

THE LUKE 19:43-44 PROPHECY

THE DESTRUCTION OF
JERUSALEM FORETOLD



MICHAEL FILIPEK

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The setting was Jerusalem. The date was Nisan 10 (or our March 30th) of the year 33 AD. Jesus was approaching the city while being showered with a chorus of *hosannas* from the frenzied Jewish onlookers (*hosanna* meaning, “save now”). They threw palm branches down before Him as He approached, riding a donkey. They sang the prophetic Messianic song from Psalm 118, which anticipated the Messianic King entering Jerusalem. This was that time!

What time exactly? The time prophesied of in Daniel 9:25 – the culminating day of Daniel’s sixty-nine week “countdown to the Messiah,” the prophecy given by the angel Gabriel to Daniel half a millennium earlier. This was “the day” spoken of in Psalm 118:24-26 and anticipated in detail in Zechariah 9:9.

This culminating day – known to Christians as the Triumphal Entry – was supposed to be a day of great joy, and so far, it had been. But something was about to change. Jesus Christ, as He was being hailed as a Messianic King entering Jerusalem on that day, suddenly began to weep. Let’s read Luke’s recording of this event.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

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.

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,

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

We see that Jesus wept over the city. This is the Triumphal Entry, the big day, but He wept over it – knowing that although they were hailing Him on this day, a few days later they would join with the religious leaders in rejecting Him as a nation, and ultimately crucifying Him.

Notice His phrase “this thy day” in the passage we just read. What day? Again, the day that Daniel predicted! The termination of the prophetic countdown to the Messiah! That “day” specifically mentioned in Psalm 118 (“this is the day which the Lord hath made”)! He made His appointment and showed up right on time. He expected them to be ready! He expected them to understand that He was the Messiah arriving right on schedule – to the exact year – that Gabriel had predicted to Daniel so many years before.

Note: To learn more about this, consult the companion study entitled, “The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy: An Exact Timeline For The Arrival Of The Messiah”.

Jesus essentially was saying to Israel as a nation, “you had your chance, and you blew it.” He wept because they blew it, despite the fact that He had gone to such lengths to tell them ahead of time. Because of that, He then said “the things which belong unto thy peace” are hidden from them. He announced corporate blindness

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upon the Jewish people specifically because they did not recognize this day! In other words, as a nation, the Jews would continue to not recognize Christ as their Messiah.

The apostle Paul later tells us that this national blindness on Israel is temporary. It will last until the “fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25). After the Church is removed, God’s program will shift back towards Israel, necessitating a time of unparalleled distress that will cause them to be awakened spiritually. So eventually, they will recognize Him and acknowledge Him (as is prophesied in Zechariah 12:10, et al.). We find that this will happen at the end of the future seventieth week of the prophetic timeline given to Daniel – a period Christians often call the Tribulation, or as the Old Testament calls it, the time of Jacob’s Trouble (Zechariah 8-14; Revelation 7-19; et al.). We’re also told that the remnant Jews acknowledging Jesus as their Messiah and petitioning His return is actually a precondition for His Second Coming. God, speaking prophetically in Hosea 5, says:

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 that passage actually means “diligently” or “earnestly” (*shachar* – Strong’s #H7836).

This passage requires that God would have at one time left “his place.” Of course, as Christians, we know this to refer to the Incarnation – the time of His visitation to Israel as the Son of God and Messiah. The “offense” spoken of here was their national rejection of Him as Messiah – prompting His return to “his place” in heaven. But during the future period of distress and affliction, Israel will finally begin to earnestly seek the face of their true Messiah.

So, the corporate blindness Jesus proclaimed on the Jews is temporary. But the real point here is that Jesus actually held them accountable to know the prophecy given to them! He was the culminating

Messianic Savior that the Old Testament looked toward! He was the One of whom the Patriarchs and the Prophets spoke and longed to see! But the nation of Israel was unready to receive Him when He arrived.

Turning our attention back to Luke 19:41-44, Jesus then states that for this reason, Jerusalem would soon be destroyed – “because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation”. In other words, He was telling them that He came as their Messiah, but tragically, they did not recognize the timing of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy and did not receive Him! If they had known the prophecy, they should have expected Him at that very time. But they ended up crucifying their Messiah instead – just as Daniel 9 also predicted (“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off” – Daniel 9:26). This is the verse that follows Daniel 9:25 – the verse that gives us the sixty-nine week countdown to the Messiah. Verse 26 says that after “threescore and two weeks” – in other words, after the entire $7 + 62 = 69$ weeks of years that Verse 25 spoke of – the Messiah would be cut off, or in other words, killed (*karath* – Strong’s #H3772).¹

Jesus, weeping over the heartbreaking rebellion of His covenant nation, foretold the future destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. It took place thirty-seven years later in 70 AD, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple – fulfilling His exact words.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD is a well-documented fact of history, being the climax of the war that began when the Jews revolted against the Romans in 66 AD. In this study, we will take an in-depth look at some amazing specifics concerning this destruction that have been handed down to us through archaeology and ancient histories – specifics that demonstrate the astonishing precision of Jesus’s prediction.

But first, we need to spend some time examining whether we can view the Gospel of Luke as a reliable and prophetic source. If we’re to recognize the words of Jesus – which Luke records – as being genuine prophecy, we need solid reasons to support the idea that it was actually written prior to the fulfillments of the events it speaks of. If on the

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other hand, it was written long after the events it foretells – a common claim by the critics – then it obviously could not be regarded as prophetic. So, let's spend some time examining the evidence.

1. "Expository Dictionary of Bible Words," ed. Stephen D. Renn, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005, pp. 231-232.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELIABILITY AND DATING OF LUKE

If we are going to take the prophecies of Jesus – recorded in Luke – as genuine prophecy written in advance of the fulfillments described, we need to take some time to examine several points of evidence. We do not want to believe in anything without the foundation of evidence and reason – nor do we as Christians expect others to believe us if we are unwilling to demonstrate the justification. So, let’s take a look at two specific points – the reliability and the dating of Luke. We need to show sound reasons to trust in the reliability and the early dating of Luke.

The Reliability of Luke

The first point we need to make is that Luke actually states that his Gospel is historically accurate and should be taken as a strict record of exactly what happened according to the eyewitnesses, which, if we show its early authorship, were still alive at the time.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

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Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

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,

That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

-Luke 1:1-4

So, we can see that Luke strongly affirms the accuracy and reliability of his record. Let's see if the evidence agrees or disagrees with this.

Beginning around the 1800s, European scholars started rejecting the historical records of the Gospel of Luke. These academics declared that there was no evidence to support the existence of several locations and leaders mentioned in Luke's writings, and therefore, they rejected the entirety of his account. However, in more recent years, the evidence has revealed the direct opposite to be true. Archaeological finds during the 1900s have revealed that Luke was an extremely accurate historian, and the two books he authored were authoritative records of history!

Sir William Ramsay was one of the greatest archaeologists of all time. He studied under the famous German historical schools in mid-1800s, which were teaching that the New Testament was a just a religious tract written in the mid-200s AD, and not a historical document recorded in the first century. Ramsay was so convinced of this teaching that he entered the field of archaeology and actually went to Asia Minor specifically to find physical evidence to refute the historical accuracy of Luke's Biblical record.

But after years of field study, Ramsay completely reversed his entire viewpoint of the Bible and the historicity of Luke and Acts. Knighted in 1906 to mark his distinguished service to the world of scholarship, Ramsay also gained three honorary fellowships from Oxford colleges, nine honorary doctorates from British, European, and North American universities, and became an honorary member of

almost every association devoted to archaeology and historical research.¹ Ramsay, who was a Professor at Oxford University, stated:

I began with a mind unfavorable to it [the writings of Luke, but specifically referring to Acts], for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tübingen theory had at one time quite convinced me. It did not then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often brought into 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.²

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.³

Over and over, Biblical references can be checked and proven to be historically accurate in every detail – and we will examine some examples from the writings of Luke shortly. After hundreds of years of critical scrutiny, both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible have proven their authenticity and accuracy at every turn. Ramsay, in his assessment of Luke's writings, wrote:

You may press the words of Luke in a degree beyond any other historian's, and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment...⁴

Today, over a hundred years after that statement originally was

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written, the exact same thing can be said with even more certainty of the writings of Luke based on further discoveries.

Luke's accuracy is demonstrated by the fact that he names key historical figures in the correct time sequence. He also uses the correct – and often obscure – government titles in various geographical areas, including the Greek term “politarch” of Thessalonica, the proconsul of Cyprus, and the “first man of the island” in Malta. Let's examine several of these examples from Luke's writings in Luke and Acts.

Lysanias, Tetrarch of Abilene

In Luke's announcement of Jesus's public ministry (Luke 3:1), he mentions, “Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene.” Scholars questioned Luke's credibility since the only Lysanias known for centuries was a leader of Chalcis who ruled from 40-36 BC. However, an inscription dated to the time of Tiberius (14-37 AD) was found, which records a temple dedication naming Lysanias as the “tetrarch of Abila” (Abilene, near Damascus). This matched Luke's account and stunned the liberal scholarship of the day.⁵

Gallio, Proconsul of Achaea

In the Book of Acts, also written by Luke, Paul was brought before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaea. Again, archaeology confirms this account. At Delphi, an inscription from Emperor Claudius was discovered that says, “Lucius Junios Gallio, my friend, and the proconsul of Achaia...”⁶ Historians have dated this inscription to 52 AD, which supports the time of Paul's visit there in or around 51 AD.⁷

Erastus, Treasurer of Corinth

Later in Acts, Erastus, a coworker of Paul, is appointed treasurer of Corinth. In 1928, archaeologists excavated a Corinthian theatre and discovered an inscription that reads, “Erastus in return for his aedil-

ship laid the pavement at his own expense.” The pavement was laid in 50 AD, and the term aedile refers to the title of “treasurer.”⁸

Publius, Chief Man of the Island of Malta

In another passage (Acts 28:7), Luke gives Publius, the leader on the island of Malta, the title, “chief (or first) man of the island.” Scholars for a long time questioned this strange title and deemed it unhistorical. But inscriptions have been discovered on the island that indeed give Publius this title.⁹

The Greek Term “Politarch”

Luke uses the Greek term “politarch” (meaning, “rulers of the city/citizens”) to refer to the leaders in Thessalonica. Although it sounds inconsequential, this was another supposed hit against Luke’s credibility for centuries, because no other Greek literature used this leadership term. However, numerous inscriptions have now been discovered that bear the term politarch, including five finds that specifically refer to the ancient leadership in Thessalonica.

One example is an inscription from an old Roman arch that was part of the old Vardar Gate that was torn down in 1876. The inscription was given to the British Consulate and eventually presented to the British Museum.¹⁰

In 1960, Carl Schuler published a list of thirty-two inscriptions bearing this term. Approximately nineteen out of the thirty-two came from Thessalonica, and at least three of them dated back to the first century.¹¹

Iconium, a City in Phrygia

As a final example, Luke (in Acts 14:5-6) implies that Iconium was not a city in the district of Lycaonia. Who cares? Well, this was also a major rub against the credibility of Luke for centuries. Scholars, going all the way back to writings from historians like Cicero, maintained

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that Iconium was in Lycaonia, not Phrygia. Therefore, scholars declared that the entire Book of Acts was unreliable. Let's take a look at this passage in Acts.

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 context here is Iconium],

They were ware of it, and fled [from Iconium] unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

-Acts 14:5-6

This passage was in historical dispute for many years because it says Lystra and Derbe were cities in the district of Lycaonia, implying that Iconium (from which Paul had just come) was not. This conflicted with later Roman writers such as Cicero (106-43 BC), who said Iconium was in Lycaonia. In the words of William Ramsay, this made as much sense as saying your leaving London to go to England.

When examining this further, Ramsay became convinced that there was an Iconium nearby elsewhere, outside of the district of Lycaonia, in Phrygia – which made perfect sense in the context of the passage Luke wrote. What convinced Ramsay of this was ancient literary texts. He cites the following several sources:¹²

- In 394 BC, Xenophon identified Iconium as a city of Phrygia.
- In 145 AD, Pliny says Iconium was a Phrygian city.
- In 163 AD, several Christians, including Justin Martyr, were put on trial in Rome for their Christian faith. One man at the trial – a slave named Hierax – was asked who his parents were. Hierax replied, “My earthly parents are dead; and I have been brought here (a slave) torn away from Iconium of Phrygia.”

- Firmillian, Bishop of Caesarea, is said to have attended a council at Iconium in Phrygia in 232 AD.

So, these examples demonstrate that the evidence we now have has completely destroyed the school of thought that emerged several hundred years ago, which considered Luke (and other Biblical writings) to be shoddy and unhistorical records.

But let's give one further example that showcases the remarkable precision of Luke. Consider the following details contained in just a single chapter of Luke's writings (Acts Chapter 17) that have been confirmed by historians and archaeologists:¹³

- The proper location (Amhipolis and Apollonia) of where travelers would spend successive nights on this journey (Acts 17:1).
- The presence of a synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1).
- The proper title, "politarch," used of the officials there (Acts 17:6).
- The correct implication that sea travel is the most convenient way of reaching Athens with favoring east winds of summer sailing (Acts 17:14).
- The abundant presence of images in Athens (Acts 17:16).
- The reference to a synagogue in Athens (Acts 17:17).
- The depiction of the Athenian life of philosophical debate in the Agora (Acts 17:17).
- The correct use of the Greek Athenian slang word for Paul, a *spermologos* (Acts 17:18), as well as the court (*areios pagos*, or the "Areopagus"). *Spermalogos* was used as a slur to describe

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someone who picks up scraps of learning and then parades them around without understanding them himself.

- The proper characterization of the Athenians – being consumed with hearing and telling about new philosophies (Acts 17:21).
- An altar to an “unknown god” (Acts 17:23).
- The proper reaction of Greek philosophers who denied bodily resurrection (Acts 17:32).
- Areopagites as the correct title for a member of the court (Acts 17:34).

Remember, all of these accurate details are found in just **one chapter** of Luke’s writings. This strongly reveals that the writer (Luke) had intimate knowledge of the people, customs, and places he wrote about, which is an indicator that his books were written at the early dates that conservative scholars suggest. It would be hard to imagine a writer so precisely recording the names, places, customs, terms, etc. of a region if he was writing the document a hundred years or more after the fact.

Wayne Jackson summarizes what we now know regarding the historical and geographical accuracy of Luke’s record.

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.¹⁴

Before moving on, let’s take a look at the opinions of several other well-known historians and scholars.

A.N. Sherwin-White was a prominent ancient historian who was a fellow of St. John's College at the University of Oxford. When reviewing the research and writings of Luke, Sherwin-White declared:

For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming... Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd.¹⁵

F.F. Bruce, one of the most respected New Testament Biblical scholars ever, wrote:

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 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.¹⁶

Noted historian and scholar Edward Musgrave Blaiklock wrote:

For accuracy of detail, and for evocation of atmosphere, Luke stands, in fact, with Thucydides [one of the great ancient historians]. The Acts of the Apostles is not shoddy product of pious imagining, but a trustworthy record ... it was the spadework of archaeology which first revealed the truth.¹⁷

Dr. Nelson Glueck was the president of Hebrew Union College and a renowned archaeologist whose reliance upon the historical accuracy of scripture led to the discovery of one thousand five hundred ancient sites. Regarding the Bible and archaeology as a whole, he stated:

It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted [meaning contradicted or refuted] 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

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the same token, proper evaluation of biblical description has often led to amazing discoveries.¹⁸

So, it seems reasonable and rational to conclude – in agreement with the scholars we quoted – that Luke has an extremely high level of credibility as a meticulous historian and an accurate recorder of facts. These observations help to validate the reliability of his books. Let's now take some time to examine the evidence for the other point we need to study in order to validate Luke as genuine prophecy – Luke's early date of authorship.

The Dating of Luke

We will now examine some of the evidence that we draw upon to formulate our best guess as to when the book of Luke was actually written. Our purpose here is to try and see if the evidence supports a **pre-70 AD authorship**, which would then validate Jesus's words as genuine prophecy written **before** the events took place. Let's begin.

The first point we need to review is that Luke is recognized as being the writer of not only the Gospel of Luke, but also the book of Acts (or the Acts of the Apostles) – his second book. Early second century writings such as those of Irenaeus confirm this.¹⁹ Acts 1:1 states:

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

-Acts 1:1

Here in the first verse of the book of Acts, we can see that Luke refers to his former book, which we know of as the gospel of Luke. The main point we will establish in this chapter is that **if the authorship of Acts predates 70 AD, then the authorship of Luke definitely does, as it must predate Acts.**

The next point we need to recognize is that Luke's second book –

the Book of Acts – ends with the apostle Paul still alive. 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

So, we see that the book of Acts ends with Paul as a prisoner being kept in a house in Rome, obviously alive and not yet martyred. This is a hugely important point to our perceptions of the dating of both of Luke's books. How so? Well, if we know that Paul was martyred before 70 AD, and Acts ends with Paul still being alive, then that would indicate that both Acts and Luke both had to have been written before Paul was martyred – before 70 AD.

In other words, because Acts documents the historical chronology of the early Church and Paul's missionary journeys, we can confidently determine its approximate date of authorship by what is *not* written. Although the example we just mentioned – the martyrdom of the apostle Paul – is one of the most important events we would expect to be recorded – and yet don't find recorded, it is not the only one. In fact, there are a total of at least five monumental Church events that took place in the decade prior to 70 AD – all of which are conspicuously omitted from Acts. Let's examine these five events that have no mention in Acts, along with their commonly accepted dates.

- the martyrdom of James the brother of Jesus and leader of the church at Jerusalem around **62 AD**.²⁰
- the martyrdom of the apostle Paul between **62-64 AD**.²¹
- the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor Nero, and the martyrdom of the apostle Peter – both in or around **64 AD**.^{22 23}

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- the revolt and war of the Jews against Rome, beginning in **66 AD**.²⁴
- the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which occurred in **70 AD**.²⁵

One would expect that if Acts was written after any of these events, the author surely would have included them, as the purpose of Acts was to be a historical account of the early Church. These were some of the most significant events of the early Church in the first century. The fact that none of these are mentioned indicates that they hadn't yet happened at the time Acts was written. In other words, it seems obvious enough that Acts predates all of these events. If Acts predates these events, and Luke was written before Acts, then Luke unquestionably predates them. Our best guess is that Acts was written no later than the early-60s AD, and Luke was written sometime before that.

But let's examine several other points of agreement, showing the early authorship of Luke.

In the book of Acts, the Temple and the city of Jerusalem both continue to play central roles in Israel. This indicates that Acts was written before the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD, agreeing with what we just discussed.

Additionally, we see that the apostle Paul quotes from Luke's gospel in 1 Timothy 5:18, showing us that Luke's gospel was completed during Paul's lifetime.

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

The first quote, regarding an ox and grain, is from Deuteronomy 25:4. But interestingly, the second quote is from Jesus. These words of Jesus are recorded in Luke 10:7, and are similar to Matthew 10:10. Also, we should note that Paul refers to both quotations as "scrip-

ture,” meaning Paul is placing Luke’s writings in the same category as the Old Testament – inspired scripture.

But our real point here is that this quotation obviously indicates that the gospel of Luke had to have already been written by the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy. 1 Timothy is thought to have been written no later than 64 AD, again confirming a pre-70 AD authorship of Luke.²⁶

So, all of this evidence shows that Luke was written no later than the early-60s AD. We can clearly then show that Luke’s recording of Jesus’s prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem is established as genuine prophecy, as it was recorded prior to the fulfillment of the events that took place in 70 AD. Let’s now begin our examination of this prophecy by Jesus.

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CHAPTER 3

THE PROPHECY AND THE FULFILLMENT

In our introduction to this study, we reviewed the context of Jesus’s incredible prophecy recorded in Luke Chapter 19. We noted how this was the day of the Triumphal Entry – the culminating day of the Daniel 9:25 prophecy, in which Jesus arrived just on time, presenting Himself as the Messianic King entering Jerusalem. Tragically though, the Jews – obviously unaware that He was arriving exactly on time as the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophetic “countdown to the Messiah” – ultimately responded by crucifying their Redeemer.

Although the day of the Triumphal Entry was filled with the multitude joyfully welcoming Him and crying “hosannas,” He knew that just days later they would be part of the mob yelling “crucify him!” Knowing this, as He approached the city, He began to weep. Jesus went on to sorrowfully predict that Jerusalem would be destroyed due to the fact that the Jews had failed to recognize the specific time that Daniel had predicted – and would end up rejecting their long-awaited Messiah! Let’s review this prophecy in Luke 19.

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,**

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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

So, we can see that Jesus clearly describes a future siege of Jerusalem by its enemies where they would be surrounded and then destroyed. Interestingly, Jesus predicts that the destruction would be so thorough, that the invading army would not leave one stone left on top of another – all because the Jews did not recognize one of the climactic events that the Old Testament pointed towards – the first appearance of Israel’s Messiah precisely at the time prophesied.

On another occasion, where Jesus and His disciples were walking near the Temple buildings, Jesus in Matthew 24, also spoke of the future destruction, declaring that the stones of the Temple would be completely demolished.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him **the buildings of the temple.**

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 passage is included in what is commonly called the Olivet Discourse, in which Jesus answers several questions posed by His disciples regarding future events. A parallel passage to this one in Matthew is also found in Mark.

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!

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

A similar (though maybe not identical) passage is also found in Luke 21, which we will examine later on. But from these two passages, we can see Jesus made it clear that not only would the city of Jerusalem be besieged and destroyed by her enemies, but also the very **stones of the Temple** would be thrown down one by one.

This prophesied destruction would be fulfilled in the catastrophic fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD – one of the most well-recorded events in all of ancient history – forever changing the face of Judaism and the subsequent history of the Jews in the Holy Land. It was a catastrophe with almost unparalleled consequences for the Jewish people – culturally, socially, and religiously.

From the religious perspective, we will see that this destructive event acted as the final harbinger for the fulfillment of the Old Covenant and the complete shift over to the New Covenant. What do we mean by this?

The existence of the Temple represented the Old Covenant, but in accordance with Jesus's prophecy, it would soon be destroyed as the Old Covenant fully transitioned over to the New. Hebrews 9:8-9 refers to the physical Temple as being associated with the Old Covenant age that was passing away. Hebrews 8 goes on to describe how Christ fulfilled the symbols of the Temple rituals, and that through His ultimate sacrifice, the New Covenant with man was established.

So, with this New Testament explanation, we can be sure of the reasons for the final destruction of the Temple in 70 AD – just thirty-seven years after Jesus's crucifixion in 33 AD. The Old Covenant had passed, and a New (and better) Covenant had commenced.

After 70 AD, the Jews could no longer practice Mosaic Judaism, even if they wanted to. The Temple rituals required could no longer be performed in the absence of the Temple. Since the Torah requires the ritual shedding of sacrificial blood in the Temple in order to remit the sins of the nation, the events of 70 AD necessitated a restructuring of Temple Judaism into Talmudic synagogue Judaism, predicated essentially on "good works."

So, the Jewish people were displaced once again and dispersed among the nations. The events of 70 AD submerged the Jewish home-

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land for the next nineteen centuries under foreign domination. It helped foster the split between Church and synagogue, and it set the stage for rampant prophetic speculation about the end times that continues to the present day. Few episodes in history have had that sort of impact. But with that backdrop in mind, let's now begin to look into the specifics of this destructive event.

Thirty-seven years after Jesus declared the city's destruction, the Roman Legions, led by Titus Vespasian, laid a siege upon Jerusalem which resulted in the city and Temple being destroyed – all recorded in astonishing detail by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (in his *The Wars of the Jews*), who was present at Jerusalem while this siege was taking place.¹

On the 10th of August, in 70 AD – the 9th of Av in Jewish reckoning – the very day when the King of Babylon burned the Temple in 586 BC, the Temple was burned again (Josephus records it as the 10th of Av, but Jewish tradition holds that it was the 9th – a solemn day in Judaism referred to as Tisha B'Av – a day of recurring tragedy throughout Jewish history).²

Titus – the general who had just become a prince – took the city and put it to the torch, burning and destroying both the city and the Temple. The fulfillment of Jesus's prophecy of their destruction in 70 AD is one of the most well-recognized and well-recorded events of ancient history. Let's now focus our attention of some of the individual prophetic statements made by Jesus in this passage.

#1 – The Prophecy:

*“Thine enemies shall cast a **trench** about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side...”*

The Fulfillment:

During the siege of Jerusalem, the Roman legions surrounded the city and build a vast **trench** around it, keeping the Jews trapped within the city. Max Dimont writes:

Titus completely sealed off Jerusalem from the rest of the world with a wall of earth as high as the stone wall around Jerusalem itself. Anyone not a Roman soldier caught anywhere in this **vast dry moat** was crucified on the top of the earthen wall in sight of the Jews inside the city. It was not uncommon for as many as five hundred people a day to be so executed.³

Josephus provides us with the record of this, describing the trench created by the Romans by “raising the banks” around the city. It was by doing this that Titus was able to defeat the city, as he then advanced his siege machines onto the raised banks and was able to successfully breach the walls.⁴

Josephus also describes in painful detail how the Romans crucified many Jews who were caught trying to escape these raised banks that had encompassed the city. The crucifixions were performed all around the city on the raised banks in full view of its inhabitants in order to maximize their terror. Josephus records that it was not uncommon for the Romans to catch and crucify five hundred Jews per day, until there were so many surrounding the city that they ran out of wood.⁵

Some commentators have noted the irony of this judgment, as it was the crucifixion of their own Messiah that led to it.

#2 – The Prophecy:

“And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee...”

The Fulfillment:

Jesus’s statement that Jerusalem and its inhabitants would be laid even with the ground came to pass in tragically precise fashion. Josephus records the utter demolition of Jerusalem being completely razed to the ground and the buildings and walls absolutely leveled. He also describes the extreme massacre of the inhabitants.

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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.⁶

The only man-made structures to be left in Jerusalem were to be a portion of the western wall and the three fortresses located in the Upper City. This was Titus' intention at first. But within a short time, even that portion of the western wall and the three fortresses in the west were so thoroughly destroyed that not a trace of them remained (unless the so-called "Tower of David" near the present-day Jaffa Gate, as scholars guess, is a part of the foundation of Hippicus or Phasaelus). At the conclusion of the war, the Tenth Legion left Jerusalem a mass of ruins. Stones from those ruins were finally used in the following century to build a new Roman city on its ruins, called Aelia Capitolina. But by late 70 AD, there was nothing left standing of the Temple or the buildings of Jerusalem.

Josephus affirms that the walls of the city and even the outskirts or suburbs were burned to the ground and destroyed. He records:

The Romans set fire to the extreme parts of the city, and burnt them down, and entirely demolished its walls.⁷

Josephus also provides accounts of later events after the war was

over to show how this complete destruction was accomplished. Much of the destruction came after the war had ceased.

For six months after the war, Josephus tells us that the Tenth Legion “dug up” the ruins of the houses, buildings and walls looking for plunder. They systematically excavated beneath the foundations of the ruined buildings and houses (they had many of the Jewish captives do the work for them). They also had the whole area turned upside down looking for gold and other precious metals that became molten when the fires were raging. This caused the precious metals to melt and flow into the lower crevices of the stones. Even the foundation stones contained melted gold from the great fires that devoured Jerusalem. This plundering of every former building or wall in the municipality of Jerusalem resulted in the troops overturning (or having the remaining Jewish captives overturn for them) essentially every stone within the city, completely leveling it to the ground, just as Jesus prophesied.

This continual digging up of the city occurred over a period of several months after the war. After an absence of about four months, Titus returned to Jerusalem from Antioch and once again viewed the ruined city. Josephus records what Titus saw.

And as he [Titus] came [back] to Jerusalem in his progress, and compared the melancholy condition he saw it then in, with the ancient glory of the city, and called to mind the greatness of its present ruins, as well as its ancient splendor, he could not but pity the destruction of the city, so far was he from boasting that so great and goodly a city as that was had been by him taken by force; nay, he frequently cursed those that had been the authors of their revolt, and had brought such a punishment upon the city; insomuch that it openly appeared that he did not desire that such a calamity as this punishment of theirs amounted to should be a demonstration of his courage. Yet was there no small quantity of the riches that had been in that city still found among its ruins, a great deal of which the Romans dug up; but the greatest part was discovered by those who were captives, and so they carried it away; I mean the gold and the silver, and the rest of that

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most precious furniture which the Jews had, and which the owners had treasured up under ground, against the uncertain fortunes of war.⁸

Josephus also records the desolation and leveling of the entire countryside surrounding the city, so much so that a former inhabitant would not even be able to locate where it once stood.

And now the Romans, although they were greatly distressed in getting together their materials, raised their banks in one and twenty days, after they had cut down all the trees that were in the country that adjoined to the city, and that for ninety furlongs round about [or 10 miles], as I have already related. And truly the very view itself of the country was a melancholy thing; for those places which were before adorned with trees and pleasant gardens were now become a desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down: nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change: for the war had laid all the signs of beauty quite waste: **nor if any one that had known the place before, had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again; but though he were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it notwithstanding.**⁹

So, we can see that Josephus records how the Romans utterly leveled the city and surrounding countryside to the point where even if someone extremely familiar with the city had come upon the destruction, they would not know where it once stood.

Josephus also vividly describes the massacre that took place when the Romans finally breached the walls of the city.

But when [the Romans] 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 wither 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

So, we see in tragic fulfillment, the prophecy of Jesus that described the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants being laid even with the ground, even with its children “within.” Some have even pointed out the gruesome reality of cannibalism that took place during the siege, bringing to mind an even darker potential fulfillment of Jesus’s words: “and thy children **within thee.**”

#3 – The Prophecy:

“and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another...”

The Fulfillment:

After 70 AD, people would have seen utter desolation in all directions. Every stone of every building and wall in Jerusalem was dislodged from its original position and thrown down to the ground. Although Jesus specified that this referred to the Temple stones in the passage in Matthew, we cannot overlook the possibility that the reference in Luke referred to the entire city. As we saw in the previous point, Josephus does record the complete leveling of the city, aside from the encampment of the Romans,¹¹ or the Fortress of Antonia, which some have suggested is the true identity of today’s “Wailing Wall.” But since we have already touched on the destruction of the city as a whole, let’s focus now on the Temple itself.

Josephus records that after the Romans had entered the city, while the fighting was still ongoing, a torch thrown by a soldier through a window started a fire inside the Temple, leading to it being completely burned.¹²

Josephus’ account (as well as scripture) tells us that the Temple was not only furnished with gold and silver, but that it was also the treasury of Israel. It has been suggested that the melting of these extensive gold and silver holdings may have forced the Romans to

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have every stone removed individually in order to recover all the gold that had oozed in between the stones making up the walls of the buildings.

Thus, the specific words of Jesus (“And they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another...”) were fulfilled in the events of 70 AD. Although the Romans’ motivation for removing each stone is not known for sure, the claim that no stone was left on top of another is an archaeological fact.

Many scholars, believe that the melted gold was the reason the Romans tore apart every stone, fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus. For instance, Rey Stedman wrote:

During the long siege a terrible famine raged in the city and the bodies of the inhabitants were literally stacked like cordwood in the streets. Mothers ate their children to preserve their own strength. The toll of Jewish suffering was horrible but they would not surrender the city. Again and again, they attempted to trick the Romans through guile and perfidy. When at last the walls were breached Titus tried to preserve the Temple by giving orders to his soldiers not to destroy or burn it. But the anger of the soldiers against the Jews was so intense that, maddened by the resistance they encountered, they disobeyed the order of their general and set fire to the Temple. There were great quantities of gold and silver there, which had been placed in the Temple for safekeeping. This melted and ran down between the rocks and into the cracks of the stones. When the soldiers captured the Temple area, in their greed to obtain this gold and silver they took long bars and pried apart the massive stones. Thus, quite literally, not one stone was left standing upon another. The Temple itself was totally destroyed, though the wall supporting the area upon which the Temple was built was left partially intact and a portion of it remains to this day, called the Western Wall.¹³

Note: Many have claimed that since the Western Wall, (also referred to as the Wailing Wall) in Jerusalem is still standing, Jesus’s prophecy was not fulfilled. However, the Wailing Wall was not part of the

Temple. It was a giant retaining wall for the courtyard on which the Temple buildings sat.¹⁴ Another view (alluded to earlier) is that the Western Wall is not actually the location where the Temple buildings sat. Instead, it was the Western Wall of the Fortress of Antonia, which was a Roman fortress within Jerusalem that Josephus records Titus purposely left standing as a monument to the utter destruction of the city.¹⁵ Regardless, the eyewitness historical record left to us by Josephus, as well as modern archeological observation, agrees with Jesus's prophecy that described utter destruction.

This claim of not one stone of the Temple being left standing upon another is verified for us by the following archeological sources (among many others). For instance, in his book, *The Archaeology of the Jerusalem Area*, Harold Mare, former president of the Near East Archaeological Society, notes:

We do not have any remains of the Herodian temple itself because of the devastating Roman destruction in A.D. 70.¹⁶

Another scholar 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.¹⁷

So, we can see that Jesus's prophecy of this event about forty years before it happened, was fulfilled with remarkable precision. Jesus's specific mention of one stone not being left upon another is a perfect example of a fulfilled prophecy that we can still see today, allowing us to fully appreciate Jesus's accuracy.

After looking at these three segments of Jesus's prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction, we should appreciate the exactness of its fulfillment, as recorded in great detail by the ancient historian Josephus.

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5. *Ibid.*, V, 11.1, p. 863.
6. *Ibid.*, VII, 1.1, p. 900.
7. *Ibid.*, VI, 9.4, p. 899.
8. *Ibid.*, VII, 5.2, p. 906.
9. *Ibid.*, VI, 1.1, p. 872.
10. *Ibid.*, VI, 8.5, p. 897.
11. *Ibid.*, VII, 8.7, p. 920-921.
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13. Ray C. Stedman, *What's This World Coming To? (An expository study of Matthew 24-26, the Olivet Discourse)*, Palo Alto, CA: Discovery Publications, 1970, Ch. 1.
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15. Ernest L. Martin, "The Temple Mount and Fort Antonia," Apr. 1998, *Associates for Scriptural Knowledge*. (<http://www.askelm.com/temple/t980504.htm> - Retrieved 8/25/19)
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CHAPTER 4

FURTHER PROPHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

The prophecies we have examined so far demonstrate stunning accuracy. But there are other prophecies in the Bible that are also linked to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. Being that this was such a monumental event in the Scriptural scheme of things, we should not be surprised to find out that basically every aspect of it had been foretold in precise detail. Let's now explore some of the other passages that foretell the events in 70 AD.

The Daniel 9:26 Prophecy

God had also given a prophetic vision of the destruction in 70 AD to the prophet Daniel, which had been spoken through the angel Gabriel in Daniel 9. As this prophecy had predicted (Daniel 9:26), the Temple was destroyed *after* the Messiah had already come and been cut off (or killed).

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.

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-Daniel 9:26

Verse 26, makes it clear that the Messiah would be cut off, and then following that event, Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed. Around forty years after the Messiah Jesus Christ's death, there was a prince who came – and with his army destroyed the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (the Temple). As we have seen, this prince was Titus Vespasian, whose father Vespasian had just succeeded Nero as the Roman Emperor. Titus besieged and destroyed Jerusalem and the Second Temple in 70 AD, fulfilling many Bible prophecies that precisely anticipated this event.^{1 2}

The Luke 21:20-24 Prophecy

Let's focus on another prophecy of Jesus regarding this same event in 70 AD. In another recording of the Olivet Discourse found in Luke 21, Jesus responds to the comments some made regarding the adornment of the stones of the Temple.

And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

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

You may recall the similar Olivet Discourse passages we examined earlier, found in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. Luke's account however, goes on to describe in detail the destruction of Jerusalem that would happen in 70 AD. Jesus's prophecy recorded here in Luke 21 also came with a warning – namely, to flee Jerusalem and run for the mountains when the city was facing imminent siege (Luke 21:20-24).

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

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.

For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

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.

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

So, we can see that Jesus urged the people of Jerusalem to flee to the mountains when they saw the enemy army approaching and surrounding the city, as it would be a time of terrible persecution for Israel. It would also be an extremely difficult time for pregnant women and nursing mothers for obvious reasons. Jesus predicted that many would fall by the sword or be taken as prisoners – another prophetic detail that we will discuss in more depth shortly.

Unfortunately, the Jews in Jerusalem ignored Jesus's warning. But according to the Church historian Eusebius (260-340 AD), the early Christian Jews living in Jerusalem at the time of the Roman siege responded to Jesus's warning and fled to the mountainous area known as Pella. By doing this, they were able to avoid the destruction of the city and the massacre of the inhabitants that went along with it. Interestingly, this is another indicator that Luke was written prior to 70 AD.³

The defeat of the Jewish revolt ultimately led to the Jewish diaspora, as many of the Jewish rebels were scattered or sold into slavery. Recall Jesus's prophecy in this passage, in which He warned that many would fall by the sword or be taken prisoner. In chilling fulfillment of that warning, Josephus records that over a million people were killed during the siege, with a sizable portion of these being due to illnesses brought about by hunger. And in addition to that, around 97,000 Jews

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were captured and enslaved, with others fleeing to areas around the Mediterranean.⁴

For the next 1,900 years, the Jews would have no authority in the land God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This brings to mind the final prophecy that Jesus spoke in the passage we just examined. In Verse 24, Jesus prophesied that Jerusalem would continue to be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled.

The “times of the Gentiles” is a technical term in scripture that is important to understand. It refers to the extensive period of history when the Gentiles are the dominant world powers and the people of Israel (and especially Jerusalem) are subject to those powers. This period of the times of the Gentiles began around 606 or 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar made Jerusalem a subordinate city to the emerging Babylonian empire. It was at this time that the king of Babylon first took Jewish captives into exile.

Through the prophetic dream that God gave Nebuchadnezzar (which Daniel interpreted – Daniel 2:1-30) we are given insight into this age of history. We recognize that this time period will last up until the Second Coming of Christ at the end of Daniel’s seventieth week – also often referred to as the Tribulation. At this time, Christ will establish His Millennial Kingdom on Earth in which the nation of Israel will be the central and preeminent nation. This term “times of the Gentiles” is mentioned only once in scripture – here in Luke 21:24 – so it is appropriate to make reference to it here and recognize the true panorama of prophecy that Jesus makes known in this passage.

So far, since Nebuchadnezzar, the nation of Israel has never had lasting and independent control of Jerusalem – and they still don’t. Look no further than the existence of the Muslim holy sites located in Jerusalem – the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque – and the fact that Jews are banned from freely accessing and/or performing certain activities on the supposed area of the Temple Mount. Furthermore, because Palestinians also claim Jerusalem, the legitimacy of Israeli rule over Jerusalem lacks international recognition (most countries view Jerusalem’s status as something that must be resolved

through a negotiated agreement between Israel and the Palestinians), with most countries locating their embassies in Tel Aviv rather than in Jerusalem, even though the government is in Jerusalem. These are just some of the reasons that show that the control of Jerusalem is at best, contested at the moment. We can see that this prophecy of the Gentile control of Jerusalem is an ongoing prophecy that has been observable throughout the last 2,500 years of history.

So, after examining Jesus's prophecy in Luke 21:20-24, we can appreciate even further precise detail regarding the eventual destruction of Jerusalem.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As we conclude this study, let's recognize the "big picture" as it pertains to the events of 70 AD prophesied by Jesus. The destruction of the city and the Temple was a major turning point in God's agenda for Israel and all of humanity. The Old Covenant rituals were in the rear-view and an entirely new thing – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all people – was now center-stage. The events of 70 AD – the final harbinger of the transition of the Old Covenant over to the New – caused dramatic shifts even in Judaism. Let's recognize some of the changes that began to take place within the Jewish religious community who still would not recognize Jesus Christ as their awaited Messiah.

Before Titus Vespasian's departure, the Pharisaic sage and rabbi, Yohanan ben Zakkai, obtained his permission to establish a Judaic school at Yavne (Jamnia). Zakkai was smuggled away from Jerusalem in a coffin by his students. Later this school became a major center of Talmudic study.¹

It was after 70 AD that the unscathed Jewish community in Babylon began its rise to prominence in the Jewish world, giving eventual rise to the Babylonian Talmudic tradition.² Because of the rabbis' dominance after 70 AD, this era is called the Rabbinic Period.³ The

rabbis filled the void of Jewish leadership in the aftermath of the Great Revolt, and they created a new kind of Judaism through their literature and teachings.⁴

The vocation of rabbi was thought to be founded by Rabbi Gamaliel, a Pharisee, who was the first to be officially given the title “rabbi,” meaning “teacher.” In any case, scholars agree that the rabbis replaced the high priest and the priesthood’s role in Jewish society after 70 AD.⁵

The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD marked a turning point in Jewish history. In the absence of the Temple, the synagogue became the center of Jewish life.⁶ When the Temple was destroyed, Judaism responded by fixating on the commandments of the Torah and embracing an overemphasized commitment to the Oral Law – the interpretations of the rabbis (made up of the Talmud and the Mishna). Synagogues replaced the Temple as a central meeting place, and the rabbis replaced high priests as Jewish community leaders. Effectively, without a Temple and Priesthood, and without a significant presence in the land promised, Mosaic Judaism was dead and Talmudic Judaism began.

As we mentioned in the beginning of this study, the events of 70 AD removed all ability for the Jews to practice Mosaic Judaism as commanded in the Old Testament Law. This should have served as a wake-up call for a nation who had been anticipating the arrival of their long-awaited Messiah and Savior. The One who came riding into Jerusalem on the terminal day of the Daniel 9:25 countdown was rejected by the nation of Israel and put to death. But this rejection was all part of the plan. Through His crucifixion, Jesus fulfilled a multitude of Old Testament prophecies that spoke of One who would be the Savior not only of the Jews, but of all nations.

Through His sacrificial death on the cross, this Messiah Jesus Christ, would usher in a new age of Covenant – this time, based on the outpouring of the prophesied Holy Spirit, which would write God’s laws on the hearts of those who received it. With the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (emblematic of the Old Covenant), the former times had fully passed and God’s plan and attention had

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fully transitioned over to the institution of the Church – God’s plan to reach all of humanity through the gospel.

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6. *Ibid.*

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