

The Widow's Mites and the Prophecy of the Destruction of Jerusalem

Luke 21

The Widow's Mites (21:1-4)

On the Tuesday before the crucifixion when Jesus had confrontations with the Jews in the Temple, another incident happened. As He observed the contributions into the

denarius which was a day's wages). Perceiving that this was all the money which this poor widow had, Jesus said, "Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these



Among the evidences of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 are the remains of the Burnt House. A stone weight found inside the house has the inscription "Belonging to Bar Kathros" who was a member of the priestly family. Pictured above is a portion of what remains of that house.

treasury of the Temple, He saw rich men contributing large sums into the treasury. About the same time, a poor widow cast in two mites (each *lepton* was 1/128 of a

have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had" (21:3-4).

Prophecy of the Destruction of Jerusalem (21:5-38)

As Jesus began leaving the Temple, the disciples called His attention to the attractive buildings (Matt. 24:1). He replied to these comments saying, "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (21:6).

The disciples left the Temple and went to the Mount of Olives (Matt. 24:3) where the disciples asked Jesus about the destruction of the city and Temple. Their question asked what signs would indicate that this destruction was about to take place. In response, Jesus gave signs by which His disciples could see when the city was to be destroyed in order that they might flee the city before it fell.

1. The danger of false "Christ's" (21:8). Jesus warned His disciples not to be deceived by the false messiahs who would rally the nation to political revolution. His disciples should not become involved in such activities.

2. Signs to indicate the imminent destruction of the city (21:9-13). The signs which Jesus gave were: (a) Wars and commotions (21:9) which occurred in the period of AD 55-70 as Jewish zealots attacked Roman garrisons in Judea and Galilee. These skirmishes were not to be understood as the end. (b) Nation against nation (21:10). The conflict would increase until the Roman nation would send its army to totally destroy the Jewish nation. (c) Earthquakes (21:11). (d) Famines (21:11). One is recorded in Acts 11:27-30. (e) Pestilences (21:11). (f) Signs in the heavens (21:11). (g) Persecution of Christians (21:12). That this occurred is witnessed by Acts 4:5f; 5:17; 7:54-8:1; 8:1-4; 9:1-22; 12; etc.

3. Proper conduct before civil authorities when persecuted (21:13-19). When arrested, Jesus' disciples should not be anxious about their defense for the Holy Spirit would inspire them to give proper answer (21:14-15). He warned the disciples that their own families and friends would betray them into the hands of their enemies. They would be hated and put to death because of their faith in Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus promised to protect them from harm (21:18). In their perseverance in the faith, they would save their souls (21:19).

4. Instructions to flee the city (21:20-24). Jesus told His disciples in Judea and Jerusalem to flee when they saw the Roman armies siege the city. They were not to hope for deliverance from God. Their doom was certain, having been ordained of God because of their wickedness (21:22). Jesus lamented the suffering which would befall those saints in difficult circumstances when the siege came (21:23). Many would be killed, many would be taken captive. Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Gentiles.

5. Signs in the heaven (21:25-28). These verses have been misinterpreted to refer to the miraculous signs associated with the Lord's second coming. This interpretation stumbles over Jesus' plain statement in v. 32—"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." Viewing these statements literally, we cannot find a fulfillment within the generation which was contemporary with Jesus. However, the language should not be interpreted literally. When Isaiah foretold the destruction of Babylon, he wrote, "For the stars of heaven and the constellation thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine" (Isa. 13:10; cf. 13:1). (One



The Arch of Titus was constructed in Rome to celebrate Titus' victory over the Jews in AD 70. On one of the interior walls of the arch is a picture of marching into Rome carrying the trophies of war, one of which was the *menorah*, the candlestick from the Temple in Jerusalem.

might also compare Amos 8:9; Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10; 3:15; Isa. 24:23; 34:4.) This language describes the destruction of the present government in Jerusalem, referring to their leaders as sun, moon, and stars. Such a destruction will be upsetting to men, when the present order is overturned (cf. what would be our situation should the U.S. government be overthrown). So upsetting would be the times that men's hearts would fail because of fear (21:26). Nevertheless, to the saint, the fall and destruction of Jerusalem would be testimony that the Lord had ascended into heaven and was reigning over the kingdoms of men (21:27). Their redemption (probably referring to redemption from persecution from the Jewish nation) would occur when the Lord came in judgment upon the Jewish nation.

6. Exhortation to read the signs (21:29-33). The disciples of Christ should be able to read the signs given by Jesus to know that

the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent. Jesus compared their ability to know when the destruction would come to a farmer's ability to know that summer was nigh by the things which happen to the fig tree (21:29-31). Knowing this, they could flee the city and not die when the Romans destroyed the city. Jesus assured them that these things would occur within that generation (21:32-33).

Exhortation to Right Living (21:34-38)

Seeing what lay ahead of His disciples, Jesus exhorted them to keep themselves free from sin (21:34-35) and to pray for escape from these dangers (21:36). Each day during this last week, Jesus went to the Temple to teach and then left the city at evening.

Questions

1. What distinguished the widows' contribution (21:1-4)? _____

2. How did Jesus know her circumstances and how much she gave? _____

3. What kind of giving duplicates hers? _____

4. What were the following signs to tell the disciples: false christs, pestilence, famine, earthquake, war? _____

5. Date the following:
 - a. Year Jesus spoke these words: _____
 - b. Year Jerusalem fell: _____
 - c. Length of one generation: _____
6. Why were the disciples told not to worry about their defense when arrested? _____

7. How can vv. 16 and 18 be harmonized? _____

8. What does v. 19 teach? _____

9. What sign indicated to Christians that the time to flee the city had come (vv. 20-21)? _____

10. In what sense was the destruction of Jerusalem "the days of vengeance" (21:22)? _____

11. Why did Jesus say, "Woe unto them with child. . ." (21:23)? _____

12. Give your reasons for concluding that vv. 25-28 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem or to the second coming.

13. What limit does v. 32 place on the fulfillment of vv. 1-31? _____

14. What does v. 33 show about Christ's words? _____

15. In light of the prophecy of vv. 1-33, how did Jesus tell His disciples to live (vv. 34-36)? _____

Answering Denominational Error

An evangelist uses Luke 21:9-11 to prove that the second coming is imminent. Show how he misuses the text.
