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The Luke 19:43-44 Prophecy

The Destruction Of Jerusalem Foretold



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CONTENTS

Chapter 1 1
Introduction
Chapter 2 6
The Reliability and Dating of Luke
Chapter 3 22
The Prophecy and the Fulfillment
Chapter 4 36
Further Prophetic Considerations
Chapter 5 41
Conclusion

Bibliography 45

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The setting was Jerusalem. The date was Nisan 10 (March 30), 33 AD. Jesus was approaching the city riding on a donkey, while crowds welcomed Him with shouts of "Hosanna," meaning "save now." Some carried palm branches, while others spread their garments and branches along the road before Him (Matthew 21:8; John 12:13). Their cries echoed the words of Psalm 118:25-26, while His arrival on a donkey fulfilled Zechariah 9:9, which had foretold the coming of Israel's messianic King.

But the *timing* of this event was just as significant. This was the culminating day of Daniel's sixty-nine-week prophetic countdown to the Messiah, revealed to Daniel through the angel Gabriel more than five centuries earlier (Daniel 9:24-25). Jesus had arrived in Jerusalem at the appointed time – the day also anticipated in Psalm 118:24-26. The long-awaited Messiah had presented Himself to Israel exactly as the prophecy had foretold.

This should have been a day of great joy, and for the crowds welcoming Jesus, it was. Yet as He approached Jerusalem, something unexpected happened. Jesus began to weep over the city. Luke records what happened:

> **41** And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, **42** Saying, 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. **43** 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, **44** 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.
>
> -Luke 19:41-44

Jesus knew that within days He would be rejected by the nation's religious leaders and crucified. Although the crowds had welcomed Him, Jerusalem, represented by its leadership, had failed to recognize its Messiah.

Notice the two expressions Jesus used: "this thy day" (Luke 19:42) and "the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:44). These were not casual references to the occasion. As explained in our companion study, *The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy: An Exact Timeline for the Arrival of the Messiah*, Daniel's sixty-nine-week prophetic countdown had reached its culmination with Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. He had come at the appointed time – exactly as Gabriel had foretold – but the nation had failed to recognize the significance of His coming.[1]

Jesus' words also carried implications beyond the destruction of Jerusalem. When He declared that "the things which belong unto thy peace" were now hidden from the city's eyes (Luke 19:42), He was pronouncing judgment upon a nation that had failed to recognize its Messiah. This did not mean that every individual Jew would reject Him, nor that Israel would remain in this condition forever. Rather, the nation as a whole would continue in its failure to recognize Jesus as Messiah.

The apostle Paul later explained that "blindness *in part* is happened to Israel, *until* the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25). Notice the words "in part" and "until." Israel's national blindness would be neither total nor permanent. Following the removal of the Church, God's prophetic program will again turn toward Israel during

Daniel's future seventieth week – the period commonly called the Tribulation, and associated with "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). During this period of unparalleled distress, a surviving remnant of Israel will finally recognize Jesus as their Messiah and turn to Him in repentance, as anticipated in Zechariah 12:10.

Jesus also indicated that Israel's future acknowledgment of Him would precede His return when He declared, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, *till ye shall say*, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:39). This same prophetic theme of Israel seeking the Lord during a time of affliction is reflected in Hosea 5:15, where God declares:

> I will go and return to my place, **till** they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.
>
> -Hosea 5:15

Note: The Hebrew word translated "early" in Hosea 5:15 is *shahar* (Strong's #H7836), which carries the sense of seeking diligently or earnestly.[2] In this passage, the word emphasizes Israel's determined pursuit of God during its affliction.

For God to "return to my place," He must first have left it. As Christians, we understand this to refer to the Incarnation – when the Son of God came to Israel as its promised Messiah. The "offence" Israel must acknowledge is its national rejection of Him, after which He returned to "his place" in heaven. Notice the word "till." He will remain there *until* Israel finally acknowledges its offense and seeks His face. During their future period of eschatological distress and affliction, a remnant of Israel will recognize Jesus as its true Messiah and earnestly seek Him, fulfilling a necessary condition for His Second Coming, which will occur at the end of the Tribulation.

Israel's corporate blindness is therefore temporary. But the main point here is that Jesus held the nation accountable for recognizing the prophetic timing of His arrival! He was the promised Messianic Savior toward whom the Old Testament pointed – the One the Patri-

archs and Prophets spoke of and longed to see! Yet when He arrived, the nation of Israel was not ready to receive Him.

Returning to Luke 19:41-44, Jesus then declared that Jerusalem would be destroyed "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." In other words, He was telling them that He had come as their Messiah at the appointed time, but tragically, they had failed to recognize Him and ultimately rejected Him. Daniel 9 had even predicted what would happen next: "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off" (Daniel 9:26). These sixty-two weeks follow the initial seven weeks of verse 25, making a total of sixty-nine weeks of years (7 + 62 = 69). Daniel was predicting that after this prophetic countdown, the Messiah would be "cut off" – or killed. The Hebrew word *karath* (Strong's #H3772), translated "cut off," refers in this context to the Messiah's death.[3]

Jesus, weeping over the coming judgment upon His covenant nation, foretold the future destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Thirty-seven years later, in 70 AD, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple – fulfilling His prophetic warning.

Jerusalem's fall marked the climax of the Jewish revolt against Rome, which began in 66 AD. In this study, we will examine some remarkable details concerning this destruction that have been preserved through archaeology and ancient historical records – details that demonstrate the remarkable precision of Jesus' prediction.

But first, we need to spend some time examining whether we can regard the Gospel of Luke as a reliable historical and prophetic source. If we are to recognize the words of Jesus recorded by Luke as genuine prophecy, we need sound reasons to conclude that they were spoken before the events they foretold and that Luke faithfully preserved them. Establishing that Luke's Gospel was written before the destruction of Jerusalem would provide strong evidence for this conclusion. On the other hand, if Luke's account was written after the events – as many critics claim – its predictive character regarding this event would be undermined. So, let's examine the evidence.

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1. Michael Filipek, *The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy: An Exact Timeline for the Arrival of the Messiah*, Springfield, NJ: LetUsReason Publishing, 2026.
2. James Strong, "šāhar" (#H7836), in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, updated and expanded ed., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007, p. 1581.
3. Strong, "kārath" (#H3772), p. 1517.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELIABILITY AND DATING OF LUKE

Two important questions must be addressed concerning Luke's account of Jesus' prophecy. First, how reliable was Luke as a historian? And second, when did he write his Gospel? Establishing his historical reliability and the early dating of his Gospel would strengthen our case that Jesus' prediction was recorded before Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD.

The Reliability of Luke

Luke begins his Gospel by explaining that he carefully investigated the events he was recording, drawing upon accounts handed down by those who had been eyewitnesses from the beginning. He presents his work as an orderly historical account, written so that his reader could have confidence in the things he had been taught.

> **1** Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, **2** Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; **3** It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to

> write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, **4** That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.
>
> -Luke 1:1-4

Luke therefore presents his Gospel as a carefully investigated account based upon eyewitness testimony. But how well does his claim of historical reliability stand up to scrutiny? Archaeological discoveries and historical research have provided considerable evidence by which we can evaluate the accuracy of Luke's writings.

During the nineteenth century, some European scholars began challenging the historical reliability of the Book of Acts, arguing that it was a second-century composition rather than an authentic record of the early Church. This view, known as the Tubingen theory, held that Acts was written to reconcile a supposed conflict between Peter and Paul.[1] One scholar who originally accepted this view was Sir William Mitchell Ramsay, a distinguished British archaeologist and historian. Ramsay held professorships at Oxford and Aberdeen and was knighted in 1906 for his contributions to scholarship.[2]

Ramsay's original research focused on the history, geography, and antiquities of Asia Minor. In the course of his investigations, he began consulting the Book of Acts as a potential source of historical information. Although he initially regarded it as a second-century composition, he gradually discovered that Luke's descriptions of the geography, cities, and institutions of Asia Minor corresponded remarkably well with the historical evidence. These discoveries led him to reconsider his earlier assumptions and eventually convinced him of Luke's remarkable accuracy as a historian. Describing how his original skepticism toward the Book of Acts began to change, Ramsay wrote:

> I began with a mind unfavorable to it [the conclusion that Acts was historically trustworthy], for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tubingen theory had at one time quite convinced me. It did not lie then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often brought in contact with the Book of Acts

> as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth.[3]

Ramsay further said:

> Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historic sense; he fixes his mind on the idea and plan that rules in the evolution of history; and proportions the scale of his treatment to the importance of each incident. He seizes the important and critical events and shows their true nature at greater length, while he touches lightly or omits entirely much that was valueless for his purpose. In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.[4]

Numerous details in Luke's writings can be tested against independent historical evidence, particularly archaeological inscriptions and records of Roman administration. Ramsay found that Luke's descriptions repeatedly stood up to this kind of scrutiny. Summarizing his assessment, he wrote:

> You may press the words of Luke in a degree far beyond any other historian's, and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment … [5]

More than a century after Ramsay made that statement, further historical and archaeological discoveries have provided additional evidence supporting the accuracy of Luke's writings. Luke names key historical figures in the correct chronological settings. He also uses the correct – and often obscure – government titles in various geographical areas, including the Greek term *politarch* in Thessalonica, the proconsul of Achaea, and the "first man of the island" in Malta. Let's examine several examples from the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Lysanias, Tetrarch of Abilene

In Luke's account of the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry (Luke 3:1), he mentions "Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene." For many years, scholars questioned Luke's historical accuracy because Flavius Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, had written about a ruler named Lysanias who governed the nearby region of Chalcis and was executed around 36 BC – several decades before the time Luke describes.[6] Critics therefore assumed that Luke had confused the earlier ruler with someone living during the ministry of John the Baptist.

However, archaeological discoveries provided evidence that there was another ruler named Lysanias in the region. An ancient inscription discovered at Abila, the principal city of Abilene near Damascus, identifies a man named Nymphaeus as a freedman of "Lysanias the tetrarch."[7] The inscription is commonly dated to the early first century AD, although its precise date remains debated. Nevertheless, it provides important independent evidence supporting the existence of a tetrarch named Lysanias in the region during the period described by Luke, undermining the claim that Luke had simply confused him with the earlier ruler mentioned by Josephus.[8]

Gallio, Proconsul of Achaea

In Acts 18:12-17, Luke records that during Paul's ministry in Corinth, his Jewish opponents brought him before Gallio, whom he identifies as "the deputy of Achaia" (Acts 18:12). The word translated "deputy" in the King James Version refers to a proconsul – a Roman official who governed a province under the authority of the Roman Senate. Achaea was a Roman province encompassing much of southern Greece, with Corinth serving as its capital. Luke therefore identifies a specific historical figure, his official title, and the province he governed – details that can be compared with independent historical evidence.

Archaeological discoveries at Delphi, Greece, have provided just such confirmation. Fragments of an inscription containing a letter from the Roman emperor Claudius refer to "Lucius Junius Gallio, my friend, and the proconsul of Achaia," with portions of the damaged inscription reconstructed by scholars.[9] The letter can be dated to 52 AD based on the imperial titles used for Claudius, while Gallio's governorship is generally placed around 51-52 AD.[10] This agrees with the period in which Luke places Paul in Corinth and identifies Gallio as the governing Roman official. The inscription consequently provides independent confirmation of Luke's historical accuracy regarding Gallio's identity and official position, while also supplying an important chronological reference point for Paul's missionary journeys.

Erastus, Treasurer of Corinth

In Acts 19:22, Luke mentions a man named Erastus who served as one of the apostle Paul's assistants and was sent with Timothy into Macedonia. Paul also identifies an Erastus as a city official in Romans 16:23, writing, "Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you." The Greek word translated "chamberlain" in the King James Version is *oikonomos* (Strong's #G3623), referring to an administrator or manager, often translated as "treasurer."[11] Since Paul's letter to the Romans was written from Corinth, this places a man named Erastus in a position of municipal authority in that city.

During archaeological excavations near the ancient theater in Corinth in 1928 and 1929, an inscription was discovered that was traditionally dated to approximately 50 AD – the very period of Paul's ministry in Corinth. It reads, "Erastus in return for his aedileship laid (the pavement) at his own expense."[12] An *aedile* was a Roman municipal official responsible for overseeing public works, markets, and certain city revenues, duties that could overlap with those of the *oikonomos* mentioned by Paul. Although some scholars have challenged the inscription's dating and its identification with Paul's Erastus, the convergence of name, location, period, and civic responsibility makes

the proposed connection plausible, even if not conclusively established.[13]

Publius, Chief Man of the Island of Malta

Following Paul's shipwreck on Malta, Luke identifies a man named Publius as "the chief man of the island" (Acts 28:7). Publius owned land near the site of the shipwreck and received Paul and his companions, providing them with hospitality for three days. Luke also records that Paul healed Publius' father, who was suffering from fever and dysentery (Acts 28:8). The Greek word *protos* (Strong's #G4413), translated "chief" in the King James Version, means "first" or "foremost," and Luke applies it to a leading figure on the island.[14]

Archaeological evidence confirms that this form of address was actually used on Malta during the Roman period. A Greek inscription dating to the first century AD identifies a Roman knight named Lucius Castricius Prudens as "first of the Maltese" (*protos Melitaion*) – a designation closely corresponding to Luke's "chief man of the island." Although scholars have debated whether this title represented a specific governing office or a recognized position of high rank, its use on Malta is independently established by the inscription.[15] While the discovery does not identify Publius himself, it confirms that Luke used terminology consistent with the island's historical customs and institutions, providing another example of his familiarity with the people and places he described.

The Greek Term *Politarch*

In Acts 17:5-9, Luke records that when Paul and Silas could not be found in Thessalonica, their opponents dragged Jason and several other believers before the "rulers of the city." The Greek term Luke uses for these officials is *politarch* (Strong's #G4173), meaning a city magistrate or ruler. This was an unusual designation, largely absent from surviving Greek literature, which led some scholars to question whether Luke had accurately identified the city's governing officials.

However, archaeological discoveries have since confirmed that *politarch* was an authentic title used for municipal authorities in Macedonia, particularly in Thessalonica.[16]

One of the most significant discoveries was an inscription on an ancient Roman arch associated with Thessalonica's Vardar Gate. When the gate was demolished in 1876, the inscribed stone was preserved and eventually transferred to the British Museum in London. The inscription identifies six city officials as *politarchs*, directly confirming the title Luke used.[17] Furthermore, archaeological evidence establishes that this title was in use during the first century AD, the very period in which Paul visited Thessalonica. In 1960, Carl Schuler published a study documenting thirty-two inscriptions containing the term, nineteen of which came from Thessalonica, including at least three dating to the first century AD.[18] These discoveries provide compelling evidence that Luke accurately recorded the distinctive terminology used for the governing officials of Thessalonica.

Iconium, a City in Phrygia

In Acts 14:5-6, Luke records that Paul and Barnabas fled from Iconium to Lystra and Derbe, which he specifically identifies as "cities of Lycaonia." This wording suggests that Iconium itself was not considered part of Lycaonia, presenting an apparent historical difficulty. Iconium was situated on the edge of the Lycaonian plain, and the Roman statesman Cicero had identified it with Lycaonia in the first century BC. Critics consequently questioned whether Luke had accurately described the geography of the region. Ramsay himself initially shared this concern, comparing the apparent inconsistency to someone speaking of going "from London to England" – even though London is already in England.[19]

> **5** And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them [the setting here is Iconium], **6** They were ware of it, and fled

> unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:
>
> -Acts 14:5-6

Ramsay found considerable historical evidence identifying Iconium with Phrygia rather than Lycaonia. Xenophon, an ancient Greek historian, described Iconium as "the last city of Phrygia" before the army proceeded into Lycaonia. Pliny the Elder, a first-century Roman historian, likewise listed Iconium among the notable cities of Phrygia. In the second century AD, a Christian named Hierax, who was brought to trial in Rome alongside Justin Martyr, identified his hometown as "Iconium of Phrygia." Later, around 232 AD, Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, referred to a church council held at Iconium in Phrygia.[20] These independent references demonstrate that Iconium was recognized as a Phrygian city despite its geographical association with Lycaonia. Luke's account of Paul and Barnabas leaving Iconium for the cities of Lycaonia is therefore consistent with this historical distinction. What had once appeared to be an error in Luke's geographical description instead provided Ramsay with further evidence of his historical accuracy.

Further Historical Evidence from Acts 17

The historical evidence supporting Luke's accuracy extends well beyond the examples we have already examined. Consider the following details found in just a single chapter of his writings – Acts 17 – that agree with what we know about the geography, government, language, and customs of the ancient world:[21]

- The correct geographical sequence of Amphipolis and Apollonia along the Roman road connecting Philippi with Thessalonica (Acts 17:1).
- The presence of a Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1).

- The geographically plausible route toward the coast from Berea on Paul's journey to Athens (Acts 17:14-15).
- The abundance of idols and religious images in Athens (Acts 17:16).
- The reference to a Jewish synagogue in Athens, consistent with the presence of a Jewish community there (Acts 17:17).
- The depiction of the Athenian practice of philosophical discussion and debate in the Agora, or public marketplace (Acts 17:17).
- The accurate use of the Greek term *spermologos* (Strong's #G4691), a derogatory expression for someone who gathers and repeats scraps of knowledge without fully understanding them, along with the reference to the Areopagus, Athens' historic council (Acts 17:18-19).
- The characterization of the Athenians as particularly interested in hearing and discussing new ideas (Acts 17:21).
- The reference to an altar dedicated to an "unknown god," consistent with ancient accounts of Athenian altars dedicated to unknown deities (Acts 17:23).
- The skeptical reaction of Greek philosophers to the proclamation of bodily resurrection (Acts 17:32).
- The designation "Areopagite" for a member of the Athenian council (Acts 17:34).

All of these precise details appear within a single chapter of Acts, illustrating Luke's familiarity with the geographical, political, religious, and cultural setting of the events he describes. Such accuracy provides substantial reason to regard Luke as a reliable historian. It also strengthens the case for taking his writings seriously when considering whether they were composed during the first century, rather than long after the events they record.

Scholarly Assessments of Luke's Historical Reliability

The historical accuracy of Luke's writings has also been recognized by numerous scholars who have examined the evidence. Wayne Jackson, a biblical scholar and author, summarized the remarkable amount of historical information contained in the Book of Acts:

> In Acts, Luke mentions thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine Mediterranean islands. He also mentions ninety-five persons, sixty-two of which are not named elsewhere in the New Testament. And his references, where checkable, are always correct. This is truly remarkable, in view of the fact that the political/territorial situation of his day was in a state of almost constant change.[22]

A.N. Sherwin-White, a distinguished Roman historian at the University of Oxford, also examined the historical reliability of Acts. Although he recognized that Acts was written from a religious perspective, his assessment of its historical foundations was emphatic:

> For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. … But any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.[23]

F.F. Bruce, a respected New Testament scholar, similarly emphasized the significance of Luke's demonstrated accuracy in matters that can be independently verified:

> A man whose accuracy can be demonstrated in matters where we are able to test it is likely to be accurate even where the means for testing him are not available. Accuracy is a habit of mind, and we know from happy (or unhappy) experience that some people are habitually accurate just as others can be depended upon to be inaccurate. Luke's record entitles him to be regarded as a writer of habitual accuracy.[24]

Edward Musgrave Blaiklock, a classical scholar and professor at the University of Auckland, went so far as to compare Luke's historical writing with that of Thucydides, the ancient Greek historian:

> For accuracy of detail, and for evocation of atmosphere, Luke stands, in fact, with Thucydides. The Acts of the Apostles is no shoddy product of pious imagining, but a trustworthy record … it was the spadework of archaeology which first revealed the truth.[25]

The broader relationship between biblical history and archaeology was also emphasized by Nelson Glueck, a renowned archaeologist who served as president of Hebrew Union College from 1947 to 1971. Glueck identified approximately 1,500 ancient archaeological sites during his research in the Middle East. Writing in 1959, he observed:

> It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail, historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper evaluation of biblical description has often led to amazing discoveries.[26]

The historical and archaeological evidence we have examined provides substantial grounds for regarding Luke as a careful and reliable historian. But this establishes only one part of our case. To determine whether Luke's account of Jesus' prediction concerning Jerusalem was recorded before its fulfillment in 70 AD, we must now examine the evidence for the date of his Gospel.

The Dating of Luke

Having examined the historical reliability of Luke's writings, we now turn to the question of when his Gospel was written. This is particularly important to our study because if Luke recorded Jesus' prediction before Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD, his account preserves a prophecy written before the events it foretold. One way to investigate this question is through Luke's second book – the Acts of the Apostles.

Luke is traditionally recognized as the author of both the Gospel bearing his name and the Book of Acts. This attribution is supported

by early Christian testimony, including Irenaeus, a second-century bishop who wrote around 180 AD. In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus identifies Luke as a companion of Paul who recorded a Gospel and also discusses Luke's account of Paul's missionary journeys in Acts.[27] But the connection between these two books is also apparent from their opening verses. Luke addresses his Gospel to a man named Theophilus (Luke 1:3), and Acts begins with a reference to an earlier work addressed to that same individual:

> The **former treatise** have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
>
> -Acts 1:1

Here, Luke refers to his previous account, which we know as the Gospel of Luke. This establishes an important chronological relationship between the two books: the Gospel was written before Acts. Consequently, if we can establish that Acts was written before 70 AD, Luke's Gospel must also have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem.

The next important clue concerns where the Book of Acts ends. After documenting Paul's missionary journeys, his arrest in Jerusalem, and his journey to Rome, Luke concludes his historical account with Paul still alive and under house arrest. Acts 28:30 tells us:

> And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,
>
> -Acts 28:30

Acts ends without recording Paul's trial before Caesar, his eventual release or execution, or what happened during the remainder of his life. This is significant because Paul is traditionally understood to have been martyred in Rome during the reign of Nero, sometime in the 60s AD. Given the attention Luke devotes to Paul's arrest, journey to Rome, and imprisonment, the simplest and most natural explanation

for this abrupt ending is that Luke completed Acts while Paul was still alive, during the early 60s AD.

This conclusion becomes even more compelling when we consider the other major historical events that Acts never mentions. In fact, at least five major events between the early 60s and 70 AD are conspicuously absent from Luke's account:

- The martyrdom of James, the brother of Jesus and a leader of the Jerusalem church, around 62 AD.[28]
- The martyrdom of the apostle Paul during Nero's reign, traditionally placed in the mid-to-late 60s AD.[29]
- Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome beginning in 64 AD, and the martyrdom of the apostle Peter, traditionally associated with that same period.[30] [31]
- The outbreak of the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66 AD, which developed into a major war in Judea.[32]
- The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD.[33]

These were enormously significant events in the history of the early Church and the Jewish nation. Luke devoted considerable attention to James, Peter, and Paul, as well as the activities of the Church in Jerusalem and throughout the Roman world. Yet none of their martyrdoms, nor the Jewish revolt and destruction of Jerusalem, appears in Acts.

Although the omission of an event cannot by itself prove that it had not yet occurred, these omissions become particularly noteworthy when viewed alongside the book's ending. If Acts was written after these events, Luke chose to leave out several developments directly connected to the people and places he had been describing. On the other hand, if Acts was completed in the early 60s AD, their absence is readily explained. This provides a substantial cumulative argument for dating Acts before 70 AD and, consequently, Luke's Gospel still earlier.

Another consideration is the way Luke portrays Jerusalem and its

Temple throughout Acts. The Temple remains an active center of Jewish religious life, including the activities of the apostles and the early Church. This historical perspective, combined with the absence of any reference to the Temple's destruction, fits naturally with Acts having been written before 70 AD.

We find another potentially important chronological clue in Paul's first letter to Timothy. In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul writes:

> For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.
>
> -1 Timothy 5:18

In this passage, Paul begins by quoting Deuteronomy 25:4 concerning an ox treading out grain. He then quotes a saying of Jesus recorded in Luke 10:7: "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Although the KJV uses "reward" in 1 Timothy and "hire" in Luke, the underlying Greek wording is essentially identical. A similar statement appears in Matthew 10:10, but Paul's wording corresponds more closely to Luke's account.

What makes this especially noteworthy is that Paul introduces the quotations with the words "the scripture saith." This raises the possibility that Paul was quoting directly from Luke's written Gospel and recognizing its authority as Scripture. If so, Luke's Gospel must already have been written by the time Paul composed 1 Timothy, which is normally dated to the early-to-mid 60s AD.[34] While some have proposed that Paul was quoting a saying of Jesus preserved through oral tradition, the close correspondence with Luke's wording makes the written-Gospel explanation worthy of serious consideration.

The evidence for early authorship is therefore substantial. Acts follows the Gospel of Luke, ends with Paul still alive, and omits several major events that occurred during the 60s AD and culminated in Jerusalem's destruction in 70 AD. The possible quotation of Luke's Gospel in 1 Timothy provides an additional argument for an early date. These considerations give us sound reasons to favor a date for

Acts in the early-to-mid 60s AD, with the Gospel of Luke written sometime earlier – placing Jesus' recorded prediction of Jerusalem's destruction before its fulfillment.

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CHAPTER 3

THE PROPHECY AND THE FULFILLMENT

In the introduction to this study, we examined the circumstances surrounding Jesus' remarkable prophecy concerning Jerusalem's destruction. It was the day of His Triumphal Entry, when He arrived in Jerusalem and publicly presented Himself as Israel's long-awaited Messiah and King. As we established in our companion study on Daniel 9:25, this event marked the culmination of Daniel's prophetic countdown leading "unto the Messiah the Prince." Yet despite the multitude joyfully welcoming Him with cries of "Hosanna," Jesus knew that His own people would soon reject Him and that He would be crucified only days later.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He began to weep over the city. He understood the terrible consequences that would follow Israel's rejection of its Messiah and proceeded to foretell the destruction that would come upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Luke records His words:

> **43** 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, **44** 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.
>
> -Luke 19:43-44

Jesus described a future siege in which Jerusalem's enemies would surround the city, construct fortifications against it, and completely enclose its inhabitants. He then foretold the devastating destruction of Jerusalem and its people, declaring that its buildings would be demolished until not one stone remained upon another.

But the reason Jesus gave for this coming destruction is especially significant: "because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." As noted, Israel had been given a prophetic countdown to the Messiah's arrival. That countdown reached its culmination on the day of the Triumphal Entry, when Jesus publicly presented Himself to Jerusalem as its messianic King, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9. The people welcomed Him with cries of "Hosanna," publicly hailing Him as "the King of Israel" and "the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." Yet only days later, many of these same people would join in calling for His crucifixion. Thus, despite their initial welcome, the nation ultimately rejected its Messiah and failed to recognize the prophetic significance of His arrival. Jesus' reference to "the time of thy visitation" directly connects Jerusalem's coming judgment with this failure to recognize its Messiah at the appointed time.[1]

On another occasion, shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus spoke with His disciples concerning the magnificent buildings of the Temple. Matthew records:

> **1** And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. **2** And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
>
> -Matthew 24:1-2

This statement introduces what is commonly called the Olivet Discourse, in which Jesus answered His disciples' questions concerning future events. Mark also records this prediction:

> **1** And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! **2** And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
>
> -Mark 13:1-2

These passages provide an important distinction. In Luke 19, Jesus speaks directly about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. In Matthew 24 and Mark 13, He specifically identifies the buildings of the Temple as objects of that destruction. A related prophecy in Luke 21:5-24 provides additional details, including the encirclement of Jerusalem by armies and the suffering that would follow. We will examine that passage separately in Chapter 4.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD would become one of the most consequential events in Jewish history. The Temple was the center of Israel's religious life, where the priests ministered and the sacrifices prescribed under the Mosaic Law were offered. Its destruction brought an end to the Temple sacrifices and permanently transformed the practice of Judaism.

From the New Testament perspective, this event also carried profound theological significance in connection with the establishment of the New Covenant through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 8-10 explains that the sacrifices and priestly ministry associated with the Old Covenant anticipated the greater sacrifice and priesthood of Christ. Through His death, Jesus fulfilled what those sacrifices foreshadowed and established the New Covenant. The destruction of the Temple in 70 AD then brought a decisive historical end to the sacrificial system that had characterized Israel's worship for centuries. Without the Temple and its altar, the prescribed national sacrifices could no longer be performed, and Jewish religious life increasingly

developed around the synagogue, the Torah, and rabbinic interpretation.

But the immediate focus of our study is the astonishing accuracy of Jesus' prediction. Approximately thirty-seven years after His crucifixion in 33 AD, the Roman armies under Titus, the son of Emperor Vespasian, besieged Jerusalem and ultimately destroyed the city and its Temple. These events were recorded in considerable detail by the first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who witnessed the Roman campaign and was present with the Roman forces during the siege. His account, *The Wars of the Jews*, provides our principal historical evidence for examining the fulfillment of Jesus' words.[2]

The destruction of the Temple also became associated with the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av, commemorated in Judaism as Tisha B'Av. Josephus dates its burning to the tenth of Av and emphasizes that it was the same day on which the Babylonians had previously destroyed Solomon's Temple. Jewish tradition observes the destruction on the ninth of Av, with the burning continuing into the following day. Thus, the destruction of both Temples became associated with the same annual period of national mourning.[3]

With this historical background established, we can now examine the three specific predictions contained in Luke 19:43-44 and compare each one with the events recorded by Josephus and the archaeological evidence uncovered in Jerusalem.

#1 – The Siege and Encirclement of Jerusalem

The Prophecy:

> "Thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side…"

The Fulfillment:

Jesus specifically predicted that Jerusalem's enemies would construct a siege fortification, completely surround the city, and prevent its inhabitants from escaping. The precision of this language becomes even more apparent when we examine the Greek word translated "trench" in the King James Version.

The word is *charax* (Strong's #G5482), which refers to a stake, palisade, or fortified rampart constructed during a siege. It describes the kind of military fortification used to enclose an enemy city rather than simply an ordinary ditch dug into the ground.[4] This is especially significant because Josephus records that Titus ordered the construction of a continuous fortified wall around Jerusalem for precisely this purpose.

According to Josephus, the Romans built a wall measuring thirty-nine furlongs in length, with thirteen fortified garrison positions established along its course. Remarkably, the entire project was completed in only three days. Josephus describes the extraordinary effort of the Roman soldiers as Titus supervised the construction, with the legions competing to finish their assigned sections of the wall.[5]

The purpose of this fortification was to isolate Jerusalem completely. Once the Romans finished their work, the city was surrounded by military positions that could prevent anyone from entering or escaping. Josephus records the immediate consequences:

> So all hope of escaping was now cut off from the Jews, together with their liberty of going out of the city.[6]

The correspondence with Jesus' prediction is remarkable. He had foretold that Jerusalem's enemies would build a fortified siegework around the city, compass it about, and keep its inhabitants enclosed on every side. Josephus describes exactly such a military operation, including the wall's dimensions, its fortified positions, and the devastating consequences for those trapped within.

The Romans also constructed separate siege embankments against Jerusalem's defensive walls. These raised banks supported the siege engines and battering rams used to attack and eventually breach the

city's fortifications. Thus, the Romans employed both a surrounding wall to imprison the inhabitants and additional earthworks to carry out their assault.

Josephus further describes the terrible treatment of Jews who attempted to escape. Roman soldiers captured those who ventured outside the city searching for food or trying to flee. Many were tortured and crucified in full view of Jerusalem's defenders. Josephus records that the Romans sometimes crucified five hundred people in a single day, occasionally even more, until the number of victims became so great that there was insufficient room for the crosses.[7]

There is a tragic irony in these accounts. Only a few decades earlier, Jesus had been crucified outside Jerusalem following His rejection by the nation's religious leadership. Now, during the Roman siege, enormous numbers of Jewish captives were likewise being crucified before the walls of the city.

#2 – The Destruction of Jerusalem and Its Inhabitants

The Prophecy:

> "And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee…"

The Fulfillment:

Jesus then foretold that Jerusalem would be laid even with the ground and that its inhabitants, including its children, would suffer within the city. Josephus describes the fulfillment of these words in horrifying detail, recording the destruction of Jerusalem's buildings and fortifications, the widespread slaughter of its inhabitants, and the terrible conditions that developed during the siege.

One circumstance made the situation especially catastrophic. The Roman siege began around the Passover season, when large numbers of Jewish pilgrims had traveled to Jerusalem to observe the festival.

Many of these visitors became trapped alongside the city's regular inhabitants when the Roman forces enclosed Jerusalem. Josephus specifically mentions the pilgrims who had gathered for the Feast of Unleavened Bread when explaining the enormous suffering and loss of life.[8]

As food supplies dwindled, famine spread throughout Jerusalem. Josephus describes entire households dying of starvation, streets filled with corpses, and desperate inhabitants searching for anything they could eat. Conditions deteriorated further as internal factions fought one another and the Roman siege tightened around the city.

When the Romans finally overcame Jerusalem's defenses, these awful conditions worsened into all-out slaughter. Josephus also describes the systematic demolition of the city that followed:

> Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury, (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other work to be done,) Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne; and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison, as were the towers also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.[9]

This account is especially important because Josephus uses language corresponding directly to Jesus' prediction that Jerusalem would be laid even with the ground. He describes the city walls being demolished down to their foundations, leaving the former splendor of Jerusalem almost unrecognizable.

Josephus also explains that Titus ordered three prominent towers

and part of the western city wall to remain standing. These structures were deliberately spared to accommodate the Roman garrison and demonstrate the strength of the city Rome had conquered. The remainder of Jerusalem, however, was subjected to extensive demolition.

The human consequences were equally terrible. Describing the Roman soldiers entering Jerusalem's streets and houses, Josephus writes:

> But when they went in numbers into the lanes of the city, with their swords drawn, they slew those whom they overtook, without mercy, and set fire to the houses whither the Jews fled, and burnt every soul in them, and laid waste a great many of the rest; and when they were come to the houses to plunder them, they found in them entire families of dead men, and the upper rooms full of dead corpses, that is of such as died by the famine.[10]

This provides a tragic picture of what Jesus had foretold concerning Jerusalem and its children. Entire families perished from starvation, fire, and the violence of the Roman assault.

The devastation continued long after the city had fallen. Josephus records that when Titus later returned to Jerusalem, Roman soldiers and captives were still recovering gold, silver, and other valuables from beneath the ruins. Precious possessions had been concealed underground during the fighting, and the Romans continued excavating through the remains of the city to recover them.[11]

The destruction extended well beyond Jerusalem's buildings. Josephus describes how Roman soldiers cut down the trees throughout the surrounding countryside to obtain timber for their siegeworks, stripping the landscape of its former beauty. He wrote that even someone familiar with the region would scarcely recognize it after the devastation.[12]

Modern archaeology provides additional, independent confirmation of the destruction Josephus describes. Excavations in Jerusalem's Upper City uncovered the remains of a residence known as the Burnt

House. Archaeologists found collapsed walls, burned material, broken household objects, and coins from the Jewish revolt of 66-70 AD. The evidence documents the destruction of a Jewish home during the Roman conquest and preserves a physical reminder of what happened to Jerusalem's inhabitants.[13]

More recently, excavations along the ancient Stepped Street in the City of David uncovered extensive destruction layers associated with the Roman conquest in 70 AD. Archaeologists identified burned organic material, pottery from the end of the Second Temple period, and thick deposits of collapsed building stones covering sections of the street. These discoveries provide further physical confirmation that Jerusalem's buildings were violently destroyed during the war.[14]

The historical and archaeological evidence therefore confirms the devastating fulfillment of Jesus' words. Jerusalem's fortifications and buildings were demolished, its streets and homes were consumed by fire, and enormous numbers of its inhabitants perished within the city. The destruction was so extensive that Josephus described Jerusalem as having been laid even with the ground – the exact language Jesus had used decades earlier.

#3 – The Destruction of the Temple

The Prophecy:

"And they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another…"

The Fulfillment:

Jesus foretold that Jerusalem's enemies would not leave one stone standing upon another. As we have already seen, Josephus describes the extensive leveling of Jerusalem's buildings and walls. But Jesus made an even more specific prediction concerning the magnificent Temple buildings, recorded in Matthew 24:1-2 and Mark 13:1-2.

These buildings were among the greatest architectural achieve-

ments of the ancient world. Herod the Great had undertaken a massive expansion and renovation of the Temple complex, constructing enormous retaining walls, courts, and monumental buildings. Yet Jesus told His disciples that the Temple buildings they admired would be thrown down stone by stone.

As the Romans advanced against the Temple, Jewish defenders continued resisting from its courts and fortified entrances. Josephus records that Titus actually wanted to preserve the magnificent Temple, believing its destruction would be a loss even to Rome. Although he ordered the Temple gates set on fire after Roman siege engines failed to breach its massive defenses, he later instructed his commanders to extinguish the flames and specifically opposed destroying the sanctuary itself. During the fighting that followed, a Roman soldier acting without orders set fire to a chamber adjoining the Temple. When Titus learned what had happened, he rushed to the scene and repeatedly ordered his soldiers to extinguish the flames. But amid the chaos and fury of battle, they ignored his commands, and the Temple was consumed by fire. Josephus records that when Titus later returned to Jerusalem and witnessed the terrible devastation, he was deeply saddened by what he saw, reflecting on the city's former splendor and lamenting its destruction.[15]

The Temple contained enormous wealth. Its furnishings and decorations incorporated precious metals, and its treasury chambers held money, valuables, and other possessions deposited for safekeeping. Josephus specifically describes the burning and plundering of these chambers and the immense quantities of treasure stored within the Temple complex.[16]

The intense fires may also help explain the thorough dismantling that followed. Biblical commentator Ray C. Stedman describes how the Temple's gold and silver melted during the fires and flowed into the spaces and crevices between the stones. According to Stedman, Roman soldiers subsequently dismantled the stonework to recover these precious metals. Explaining their motivation, he writes that "in their greed to obtain this gold and silver they took long bars and pried apart these massive stones."[17]

This is precisely what Jesus had foretold. He predicted not simply that the Temple would be destroyed, but that "there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). The Romans' determination to recover the Temple's immense wealth helps explain why the destruction went beyond the burning of the sanctuary to the physical dismantling of its stonework.

Archaeology supplies powerful confirmation of this destruction. Excavations along the southwestern and western sides of the Temple Mount have uncovered enormous fallen stones and architectural fragments from the Herodian complex. Near Robinson's Arch, massive stones were discovered lying where they had collapsed onto the ancient paved street below. Archaeological reports describe these deposits as evidence of the destruction associated with Jerusalem's fall in 70 AD.[18]

One particularly remarkable discovery is the so-called Trumpeting Place inscription. This inscribed stone was found near the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount, where it had fallen from the upper portion of the Temple complex. The inscription identifies a place associated with the blowing of trumpets, apparently marking the location from which a priest announced the beginning and ending of the Sabbath. Its discovery provides a tangible example of a stone that once belonged high upon the Temple Mount and was thrown down to the street below.[19]

These discoveries allow us to observe the physical consequences of Jerusalem's destruction nearly two thousand years after the event. Josephus describes the burning and demolition, while the fallen stones and surviving archaeological remains provide independent evidence of what happened.

The Western Wall

An objection sometimes raised against the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction concerns the survival of Jerusalem's Western Wall, also known as the Wailing Wall. Since portions of this wall remain standing, some

have questioned whether Jesus' statement that not one stone would remain upon another was literally fulfilled.

However, this objection overlooks an important architectural distinction. The Western Wall was not a wall of the Temple building itself. It formed part of the massive retaining-wall system constructed by Herod to support the expanded Temple Mount platform. The Temple buildings stood above this supporting structure.

Archaeologists Kathleen and Leen Ritmeyer explain that Herod expanded the Temple Mount by constructing enormous retaining walls around its perimeter. The surviving Western Wall belongs to this system of support, not to the sanctuary that Jesus specifically identified for destruction in Matthew 24 and Mark 13.[20] Consequently, the survival of portions of the Temple Mount's retaining walls presents no contradiction to Jesus' prediction.

The near-total disappearance of the Temple proper has long been recognized by archaeologists. W. Harold Mare, in *The Archaeology of the Jerusalem Area*, observed:

> We do not have any remains of the Herodian temple itself because of the devastating Roman destruction in A.D. 70.[21]

The absence of the Temple itself does not mean that no individual stones can be identified. H.T. Frank similarly wrote:

> Strictly speaking, the Temple proper is not a matter of archaeological consideration since only one stone from it and parts of another can be positively identified.[22]

In conclusion, the three prophetic statements we have examined match exactly with the historical events of 70 AD. Jesus foretold the construction of a siege fortification surrounding Jerusalem, the leveling of the city and the destruction of its inhabitants, and the demolition of the Temple buildings until not one stone was left upon another. Josephus records these events in remarkable detail, and

archaeological discoveries provide further confirmation of the destruction.

All of this brings us back to the reason Jesus gave for the coming judgment: Jerusalem had failed to recognize "the time of thy visitation." The Messiah had arrived at the appointed time, publicly presented Himself as Israel's King, and foretold the consequences of His rejection. Approximately thirty-seven years later, the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, fulfilling the detailed judgment He had pronounced.

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CHAPTER 4

FURTHER PROPHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD was also foretold in other passages of Scripture. Two particularly important examples are found in Daniel 9:26 and Luke 21:20-24. Both add to our understanding of the judgment Jesus pronounced upon Jerusalem, while the latter also introduces a much broader period of biblical prophecy known as "the times of the Gentiles."

The Daniel 9:26 Prophecy

Centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, God revealed to the prophet Daniel a remarkable prophecy concerning the coming Messiah and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem. Delivered through the angel Gabriel, this prophecy appears in Daniel 9:24-27.

As we established in our companion study, the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's seventy-week prophecy culminated in the Triumphal Entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem in 33 AD. On that appointed day, Jesus publicly presented Himself as Israel's messianic King.[1] The very next verse describes what would happen after the completion of those sixty-nine weeks:

> 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.
>
> -Daniel 9:26

Notice the sequence of events. First, the Messiah would be "cut off," referring to His death. Then, at a subsequent point in history, the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed. Both events were fulfilled during the first century AD, with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in 33 AD followed by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in 70 AD.

The prophecy is especially remarkable because it places the destruction of Jerusalem and its sanctuary *after* the coming and death of the Messiah. Daniel wrote centuries before either event occurred, yet the historical sequence unfolded exactly as his prophecy described.

The reference to "the people of the prince that shall come" identifies those responsible for the destruction. These were the Romans, whose armies, commanded by Titus, conquered Jerusalem and destroyed its Temple. Titus was the son of Vespasian, who had become the Roman emperor in 69 AD. As we examined in the preceding chapter, Josephus provides an extensive historical record of the siege and destruction that followed.

Daniel 9:26 therefore supplies another extraordinary prophetic witness to the events of 70 AD. The Messiah came at the appointed time, was subsequently put to death, and Jerusalem and its sanctuary were destroyed by the Roman armies approximately thirty-seven years later.

The Luke 21:20-24 Prophecy

Another important prophecy appears in Luke's account of the Olivet Discourse. As Jesus and His disciples discussed the magnificent buildings and decorations of the Temple, He made another prediction concerning its destruction:

> **5** And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, **6** As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
>
> -Luke 21:5-6

We have already examined the parallel prophecies in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, including Jesus' prediction that the Temple buildings would be completely demolished. But Luke goes further by recording specific details about the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, including a warning to those living in the city and its surrounding region.

> **20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains**; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. **22** For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. **23** But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. **24** 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 21:20-24

Here Jesus gave a direct warning to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea. He foretold that Jerusalem would be surrounded by armies and instructed those living in the city to flee, while warning those in the surrounding countryside not to enter it. Although Jesus did not identify these armies by name, the warning would become especially significant when the Romans advanced against Jerusalem during the 60s AD. Rather than seeking refuge within the city's fortified walls, those who recognized the danger were to escape while they still could. Josephus records that in 66 AD, the Roman

commander Cestius Gallus advanced against Jerusalem but unexpectedly withdrew his forces. This retreat provided a potential opportunity for people to leave the city before the final Roman siege in 70 AD.[2]

The fourth-century church historian Eusebius records that, before the war, certain men among the Christians in Jerusalem received a revelation instructing the believers to leave the city and settle in Pella, a town in Perea east of the Jordan River. While Jesus had warned His followers to flee Jerusalem, this revelation specifically identified where they were to go. Eusebius explains that the Christians obeyed the instruction and departed Jerusalem, escaping the terrible destruction that overtook the city in 70 AD.[3]

But Jesus' prophecy did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. His final statement in Luke 21:24 introduces a much broader period of biblical prophecy: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

The expression "the times of the Gentiles" appears only here in Scripture, yet it describes a period of history revealed extensively throughout the prophetic writings of Daniel. This period began with the rise of Babylonian domination over Judah around 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar's victories established Babylon as the dominant power in the region and Judah came under its authority.

The second chapter of Daniel provides an important overview of this prophetic period. Through the dream God gave Nebuchadnezzar, interpreted by Daniel, we are shown a succession of Gentile world powers that would dominate history until the establishment of God's everlasting Kingdom. Daniel's later visions expand upon this same prophetic framework.

Although the Jewish people have experienced periods of independence, including the Hasmonean kingdom and the establishment of the modern State of Israel, these represent temporary exceptions within the broader period of Gentile domination over Jerusalem and Israel. Such periods of Jewish sovereignty do not constitute the permanent restoration promised in biblical prophecy. The times of the Gentiles will reach their ultimate conclusion only at the Second

Coming of Jesus Christ, when He establishes His Millennial Kingdom and restores Jerusalem and Israel under His enduring rule.

This is what makes Jesus' words in Luke 21:24 especially significant. Within a prophecy that describes the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, Jesus also looks forward to the eventual completion of the times of the Gentiles, which will result in Israel's restoration. His prediction therefore extends beyond the immediate judgment upon Jerusalem and connects that event with the larger prophetic program revealed throughout Scripture.

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1. Filipek, pp. 46-48.
2. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, II.19.7.
3. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Church History*, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Vol. I, Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890, III.5.3. (https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm - Retrieved 10/27/26)

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD marked a major turning point in Jewish history. Beyond the devastation of the city itself, the loss of the Temple brought an end to the sacrificial worship that had stood at the center of Israel's Mosaic Covenant. The consequences were profound, reshaping the practice of Judaism and accelerating the development of a religious system centered upon the teachings and interpretations of the rabbis.

One important figure associated with this transition was the Jewish sage Yohanan ben Zakkai. According to a later rabbinic account preserved in the Babylonian Talmud, he escaped from Jerusalem by having his disciples carry him out in a coffin, pretending that he had died. He subsequently met with Vespasian, who was then commanding Roman forces in Judea and would soon become emperor. The account relates that ben Zakkai requested that the town of Yavne, along with its Jewish sages, be spared. Vespasian granted his request, allowing the continuation of Jewish religious learning outside Jerusalem.[1]

Yavne, also known as Jamnia, became an important center of Jewish scholarship following the destruction of the Temple. As the priesthood lost its central role in Jewish religious life, the rabbis grad-

ually assumed increasing influence through their teaching and interpretation of the Torah. This development helped establish the foundations of what became known as Rabbinic Judaism.

Synagogues had already existed long before 70 AD, but their importance increased considerably after the Temple was destroyed. Without a functioning Temple and altar, the Jewish people could no longer carry out the sacrificial offerings and other Temple ceremonies prescribed under the Mosaic Law. Prayer, Torah study, and religious observance consequently assumed a more prominent position in Jewish life.[2]

Over the following centuries, rabbinic teachings and traditions were collected and developed into an extensive body of religious literature. The Mishnah was compiled around 200 AD, and further discussion and interpretation of its teachings continued in major centers of Jewish learning, both in the land of Israel and in Babylonia. These developments eventually produced the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud, with the latter becoming the more authoritative of the two within Rabbinic Judaism.[3]

From the perspective of the New Testament, the significance is even greater. Through His sacrificial death, Jesus Christ had already accomplished what the repeated animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant could never achieve. The Epistle to the Hebrews explains that Christ offered Himself as the perfect and final sacrifice for sin, establishing the basis of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8-10). His resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost had already inaugurated a new era in God's redemptive program decades before the Temple was destroyed.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD therefore provided a powerful historical demonstration that the former Temple-centered system of worship had reached its end. Yet God's promises concerning the nation of Israel remain intact. As we discussed in the preceding chapter, Israel's ultimate restoration still awaits the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when He will establish His Millennial Kingdom and fulfill the remaining promises concerning His people.

But beyond these historical and theological consequences, the

fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy provides extraordinary testimony concerning the reliability and divine inspiration of Scripture. Jesus foretold that Jerusalem would be surrounded by a siege fortification, that its inhabitants would suffer terrible destruction, and that the Temple buildings would be demolished until not one stone was left upon another. Approximately thirty-seven years later, the Roman armies carried out the very destruction He had described. These events are recorded in detail by the Jewish historian Josephus and supported by the archaeological remains of the devastated city.

The importance of this fulfillment becomes even greater when we consider that Jesus' prediction was recorded in the Gospel of Luke, whose historical reliability and early dating we examined in Chapter 2. The prophecy was spoken decades before the destruction occurred, and the subsequent events corresponded with the specific details He had foretold.

Throughout Scripture, God presents His ability to reveal the future as evidence of His unique divine authority. Through the prophet Isaiah, He declares that He is the One who knows and controls history, "Declaring the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10). Biblical prophecy repeatedly demonstrates this extraordinary characteristic: God reveals events in advance, and history subsequently confirms the fulfillment of His Word.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD provides another remarkable example. Jesus Christ foretold the fate of the city and its Temple with a precision that history would later confirm. Such detailed and accurate foreknowledge stands as a powerful validating credential of the Bible's supernatural origin. **Fulfilled prophecy bears witness that Scripture is not simply a collection of human religious writings, but the inspired Word of the God who knows the end from the beginning.**

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2. Shaye J.D. Cohen, "The Temple and the Synagogue," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, eds. William Horbury, W.D. Davies, and John Sturdy, Vol. III, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 298.
3. Avram R. Shannon, "Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament," in *New Testament History, Culture, and Society: A Background to the Texts of the New Testament*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell, Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2019, p. 126. (https://rsc.byu.edu/new-testament-history-culture-society/rabbinic-literature-new-testament - Retrieved 10/27/26)

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