution for such is not their purpose during such events. They will present a clear exposition of the gospel that will represent the wisdom of God and not their own clever rhetoric:

1Peter 3:14-16 *But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, (15) but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; (16) and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.*

They are guaranteed a successful witness to Jesus and not from death as Luke also reports concerning the sermon and stoning of Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60).

Luke 21:16-19

"But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, (17) and you will be hated by all because of My name. (18) "Yet not a hair of your head will perish. (19) "By your endurance you will gain your lives.

The trials coming to the disciples will be even more horrendous because some of the betraying will be from relatives and friends. The word "brothers" could refer to fellow Jews or even false followers of Jesus. The hatred that comes upon them because of the name of Jesus will be from all directions:

- Acts 24:5 *"For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.*
- Acts 28:22 *"But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere."*
- 1Peter 2:12 *Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*
- 1Peter 4:14 *If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

The warnings of Jesus should cause all people considering being a disciple of Jesus Christ to carefully consider their stating such a devotion. They must count the costs (11:24-35).

Verses 18 and 19 must be read together or else one might get the impression that Jesus is promising that they will not be physically harmed for verse 16 clearly stated that some will physically die. We have already referenced the death of Stephen and we know that James is slain by Herod as are all of the apostles except John. The promise of Jesus is then that those who endure may die physically but their eternal life is promised. Jesus has already told them not to fear someone who can only kill their body:

Luke 12:4-5 *"I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. (5) "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"*

Luke 21:20-22

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. (21) "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; (22) because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled."

During the war with Rome (AD 67-70) many people fled into the city thinking they would be safe within its defensive walls but Jesus is warning them to flee away from the city for its destruction is sealed. This warning is similar to that given to people during the Babylonian siege:

Jer 21:8-10 "You shall also say to this people, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. (9) "He who dwells in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence; but he who goes out and falls away to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and he will have his own life as booty. (10) "For I have set My face against this city for harm and not for good," declares the LORD. "It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will burn it with fire."

Jesus is not warning them to take some sort of cowardly retreat but to recognize that the time of Jerusalem and the temple are past history. The nation, the temple, and the holy city are not tied to redemption any longer so the disciples are warned to not be part of that past methodology. Many early Christians did heed this warning during the war with Rome and fled to Pella and situated in trans-Jordan, south of the Sea of Galilee to begin the rise of Christianity. Jesus tells them that such will be the days of vengeance when God will judge disobedience:

- *Deut 32:35 'Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.'*
- *Jer 51:6 Flee from the midst of Babylon, And each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment, For this is the LORD'S time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her.*
- *Hos 9:7 The days of punishment have come, The days of retribution have come; Let Israel know this! The prophet is a fool, The inspired man is demented, Because of the grossness of your iniquity, And because your hostility is so great.*

Luke uses language to indicate that their disobedience will result in their destruction even as the warnings in the time of the Babylonian invasion applied. The inevitable result of disobedience is destruction and I cannot help but wonder how much longer God will wait before acting against our country because of our open defiance of the laws of God.

Luke 21:23-28

"Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; (24) and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

We should notice that Jesus does not lament over the destruction of the temple but over the suffering of those during the destruction of Jerusalem. He knows that God is forever changing the redemption process and so it is necessary for the temple to be destroyed so no further offerings and sacrifices may be made. Many people will die by the sword, many will be taken captive, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by Roman soldiers during this awful war. Josephus states that the number of Jews killed by the Romans was 1,100,000, the number of captives sent to be slaves in various places was 97,000, and he gives a horrible account of the starvation of those under siege during the war. The “times of the Gentiles” is hard to interpret but since He just said that Jerusalem would be trampled by them, it probably just means the Roman soldiers who executed God’s judgment upon the city and the temple. This last part of the verse also may be an indication of a large amount of time passing between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Parousia that starts in the next verse. Either of these conclusions would fit with the context since there were no chapter verse numbers to confuse our understanding.

Luke 21:25-28

"There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, (26) men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (27) "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory. (28) "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

Now that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple have been discussed, Jesus shifts His emphasis to the End Times and His Second Coming (the Parousia). Luke just moves into the next discussion whereas Matthew and Mark have phrases connecting the two events:

- Matt 24:29 *"But **immediately after** the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*
- Mark 13:24 *"But in those days, **after that tribulation**, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT,*

This apocalyptic language is difficult to explain but it mainly means a time when people will be fearful and not understanding what is happening. There may be a time of a solar and a lunar eclipse as well as a time with many meteors falling through the sky. These events will mark the time when Jesus returns with power and great glory. Jesus tells us that when we see these things beginning we are not to be downcast but to lift up our heads because the wonderful time of our redemption is coming near. To those who are not His disciples this will be a terrible time. But to His disciples this is a wonderful time. The corresponding section in Mark also includes angels who will gather the elect:

Mark 13:26-27 "Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. (27) "And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

Luke 21:29-36

Then He told them a parable: "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; (30) as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. (31) "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. (32) "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. (33) "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. (34) "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; (35) for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. (36) "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Jesus told them that just as anyone should be able to know that summer is coming because of the leaves appearing on the trees, all should be able to understand that something different is happening by the coming consummation and the arrival of the KOG. Mark (13:28) only includes the fig tree but Luke is concerned that his audience may not be familiar with that particular tree. The words "this generation" has been variously interpreted but it probably just means the generation of people who are present when all these events begin to occur. Everything will pass away except the prophecy of Jesus which is fixed and certain. This should be very comforting to all of His followers. Some people will be greatly discouraged and may even resort to alcohol consumption to try to fade out the events. Some may also be so inebriated by their own understanding and knowledge that they miss the event. But this end will come to all on earth: *Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them.* (Ecc 9:12) There is no way to prepare except through prayer and an absolute trust in God:

- 1Thess 5:2-6 *For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. (3) While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. (4) But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; (5) for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; (6) so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.*
- Rom 8:28 *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

Praying that we will have strength to escape these things does not mean to avoid them for they are all fixed according to God's plan. It does mean that we would be given strength to go through them victoriously when we will then stand before Jesus. The disciples of Jesus will be able to stand before Jesus because they have been transfigured into a heavenly identity by double imputation.

Christian eschatology should bring great joy and peace to the true disciple of Jesus Christ as we know that the Trinity awaits us on the other side. No matter how bleak the world looks, the future as proclaimed by God assures us that the end of evil will come and all the righteous will be rescued.

Luke 21:37-38

Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. (38) And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

Despite His dire teachings, many people would arouse themselves early in the morning to go hear Him in the temple. This was the standard time for Jesus during His last days on earth as He would be teaching in the temple during the day and spending the night on the Olivet mount. This habit of Jesus would also explain how Judas knew where to take the posse to arrest Jesus:

*John 18:2-3 Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples. (3) Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, *came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.*