

✠ Luke 21:5-28 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Lord brought His people out of the land of slavery, the son of David, King Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem. It was magnificent. The best wood was used; the best gold and silver; the best marble; the finest cloth and most expensive silk. It was beautiful both in design and in material. It was also destroyed.

Antiochus IV laid waste to the temple in the second century B.C., which gave rise to the Maccabean revolt. And it lay in ruins until King Herod, slaughterer of the Innocents, rebuilt it around the year 20B.C. Thus it was Herod's Temple that stood in Jerusalem, and that drew the eyes of the disciples as they marveled at the fine stones and precious inlays and its rich tithes and offerings. It was this temple of which Jesus spoke, saying that no stone would remain atop another.

And it came to pass in the seventieth year of our Lord that Rome laid siege to that ancient city of Jerusalem and over ran her as easily as if she had wholly surrendered. The temple was utterly destroyed. The people fled to the hill country. They fell by the sword and were taken captive by many lands and peoples. They were forcibly dispersed throughout the earth.

Those were the days of vengeance, to fulfill what is written. For once again the Jews had rejected the Word of God. They once again turned their backs on the man of God, the prophet of God. They once again did evil in the sight of the Lord, worshiping their laws and statutes rather than God. Like their forefathers, they killed those sent to them, now killing the Son, the Anointed One, sent to them by God.

But before that, before Rome removed the Jewish nation from the face of the map, the apostles proclaimed the Good News of the kingdom to all nations. They are the witnesses to the Resurrection in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. They stood before governors and kings for the sake of the Name. They were unjustly tried in court, thrown in prison, beaten, delivered to synagogues for interrogation and intimidation. They were stoned, beheaded, sawed in two, drowned, burned, and crucified – all for His name's sake.

Now what? These things have all taken place. The temple has been destroyed; no stone has been left on top another. The apostles have borne witness to the resurrection to all the world; their blood and their words crying out even now, witnessing to the Risen One. What now? We wait.

Not as those who do not know what is coming, but as those who look forward to our redemption. We wait as virgins waiting for the bridegroom: our lamps full of oil and our wicks trimmed. We wait as watchmen for the morning. We wait as wheat among the tares waiting to be gathered into the storehouse of our God, safe from destruction. We wait as disciples on the boat amidst the violence of the wind and waves as our Master calms the waters and stills the winds. We wait; the day of redemption draws near.

For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, devoting them to utter destruction so that their memory will be wiped out and they will leave no descendant to carry

their name. Therefore stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Stay awake; bear fruit in keeping with repentance. The Lord will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

For the temple that was built by men and destroyed by Rome was but a shadow of the true Temple not made with hands. The true Temple was also destroyed, but it was rebuilt in three days, fashioned not with stone and jewel but with flesh and blood. The tent of David that has fallen has been restored and rebuilt. The sacrifice has been prepared and sacrificed. Blood has been spilled; the chalice of God's wrath has been drained by the sacrificial Lamb. You have been redeemed, bought back from sin and death. Payment has been made on the altar of our God.

Then, why, o man, do you look into the heavens? Why do you gaze into the clouds? Why do you look for signs when the signs are so easily seen? Why do you wonder about the Lord's return when He has said that He is with you? For the Son of Man will come in the same way as He went. But for now, He has told you where you may find Him, and it is not in the sky and He is not in any temple made with hands.

All man-made temples will be destroyed. That is, wherever man thinks he has God encased and located, God will destroy that place. For those who think that family is the highest good, the seat of God, He will destroy the family to draw you to Himself. For those who think money and savings accounts is the temple of God, being good stewards by their own accounting, He will destroy the bank accounts and waste the money to draw you closer to Himself. For those who think they will find God in nature, in the trees and mountains, God will destroy those things to draw you closer to Himself. Whatever you've built of fine stones and precious jewels so that you boast in your tower of Babel, God will lay waste to it. He will ever chase you, destroying your temples and holy places to bring you to His Temple, His holy of holies.

You will find Him where He has placed His name. Just as in the days of Moses when He dwelt with His people in the form of a cloud, so now He dwells with His people in bread and wine, water and the Word. He comes with the power and great might, the power of God, hidden in the clouds of heaven.

But do not make the mistake of the Judahizers. He does not come to establish earthly reign and political might. His kingdom is not of this world. He does not come to make fair tax laws and clean up the school systems or set Congress in order. He does not come to justify governments or pacify people. Neither does he come to establish social orders and social clubs; little ponds with big fish. His kingdom is not concerned with man-made hierarchy or elaborate organizations. His kingdom is concerned with the heart. He comes with the power of God to destroy sin and to forgive the sinner.

He comes with power to cleanse the unrighteous and make the unholy holy. He comes with power to forgive your sins and restore peace between you and God. Straighten up and raise your heads, O Christian, for your redemption is drawing near, and is at hand, for whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved. But whoever does not believe shall be condemned.

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. It is impossible that you can atone for your own sins by your sacrifices. It is impossible that you can earn God's

favor, by building fine buildings, raising fine families, paying taxes, tithing, holding church offices, or even caring for the widows and orphans. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, [O God], but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure."

In the Old Covenant, the priest stood daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices. But this was but a shadow of the good things to come in Christ Jesus. For if those priestly sacrifices atoned for sin, making perfect those who drew near to them, then there would have been no reason to repeat them. For those who drew near would have been cleansed, no longer having any need to repeat the sacrifices for sin. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.

And you have been sprinkled with His blood. You have been cleansed. You have been made whole. Your sins have been taken away and in their place God has placed His Spirit. Thus do you please God. Not by what you do, but by His declaration of grace, by His pronouncement that you are holy.

The temple in Jerusalem has been destroyed. It is no longer the seat of God. Here is the temple of God. Here is where He dwells. The kingdom of God is in the midst of you. He has written His name upon your forehead and upon your heart. Do not go looking for the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, do not go looking for Him for He is here, making His home with you; making you who were not a people, His people. Behold, the Son of Man comes. Amen.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠