

• *Difficult times before the fall of Jerusalem*

• *Luke – Acts has a particular interest in Jerusalem*

Jesus gives them advice for enduring persecution

(i) Persecution assists evangelism

(ii) The Holy Spirit will help

(iii) Sufferings and protection

(iv) Endurance will lead to great reward

Jesus gives them advice for times when they would be able to escape disaster

• *When the soldiers were seen approaching the city*

• *Josephus recorded the*

Luke 21:12–24 is dealing with the period before the fall of Jerusalem when the disciples will go through difficult times. There is no reference to the Second Coming of Jesus before verse 25 and probably not even then. Unlike Matthew 24–25 and Mark 13, Luke 21 does not contain any teaching given at this time about Jesus' Second Coming. Luke is more concerned to report Jesus' words about the fall of Jerusalem. The reason for this is that the two-part book of Luke–Acts is interested in evangelism and in the part Jerusalem will play in the years of outreach after Jesus' death. The gospel will go out from Jerusalem^{□1}! But Jesus' followers will have only one generation to get on with the work of preaching the gospel before Roman armies march on the city and Christians have to leave it (as 21:21 says will happen).

1. **Jesus gives them advice for enduring persecution.** There are four principles here. (i) Persecution will assist evangelism. The believers will often be arrested and persecuted^{□1} but this will help their evangelism! It will give them opportunities to witness to kings and governors^{□2}. (ii) The Holy Spirit will help them in their witness^{□3}. They will be given what to say when unexpectedly brought into times of danger mixed with opportunity. We recall how in the Book of Acts these words were fulfilled (see Acts 4:5–22; and the section that runs from 21:27 to 26:32). (iii) Great sufferings will have to be endured but the disciples will be kept safe amidst danger^{□4}. (iv) Endurance will lead to great reward. *'By your endurance, gain your lives!'* says verse 19. 'Gaining life' refers to the rewards of God. It is not purely earthly survival (because verse 16 warns that some might lose their lives, and most of the twelve apostles eventually were martyrs for Jesus). Nor is it 'getting to heaven' (because that is by faith in Jesus only). It is the full and rich life of the kingdom of God. God rewards us with a fuller and richer 'life' now; and we lay hold of the life of full reward from God in final glory.

2. **Jesus gives them advice for times when they would be able to escape disaster.** It is not always God's will that we stay exactly where we are when disaster comes. The Christians were to endure persecution for much of the time, but when it would become clear that Jerusalem was about to fall they had permission to escape. They were to run for their lives and avoid the terrible sufferings that would come when Jerusalem was about to fall (as happened in AD 70). They had asked about a sign^{□1}. The 'sign' for escaping Jerusalem would be the sight of Roman soldiers. When the soldiers were seen approaching the city they would know that the end of Jerusalem had arrived^{□2}, and that the city would no longer be a centre for evangelism for a long time to come. They should escape^{□3} for the sufferings of that period would be terrible^{□4}. Jesus' words were fulfilled. The Jewish historian, Josephus, reported that over a million Jews were killed and 97,000 who escaped were sold as slaves. But the Christians escaped that 'great tribulation' because Jesus had told them what to do.

□1 see Acts 1:8

□1 21:12

□2 21:13

□3 21:14-15

□4 21:16-18

□1 21:7

□2 21:20

□3 21:21

□4 21:21-24

recorded the event

• The times of the Gentiles

• One day Jerusalem will become a centre of spiritual blessing

• Some believe that 1967 was a fulfilment

• In the light of Romans 11:26, still going on

The phrase ‘the times of the gentiles’^{□1} has interested interpreters of prophecy. Gentiles obtained control of Jerusalem in about 600 BC when it was invaded by the Babylonians. It stayed under gentile control until AD 1967 when the state of Israel gained full control of the walled city of Jerusalem. The idea in Jesus’ prediction is that Jerusalem (from the viewpoint of the AD 30s) will not be given peace, and that after its fall it will be dominated by gentiles for a long time. The phrase suggests, however, that one day there will be a change and Jerusalem will again become a centre of spiritual blessing as it was in the days of David. I doubt whether 1967 was the fulfilment of these words. There has not been much peace in Jerusalem since 1967 and it has not become a centre of evangelism! Also it must be remembered that a person *‘is not a Jew in a visible manner, nor is the circumcision that he has something in the open, in the flesh’*^{□2}. Jewish people are generally without the inner circumcision of the heart. Spiritually, un-saved Jews are still gentiles! Jerusalem will go on being ‘trodden down’ until the nation turns to the Lord Jesus Christ. When Israel turns to Jesus (as Romans 11:26 suggests it will) Jerusalem will cease to be trodden down by gentiles and will become full of Christians. To say more than that, we shall have to wait for the event itself! The ‘times of the gentiles’^{□3} is the period of Gentile domination, which I reckon is still going on despite the events of 1967.

□1 21:24

□2 Romans 2:28

□3 21:24

Importance for us

• Jesus did not envisage His followers living lives of ease and luxury

• The gospel to the nations

What is important for us in all of this is that Jesus did not expect His disciples to be living lives of ease and luxury. There were dangerous days ahead of them, but Jesus did not tell them how to escape the dangers and live nice easy lives with good employment, plenty of comforts and nice holidays!

His great concern was reaching the nations with His message of salvation. The Christian life is not a matter of prosperity or playing around with religious rituals. The church is the agent of the kingdom! The disciples will have only one generation to mobilise evangelism from Jerusalem. Let them get on with the work of preaching the gospel before Roman armies march into the city.

 <p>slices.org.uk</p>	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> 	
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