

The Times of the Gentiles

“Now is the Time” #7 – Pastor Ronnie Wolfe

Luke 21:1-36

I. PRECURSORS TO THE END

I am taking my text today from Luke 21:24, where it says *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.*

We find here that there is a time predicted when the Jewish people will be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. For that reason, and before we go into a consideration of what these times are and how they relate to our subject, we need to see what precedes, or what are the precursors, of the time of the end.

In doing this we need to go back and look at this entire chapter to see the progression of events that take place from the time the Lord is speaking this message until he comes again. By doing this I hope for us to see the urgency of our seeing the end of the Gentile period and a great and serious looking forward to the coming of our Lord from heaven to take us from this world and place us in his presence where we shall be eternally.

The Worth of Money. (Luke 21:1-5) First in this chapter we see the worth of money. The Jews had a wonderful and beautiful temple, its buildings glittering with stones and gifts. That building must have been something to admire while walking by, even at a long distance. As Jesus and his disciples would travel perhaps down from the Mount of Olives, they could readily see the buildings of the temple and their marvelous structural beauty.

In the minds of the Jews, this was not only the most beautiful building in the world, but it was

the most important building in the world. They had put much money, time and work into the building of these edifices to what they thought was the glory of God. They were pleasing God with their sacrifices in gifts to the temple. Jesus, however, takes their minds from the buildings of the temple and onto the heart when he says that this lady had put in her two mites, and Jesus said that she had put in more than they all because it was from her heart and from her poverty that she put it in. She loved the Lord more than the Pharisaical Jews who were giving out of their abundance, while this poor widow had given her entire living.

Many today adorn their ministries with many fineries and impress the masses of people with their beautiful and functional buildings. They gloat at how the Lord has given them so much and has “blessed the ministry.” But how much of this is from the heart? Many churches today are run as one would run a business. Groups are in competition with one another. One tries to outdo another.

The Lord’s purpose in these verses is to get our minds and attention off the physical and onto the spiritual. Physical buildings are good, but the heart must be pure before God.

The Waning of the Temple. (Luke 21:6-7) With their hearts deeply entrenched in the beauty of the buildings of the temple, Jesus gives a solemn warning. He predicts that there will not be one stone upon another but that the temple will be thrown down.

When the disciples asked him to give more detail about these things and when they shall come to pass, the Lord gave them a detailed description of what was to happen after He left the earth and the description of events right up until he comes again.

The Lord mentions three specific tribulations here as he continues His discourse to the disciples. Let us look at each one and then bring in the thought about the times of the Gentiles.

Tribulation of the World. (Luke 21:8-11). This is a tribulation that will come upon the world and depicts the very nature of the world and its own philosophy. The world has its messiahs, and it will introduce their messiahs to its constituents. The world will try to mimic Christianity, because there is much money to be made in the world through religious means. They will introduce their one or more Christs, and they will have many who will follow their pernicious ways.

It is a sad thing when those who profess to believe in Jesus Christ turn away from the churches of the Lord and teach another gospel, but it is very disturbing when the world itself gets involved in their mimic of Christianity for worldly gain. Jesus predicts that this will happen, and it has happened on a large scale in our country and in the world.

Wars and rumors of wars are a part of this prediction, too. War or a threat of war has been in our world ever since anyone can remember. This is just the way of the world. We all hate war, and many peace treaties have been signed with all good intentions, but there will always be war. This is the tribulation of the world. Nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.

Other features of world tribulation are earthquakes, famines and pestilences. We all have had either a direct or an indirect connection with disease, earthquakes or some other pestilence. He speaks here about signs from heaven. These are unusual things happening in the heavens such as the meteor showers that have happened in the past which scared everyone practically to death, comets which seem to bewitch the viewers and trigger their mysterious side. These will come upon the world until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Tribulation of the Saints. (Luke 21:12-19). In these verses we find that the world itself will persecute the saints of God. Daniel 7:25 *And he shall speak [great] words against the most High,*

and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

Saints of God, or believers, will actually be arrested and persecuted, brought before the legal courts for their faith in Jesus Christ and their teachings of the truth. 50,000,000 men, women, boys, and girls were slaughtered in the Dark Ages for their faith in Jesus Christ.

But our standing strong at a time like this will be a good testimony for us and for the truth of God and our faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. If we have that “divine nature” Peter speaks of, we will have no need to study what to say. Our testimony will be merely “yea and nay.” It will be a beneficial praise to God and a testimony to our enemies.

Saints will be betrayed by their own families (16). All men will hate the saints of God if we stand for the name of Christ. But not a hair of our head will perish. It is hopeful to know that there is a possibility that I will actually have hair in heaven.

Two things he tells Christians to do during this time of tribulation. First, in verse 14, he says to be “settled.” Be assured of what God will give you to say as an answer concerning your faith. We are to be settled in the truth.

Second, we are to be “patient” according to verse 19. In patience we are to possess our souls, or be assured in our souls that God will have the glory and will deliver us in the end, when the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled.

Tribulation of the Jews. (Luke 21:20-24). We owe a lot to the Jews. They have been a downtrodden people since their beginning. It seems the whole world has been out to destroy them

ever since they began to exist. In these verses we find another tribulation that is coming on these New Testament Jews.

A time will come, Jesus says, that Jerusalem will be compassed or surrounded by armies. In Matthew 24:15 he calls these armies the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet.

Daniel 9:27 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.

This abomination speaks of the armies of Rome as they approached and surrounded Jerusalem. They came into Jerusalem and plummeted it to desolation, and Jesus was correct that not one stone was left upon another in the temple.

Notice Daniel says, “*and the overspreading of the abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation*” This refers to the desolation of the Jewish nation that will come after its destruction in 70 AD by the Roman armies. These abominations will last “until the consummation,” or until Jesus comes again.

In our text, in Luke 21:21, Jesus now speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem, a very strong tribulation for the Jews, and tells them to flee to the mountains being sure to leave Jerusalem. He gives warning in verse 29 for those who are carrying unborn children, that their journey will be slow and hard. There will be wrath upon this people (the Jews). They will fall, says verse 24, by the edge of the sword and will be led away captive into all nations of the world.

These precious Jews were destroyed in mass, and those who remained were sent to every nation

under heaven, and these Jewish people remain until this day. Yes, some have gone back to Jerusalem; but even now statistics tell us that the majority of the occupants of Jerusalem are not Jews but Gentiles.

Many nations have trodden down the Jews since this event took place. They have been hated by most nations and have been suppressed in their efforts to live in peace even in their own land. Even though they have made great contributions to science, literature, mathematics, etc, they have been trodden down as a people who are considered a minority and have been hated by their own blood relation in other countries. Despite this, because they are God's people, they have overcome and have shown great courage and ingenuity in all areas of education and practice. God is still blessing them.

The sad part of this is that they will be trodden down until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. In Paul's time, he turned from his own people, the Jews, to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The Jews by and large rejected their Messiah and remained faithful to those symbols and types which picture his coming. They are now looking for another Messiah to come and deliver them from this world suppression just as they did at the time Jesus came as their Messiah.

So, now what are these "times of the Gentiles" that Luke is speaking of here? We could go all the way back to the time of Babylon when Daniel prophesied and wrote his book and say that the times of the Gentiles was first exposed to us by him. He speaks of four major world powers in the visions. He speaks of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. These are all Gentile powers, and they dominated over Israel for a time.

But it seems to me that Jesus is putting this in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened about 70 AD. Jesus said in Matthew 23:38 *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

The Spirit of God, which had so wonderfully and miraculously come to the temple in the Old Testament has now left the temple, and it is without the power of God and sanction of the Holy Spirit.

Since the Jews rejected the true Gospel of Jesus Christ when “*he came unto his own, and his own received him not,*” what use is a temple. Since Jesus Christ has fulfilled through his life and death all the types in the temple, what use is a temple. Many say that the temple of God will be rebuilt in Jerusalem one day. That could very well happen, but what purpose would it have? What good would it be? It was only a type of the coming Messiah, and the Messiah is here and has gone to heaven, we are saved by his redeeming blood, and we are assured for heaven. Why do we need a temple to foreshadow that which has already come?

This period of the times of the Gentiles is the time from the rejection of the Jewish types and acceptance of the anti-type, Jesus Christ, to the coming of Jesus again from heaven. So this persecution, this tribulation upon the Jews will continue until Jesus comes again. When Jesus comes from heaven and appears to us, that will be the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles.

Now from Romans 11 we find that there is a fulness of the Gentiles and a fulness of the Jews. In verse 12 Paul speaks of the fulness of the Jews when he speaks of them as not being cast away by God. He says in Romans 11:12 *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?*

Then in verse 25 he speaks of the fulness of the Gentiles in the same wording that Luke uses in our text for today. He says in Romans 11:25 *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.*

The fulness of the Jews comes in when the last physical Jew who will trust Jesus Christ has done so, when that last Jewish man, woman, boy or girl is born again by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

At the same time, when the last Gentile who will ever trust Jesus Christ comes into the fold of God by faith in Jesus Christ, that will be the fulness of the Gentiles. After that, there will be no opportunity for salvation. Now is the accepted time with God; today is the day of salvation.

II. PROPHECIES OF THE END

Now in closing I would like to briefly address what happens after the close of this present age according to our text. Look now at Luke 21:25-27, which read. This is the precious coming of our Lord. After this long and enduring tribulation of the Jews, Jesus will come. After the tribulation of the Gentiles, Jesus will come. .

Matthew 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 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. 31 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.

I am looking for his coming. I am looking for the times of the Gentiles to be fulfilled. I am looking for the fulness of the Jews to come. I am looking for the fulness of the Gentiles to come in. When that happens, the trials of this world are gone; the burdens and sorrows of our hearts will be lifted; all wars are done, not even a rumor of war; all justice will be meted out as only God can do;

and you and I who are saved will live forever in the presence of our Lord and enjoy the beauties and bountiful blessings of eternity with Jesus Christ.

This message is for Jews and Gentiles alike. We both have sinned against a holy God, and we both alike need a Redeemer. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and men. He is the true and holy God. He is the only Savior of lost men, women, boys and girls.

All of the things which set the stage for the expectance of the Lord's imminent coming were fulfilled in that very generation. In that very generation, people were to look for his coming. They were to have an expectant heart. They were to live as though Jesus were coming today. That generation did not pass away until all of these tribulations were experienced. But Jesus still has not come. We are to wait with patience and live as though he were coming today, which he may.

Lost sinner, you must turn, whether Jew or Gentile, to the Savior, Jesus Christ and trust him for salvation and for eternal life. May Got touch your heart today to look to him for your soul's salvation.