

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Malachi 4:1-6

The Great Day of the LORD

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. 3 And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts. 4 “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. 5 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. 6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”

4:1 *the day*. The day of the Lord. (CSB)

The day of the Lord (3:17; 4:3, 5), when He will come to judge the living and the dead. (TLSB)

The entire New Testament period being considered a day of sifting and of judgment, because it culminates in the Day of Judgment.

burning like an oven. The Lord uses images of heat, fire, and burning to portray the Day of Judgment (cf Mt 25:41; 2 Pt 3:10). (TLSB)

arrogant. Evildoers – those who challenge God. (CSB)

stubble. See Isa 47:14 and John the Baptist’s prophecy about the work of Christ in Mt 3:12. (CSB)

Evildoers who seem to prosper in this life will end up like a plant’s stalk after harvest. The note from Ps 1:4 says, “Winnowing farmers harvested the grain and, on a breezy evening, would throw it into the air. Since chaff was lighter than the grain, the breeze would blow the chaff away. Accumulated chaff was burned – vivid picture of the end of a life divorced from God. (TLSB)

neither root nor branch. Nothing of them will be left (see Eze 17:8–9). (CSB)

The fire will be so intense that nothing of the plant will remain. (TLSB)

The final, eternal destruction of the wicked being coincidental with the last Judgment. Such is the terrible fate of those who do not avail themselves of the Lord’s mercy (Kretzmann)

4:2 The Lord addresses believers directly (3:16). (TLSB)

sun of righteousness. God and his glory are compared with the sun in Isa 60:1, 19 (see notes there). Christ is the “rising sun” from heaven (see Lk 1:78–79). (CSB)

In contrast to the burning fire of judgment, the heat of the sun warms believers with the healing message of God’s righteousness in Christ (cf Is 58:8). St Bernard of Clairvaux: “Those whom He called, them also He justified. Over them a Sun arises, though not that sun which may daily be seen arising over good and

bad alike, but He of whom the Prophet speaks when addressing himself to those alone who have been called to the counsel” (SLSB, p 151). (TLSB)

righteousness ... healing. Salvation and renewal are intended (see Isa 45:8; 46:13; 53:5; Jer 30:17 and notes). (CSB)

its wings. The sun’s rays (cf. Ps 139:9). (CSB)

Wings were often a symbol of security and shelter (Ps 63:7; 91:4; Lk 13:34). The handles of royal Judean storage jars were impressed with a winged sun disk. Some archaeologists believe this represented Yahweh, the Lord, or His chariot-throne (see Ezk 10:1). The sun disk has its origin in Egypt; Israelite artists commonly borrowed Egyptian and Phoenician designs. (TLSB)

like calves released from the stall. Frisky young calves often frolic about when released from confinement. (CSB)

Those who experience salvation will be full of joy and excitement, with the same kind of energy as calves at play. (TLSB)

Our spirits feel good! They want to kick and frolic in God’s sunshine forever...and they shall! Nothing can hold them back. Imagine racing up the slopes of light! The saints stream into their final pasture. The Good Shepherd has kept His word. All is well and good. (PBC)

4:3 *tread down... the wicked.* As one treads the winepress. (CSB)

Only the ashes of the wicked remain. (TLSB)

4:4 *Remember the law.* A final exhortation to those who impatiently wait for the Lord’s coming. (CSB)

This is the word “Torah.” It comes from the verb meaning to teach or to instruct. Here it does not mean just the laws with do’s and don’t but also and especially the words of promise and instruction, the complete revelation of God to His people. We are saved through this revelation of God’s will. (PBC)

my servant. See Ex 14:31; Dt 34:5; Jdg 2:8; Ps 18 title; Isa 20:3; 41:8–9; 42:1 and notes. (CSB)

The priests were not faithful servants because they did not teach the Law as Moses had (2:8). (TLSB)

statutes and rules that I commanded. God commanded Moses to teach all Israel His statutes and rules (Dt 6:1). These remained valid in Malachi’s day. (TLSB)

Horeb. Mount Sinai (cf. Ex 3:1). (CSB)

4:5 *Elijah.* As Elijah came before Elisha (whose ministry was one of judgment and redemption), so “Elijah” will be sent to prepare God’s people for the Lord’s coming. John the Baptist ministered “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk 1:17; see Mt 11:13–14; 17:12–13; Mk 9:11–13). And some feel that Elijah may also be one of the two witnesses in Rev 11:3. (CSB)

“My messenger” (1:1) is identified here as someone like the great prophet Elijah, who had called Israel to repentance and was taken alive to heaven (2Ki 2:1–12). John the Baptist came in the power and spirit of Elijah. Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus at His transfiguration (Mt 17:3). (TLSB)

great and awesome day. Joel 2, 31, namely, before the Lord Himself would begin His ministry, which ushered in the period of the New Testament, culminating in the Last Judgment. (Kretzmann)

4:6 *turn the hearts.* Cf. Ge 18:19; Dt 7:9–11. According to Lk 1:17 John the Baptist sought to accomplish this. (CSB)

The angel Gabriel used these words to describe John's mission. When fathers and children have a good relationship, the way is prepared for the coming of Christ into their hearts. (TLSB)

Having them both realize the love of Jehovah in sending the Messiah and in the subsequent salvation wrought for all men, Luke 1,17. (Kretzmann)

utter destruction. Total destruction. If Israel does not repent, she will be dealt with as God had dealt with Edom (see Isa 34:5; cf. Mal 1:3–4). (CSB)

Though God threatened utter destruction, His ultimate hope is that people will respond in repentance and faith to the message of prophets such as Malachi and John (Lk 3:3–14). (TLSB)

4:1–6 The last OT Book concludes with the Lord's announcement that Judgment Day is coming. For those who refuse to repent and believe the Gospel, it means utter destruction. But for those who fear His name, this will be a day of rejoicing. John the Baptist called the people of his day to repentance and faith in the coming Savior. How great a message for us to hear! • Dear Lord Jesus, Son of Righteousness, let the light of Your healing grace shine on me, that I may fear, love, and trust in You always. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Warning Against Idleness

6 Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. **7** For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, **8** nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. **9** It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. **10** For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. **11** For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. **12** Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. **13** As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

3:6 *command.* An authoritative word with a military ring. (CSB)

the name. Cf. Ac 4:12. Paul has apostolic authority, and he reminded his hearers of this at the beginning of most of his Letters (cf. Gal 1:1). This is also a reminder that Christ has a baptismal claim on all who have been baptized into His name. (TLSB)

keep away. Not withdrawal of all contact but withholding of close fellowship. Idleness is sinful and disruptive, but those guilty of it are still brothers (v. 15). (CSB)

brother. People should still be acknowledged as fellow Christians and not be expelled from the Church if there is yet hope for repentance. (TLSB)

idleness. The problem was mentioned in the first letter, and evidently had worsened. Paul takes it seriously and gives more attention to it in this letter than to anything else but the second coming. (CSB)

Neglecting daily responsibilities and common tasks, but also meddling in the affairs of others. Perhaps this was because they anticipated that the end of the world was imminent (2:1–3), or perhaps they were simply lazy and arrogant (cf v 11). (TLSB)

tradition. Apostolic teaching and instruction concerning everyday conduct. (TLSB)

3:7 *to imitate us.* A theme in Paul’s Letters; he calls on his hearers to imitate him because he imitates Jesus (cf 1Co 11:1; Eph 5:1–21). In this case, he reminds the Thessalonians that when Silvanus, Timothy, and he were with them, they were not idle, disorderly, or undisciplined, but they “worked night and day” (v 8). (TLSB)

3:8 *nor dud we eat anyone’s bread.* A Hebraism for “make a living” (see, e.g., Ge 3:19; Am 7:12). Paul is not saying that he never accepted hospitality but that he had not depended on other people for his living (see 1Th 2:9 and note). (CSB)

3:10 *anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.* Called “the Golden Rule of work.” Related to both the general and specific instructions already given orally and in writing, esp the command given in v 6. (TLSB)

Pagan parallels are in the form, “He who does not work does not eat.” But Paul gives an imperative: lit. “let him not eat.” The Christian must not be a loafer. (CSB)

3:11 *we hear.* Paul does not identify from whom or how he has heard this news, though perhaps it was through the person who had delivered 1Th. (TLSB)

busybodies. Worse than idle, they were interfering with other people’s affairs, a problem to which idleness often leads. (CSB)

Didache: “See to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he wills not so to do, he is a Christ-monger. Watch that you keep aloof from such” (ANF 7:381). (TLSB)

3:12 *quietly.* Without interfering in the work of others and without arrogantly seeking to draw attention (cf vv 6, 11). (TLSB)

3:13 *do not grow weary in doing good* – In warning against idleness, Paul hopes his readers will never tire of doing what is right. If we’re going to be busy, he’s saying, be busy with the right. (LL)

GOSPEL – Luke 21:5-28

Jesus Foretells Destruction of the Temple

5 And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, **6** “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” **7** And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” **8** And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The

time is at hand! Do not go after them. 9 And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”

21:5–36 Jesus concludes by prophesying the destruction of the temple and the city and the end of the world. Although separate in time, Jerusalem’s destruction foreshadows the final judgment. (TLSB)

The final discourse in Jesus’ temple teaching is openly eschatological, serving as his last warning to the disciples, the crowds, and the religious establishment that the kingdom of God is near (21:31). It is the climax of his public teaching. As an eschatological discourse, it is about “last things,” a topic with which the hearer is already familiar from the teaching of Jesus. (Cf. Lk 12:35–48; 13:31–35; 17:20–37; 19:41–44) It is important not to lose one’s way through this complex, prophetic discourse. Careful attention to its structure can help distinguish between Jesus’ words about the destruction of Jerusalem and his words about the destruction of the world.

One of the issues is the relationship of the Lukan structure to that of Matthew and Mark. For a detailed analysis, see J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1326–29, and I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 754–58. L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 326, notes that Luke focuses on the suffering of his followers in the period *before* the fall of Jerusalem, and uses language which ... is echoed consistently in the narrative about Jesus’ followers in Acts. For the reader of Luke-Acts, therefore, these first predictions of Jesus about the future are now clearly past, and have been shown to have reached fulfillment—in Luke’s own narrative! Luke not only thereby strengthens the literary unity of his two-volume work, and accomplishes once more a literary “prophecy and fulfillment,” but most significantly, he has enhanced the presentation of Jesus as the Prophet (emphasis Johnson). (CC p. 787)

Luke uses *language* and *structure* to alert his hearers to the significance of the Lord’s final words before his passion. (CC pp. 787-788)

21:5 *some were speaking* – τινῶν—Luke does not indicate who spoke the words of admiration for the temple, nor does he identify who questioned Jesus in 21:7 after Jesus predicted the temple’s destruction in 21:6. However, in the synoptic parallels to Lk 21:5, Mt 24:1 has “his disciples,” while Mk 13:1 has “one of his disciples,” and in the parallels to Lk 21:7, Mt 24:3 identifies the questioners as “the disciples,” while Mk 13:3 is most specific: “Peter and James and John and Andrew.” Luke last mentioned the disciples in 20:45. The same synoptic parallels indicate that Lk 21:5–6 took place while Jesus and his disciples were leaving the temple (the site of Jesus’ activities in Lk 19:45, 47; 20:1; 21:37–38) and that Lk 21:7–36 was spoken on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the temple (Mk 13:3). (CC p. 783)

The discourse begins without the evangelist’s usual precision in providing a specific audience as part of his framework. It is not clear who raises the topic of the temple in 21:5. Luke simply says that some people from the crowds who were listening to Jesus teach commented on the beauty of the temple. This could very well refer to the disciples, who were last mentioned at 20:45. But at any rate, the discourse is *evoked* by the comment, rather than delivered as an *answer* to a questioner. In light of Jesus’ later comments about persecution, it appears as if he is speaking to the same group that has been gathering: his disciples, who are faithful catechumens. (CC p. 789)

the temple how it was adorned. One stone at the southwest corner was some 36 feet long. “Whatever was not overlaid with gold was purest white” (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.5.6.). Herod gave a golden vine for one of its decorations. Its grape clusters were as tall as a man. The full magnificence of the temple as elaborated and adorned by Herod has only recently come to light through archaeological investigations on the temple hill. (CSB)

Herod the Great renovated the temple. The third-century Roman historian Tacitus described it as “immensely opulent.” *adorned with noble stones and offerings*. Some marble columns were higher than 40 ft. Ornaments included tapestries, golden and bronze doors, and golden grape clusters. (TLSB)

λίθοις καλοῖς—After the Babylonian exile, the Jerusalem temple was rebuilt ca. 536–16 B.C. Those observers who were old enough to remember the first temple wept because the first temple far surpassed the second in terms of majesty and glory (Ezra 3:12). The second temple period was an era of “small things” (Zech 4:10). However, the precincts of the second temple were renovated from 20 B.C. to A.D. 64. Most significant work was done early in this period under Herod the Great. Some of the huge white stones provided for the foundation may still be seen at the bottom of the Wailing Wall. Josephus comments on the size, beauty, and whiteness of these stones in *War* 5.223–24 (5.5.6); *Antiquities* 15.392 (15.11.3). (CC p. 783)

At the beginning of this discourse, the *temple* is in view (not Jerusalem). The temple will remain the focus until 21:20, when the city of Jerusalem is first mentioned.

The entire eschatological discourse begins (21:5) and ends (21:37–38) with the temple, as does the gospel itself (1:5–25; 24:53); the infancy narrative (1:5–25; 2:41–52); and Jesus’ entire teaching in the temple (19:47; 21:37–38). (CC p. 789)

The location of the *presence of the Lord*—temple or body of Jesus—is the issue more than the geographical locale of redemption, Jerusalem. But it is not simply the temple that is in view, but the *stones* of the temple and two different perspectives on those stones. (CC p. 789)

offerings – ἀναθήμασι—Votive offerings by rich patrons of the temple could consist of “ornaments of the temple, such as tapestries, golden and bronze doors, and golden grape clusters” (R. Stein, *Luke*, 511; cf. 2 Macc 3:2–40; 9:16; Josephus, *War* 5.210–12 [5.5.4]; *Antiquities* 15.395 [15.11.3]). (CC p. 783)

21:6 *days will come* – Destruction by the Romans in AD 70. (TLSB)

ἐλεύσονται ἡμέραι—“This expression refers to a future event within history (Luke 5:35; 17:22; 23:29; cf. also 19:43), and it is not used in Luke to describe the end of the world, i.e., the coming of the Son of Man (cf. ‘that day,’ 10:12; 17:31; 21:34)” (R. Stein, *Luke*, 511). See comments at 5:35 and 17:22. (CC p. 784)

not be left. Fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the Romans took Jerusalem and burned the temple. (CSB)

Devastation would be complete; no part of the temple remains today, only a retaining wall of the outer court (the West Wall). (TLSB)

One perspective is expressed by those who comment on the majesty of the magnificent setting provided by Herod the Great for the second temple (see textual note on 21:5). They see only the earthly and temporal significance of the temple, bound as they are by time and space. But Jesus begins his eschatological revelation by warning them that “days will come” (21:6) that require thinking *eschatologically*, for these beautiful stones will be pulled down and not one will be left on top of another. Stones have already figured prominently in Jesus’ previous sayings about Jerusalem: The stones (οἱ λίθοι) would cry out in acclamation when Jesus enters Jerusalem if the people were prevented from responding (19:40). The enemies of Jerusalem “will not leave a stone upon a stone [λίθον ἐπὶ λίθον] within [her], because [she] did not know the appointed time of [her] your visitation” (19:44). And Jesus is “the stone that the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner” (20:17). Jesus repeats here what he said before he entered the holy city (19:44): *the “stones” that matter in the temple are not the ones that form*

the physical building, but the “Stone” whose presence has resided among those physical stones and who now prophesies the end of those stones. (CC p. 789)

Indirectly, Jesus announces a shift in the locale of God’s presence—from the physical temple in Jerusalem to the fleshly body of Jesus.

This shift is described in the infancy narrative in Luke, where God overshadows Mary and takes up residence as the holy Child, Jesus, incarnate in her womb. When Jesus is presented in the temple, it is the Lord coming to his temple in fulfillment of OT prophecy. The OT witnessed several shifts in the location of God’s presence. God was with the journeying patriarchs, who sojourned in Egypt. God accompanied Israel in the exodus, appeared on Sinai, and visibly came to dwell among his people in the tabernacle and, later, the temple. Before the first temple was destroyed, God’s presence departed (Ezekiel 1 and 10–11), but God promised that it would return (Ezekiel 43). (CC p. 790)

In a sense, the temple is rendered obsolete by Jesus’ incarnation (cf. Jn 4:20–26). The destruction of the temple will prompt people to look for God’s presence in the location where he has come to dwell forever—in Jesus, who, in turn, comes to dwell in his church through the Gospel—his Word and Sacraments.

At the beginning of John’s gospel, after Jesus cleansed the temple, the Jews asked for a sign that would show he was entitled to cleanse the temple. Jesus’ response fits perfectly with the opening words of this prophetic discourse:

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?”

But he spoke of the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken (Jn 2:19–22).

Through Jesus, the Stone, God can raise up stones—Gentiles—to be children of God (Lk 3:8). Those in Christ are living stones built into a new temple (1 Pet 2:4–8). (CC p. 790)

In his introduction, then, Jesus speaks about the destruction of the temple. He will conclude the first part of his eschatological discourse by returning to the theme of destruction, but Jerusalem will be the focus (21:20–24). Thus, another frame is provided the hearer to see that Jesus is carefully distinguishing between the destruction of the temple (21:5–6) and of Jerusalem (21:20–24) on the one hand and the end of the world (21:25–36) on the other.

21:7 teacher – By addressing him as “Teacher,” those who ask the question about the sign trust that Jesus is able to predict when these things will happen. (This title tends to be used by Jesus’ opponents, although here apparently disciples call him “Teacher.”) Note that they ask Jesus about “the sign” (singular), and when he does come back to their question, he responds by giving them a series of “signs” (plural in 21:11). Jesus has already spoken of *the sign* when he responded to the Jewish religious establishment that *demand*ed a sign from heaven (11:16). *The sign* is the sign of Jonah (11:29–30), which in the Lukan context is the preaching of Jesus that leads people to repentance, as well as the death and resurrection of Jesus (emphasized more in Mt 12:40), which will take place in a few days. The *sign* of the resurrection occurs some forty years before the *signs* of Jerusalem’s destruction. The end of the world could come at any time after the resurrection, which is *the sign of the eschaton*. But before describing the *signs* of the temple’s end, Jesus first issues two warnings. (CC pp. 791-792)

when ... ? Mark reports that this question was asked by four disciples: Peter, James, John and Andrew (Mk 13:3). Matthew gives the question in a fuller form, including an inquiry for the sign of Jesus' coming and the end of the age (Mt 24:3). (CSB)

ταῦτα—"These things" (neuter) are not the "days" (feminine) in 21:6, but the implied catastrophic events that would fulfill Jesus' prediction in 21:6. (CC p. 784)

what will be the sign ... ? What would be the indication that these things are about to happen? (CSB)

Portend or miracle. (TLSB)

τὸ σημεῖον—The hearer would recall that Jesus' skeptical opponents "were seeking a sign out of heaven" (11:16; σημεῖον ἐξ οὐρανοῦ). But this question is more like Mary's query in faith (1:34). This word will occur again at 21:11 (ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ σημεῖα) and 21:25 (σημεῖα ἐν ἡλίῳ καὶ σελήνῃ καὶ ἀστροῖς) *but in the plural*. See comments at 11:14–36 and below in the commentary. (CC p. 784)

Jesus' words about the temple and Jerusalem are prompted by a question about a *sign* portending the destruction of the temple. In fact, the evangelist frames two warnings with references to the *sign(s)* (21:7, 11).

From this point on the eschatological teaching of Jesus will incorporate a series of *warnings*: 21:7–11, framed by Luke with "sign(s)"; 21:12–19, concerning betrayal; 21:20–24, connected to the destruction of Jerusalem; and 21:27–36, framed by Jesus' reference to the Son of Man. (CC p. 790)

The goal of Jesus' final public teaching is catechetical preparation through exhortation (paraenesis). Jesus is *not* teaching the disciples how to predict the future with apocalyptic discernment.

I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 754, notes that the purpose of Jesus' final eschatological discourse in both Mark and Luke is "paraenetic rather than apocalyptic. Jesus is not concerned to impart apocalyptic secrets to the disciples, but to prepare them spiritually for what lies ahead." C. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 199–205, accents the paraenetic aspect of this eschatological discourse, as may be seen in his title for this section, "On Persecution and Perseverance." (CC p. 790)

I. Ylvisacker, *The Gospels* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1932) 601, made the same point eloquently: "They must not be regarded merely as a systematized portrayal of certain facts which belong to the future. But they comprise teachings that belong to the future, and which are of practical import also for the present. These truths shall serve either as a warning for the ungodly or as an admonition or a source of comfort for the believer, in dangers from within and from without, or as both." (CC p. 791)

These units of warnings (so arranged and framed by the evangelist) are the key to understanding the structure and purpose of this discourse. They also indicate why Jesus' eschatological teachings are reiterated here. The church must be prepared to see that the end times begin with the death and resurrection of Jesus. After this beginning of the end, God's grace will no longer come through animal sacrifices at the stone temple. Rather, his grace will come through what the Lord has instituted to be the worship life of the church: catechesis, Baptism, Lord's Supper. This font of the church's life prepares the people of God for the parousia, which could come at any time. (CC pp. 790-791)

21:8 *see that* – These two warnings indicate that those asking the questions are part of his catechetical community or closely associated with it. Jesus begins with an imperative: “See [βλέπετε] that you are not led astray” (Lk 21:8), showing that his priorities in connection with the destruction of the temple are different from those who are asking the questions. They are obsessed with the stone temple and *the signs*, whereas Jesus points to what is most important for them: to be prepared for the end so that they are not misled. The use of the imperative shows that this is more catechesis than a lesson in apocalyptic prediction. They are to be prepared at all times because they will not be able to predict the exact time. (CC p. 792)

not led astray – Many false prophets were coming; discernment would be needed. (TLSB)

my name – Claiming to be Christ’s representatives or Christ Himself. (TLSB)

I am he. I am Jesus the Messiah (having come a second time). (CSB)

“I am the Messiah whose return was promised!” (TLSB)

ἐγώ εἰμι—False messiahs who will come in Jesus’ name will say “I AM”—claiming to be the Christ or even Jesus himself. In light of Yahweh’s self-description as the great “I AM” (Ex 3:14; 6:2–8), the phrase in this context is a claim of divinity. Jesus uses this same Greek phrase to designate himself in Lk 22:70; 24:39; Acts 9:5; 18:10; 22:8; 26:15. The phrase also forms Jesus’ famous “I AM” statements in John. (CC p. 784)

Two things may mislead them. First, false prophets will come with a different catechesis than the one Jesus brings. Using catechetical vocabulary, Jesus alerts them to the many who will come (ἐλεύσονται) *in Jesus’ name* in order to have them journey (πορευθήτε) down another catechetical road (21:8). Their catechesis will sound authentic. It will use Jesus’ name, claiming to be the great “I AM” (ἐγώ εἰμι). This is essentially a statement that “I AM Messiah! “I AM Yahweh!” (see textual note on 21:8). And their catechesis will announce that “the appointed time” (ὁ καιρός) is near (ἤγγικεν). History has seen many try in vain to foretell the time of the end. “Do not journey after them,” says Jesus, because these are false Christs who offer a flawed eschatology. Both Jews and Christians might be tempted to interpret the razing of the temple during the Jewish war of A.D. 66–73 as *the sign* that the end has come. However, it is an eschatological event that signals God’s judgment on those who reject Jesus, “but *not immediately* is the end” (21:9). (CC p. 792)

The time. The end time. (CSB)

ὁ καιρός— The word καιρός denotes a time period, season, or point in history that unfolds according to God’s plan. It is used three times in this discourse: here of the false claim that the parousia has arrived according to the false eschatologies of false prophets; at 21:24 of the “appointed times of the Gentiles” (which begins with the destruction of Jerusalem); and at 21:36 of general seasons or expanses of time during the end times. Here the beginning of the end times is signaled by the destruction of Jerusalem (21:24), which portends the end of the world (21:36). (CC p. 784)

time is at hand – ἤγγικεν—On the eschatological connotations of this word, see comments at 15:1. This and related words occur frequently in this eschatological section: 21:20, 28, 30, 31. See A. A. Just Jr., *The Ongoing Feast*, 60–63, 125, 220–21. (CC p. 784)

don’t go after them – πορευθήτε—“Journey” is also part of Jesus’ catechetical vocabulary: don’t follow their catechetical way or road. (CC p. 784)

21:9 *do not be terrified* – πορευθη̄τε, (KJV “terrified”) The word comes from the verb “to fall” and implies anything that would make you uncertain in your steps. Colloquially, this person would be “knock-kneed” or “shaking in his boots” from fear. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 4)

The second danger that these catechumens must be warned against is linked to the false teaching of these false Christs: panic that results from wars and revolutions that the world will experience. The Jews warred against Rome both in A.D. 66–73 and in the Bar Kochba revolt of A.D. 132–35. The significance of the destruction of the holy city for God’s timetable cannot be underestimated. Jesus is giving them a hermeneutical key for interpreting the signs! Every subsequent war is an apocalyptic sign that the end will come—eventually. It is all part of God’s plan (δεῖ, “it is necessary,” [21:9]), so do not panic. (CC p. 792)

these things – Events of vv 6–8. (TLSB)

the end will not come right away. Refers to the end of the age (see Mt 24:3, 6). All the events listed in vv. 8–18 are characteristic of the entire present age, not just signs of the end of the age. (CSB)

The destruction of Jerusalem would foreshadow the distant end of the world. (TLSB)

τὸ τέλος—The destruction of Jerusalem is the beginning of the end of the world, but much time intervenes before the end comes. (CC p. 784)

21:5–9 Jesus prepares His disciples for the temple’s destruction and the final judgment. Do not be so impressed with the world’s splendor that you lose sight of the eternal. Jesus, our true temple, was laid low in the grave but rose again so we can live fearlessly. • Lord, keep our hearts fixed on You, that as we pass through things temporal, we do not lose what is eternal. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Foretells Wars and Persecution

10 Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. 12 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. 13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. 16 You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. 17 You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

21:10 *nation will rise against nation* – These signs lead up to the destruction of the temple (AD 70); similar signs will occur before the end of the world (v 25). (TLSB)

Only after warning them about false teachers and false eschatologies will Jesus tell them *the signs*. By inserting the introduction that “then he [Jesus] said to them” (21:10), Luke signals that these next words are distinct from the previous warnings. Jesus’ description of the signs is threefold. First, people will see disturbances among nations and between kingdoms. This will include the wars and revolutions mentioned before. Second, there will be natural disasters such as earthquakes, famines, and plagues. These phenomena will occur *on the earth*. The OT is filled with references to earthquakes that signal divine intervention in history or the judgment of the Lord, (Is 13:13; 29:6; Ezek 3:12–13; 38:19–22; Amos 1:1; Hag 2:6; Zech 14:5; cf. Acts 16:26; Rev 6:12; 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18) and famine figures prominently in Israel’s salvation history, (E.g., Gen 12:10; Genesis 41–50; cf. Acts 11:28) as well as in apocalyptic prophecies. (Is 5:13–14; 8:21; 14:30; 51:19; the book of Joel; cf. Rev 6:8) Finally, the heavens will be

filled with terrifying events and great signs. These phenomena will occur *in the heavens*. “Terrifying events” (singular φόβητρον) is used only here in the NT and in the LXX only at Is 19:17, where the land of Judah becomes terrifying to the Egyptians because of the significance of Judah in salvation history. Signs in the heavens are mentioned in Peter’s Pentecost text from Joel, where there are “wonders [τέρατα] in the heaven above and signs [σημεῖα] on the earth below” (Acts 2:19; LXX Joel 3:3 only has τέρατα [ET 2:30]). Josephus describes how the heavens were filled with signs of judgment before Jerusalem fell in A.D. 70 (*War* 6.288–315 [6.5.3–4]). (CC pp. 792-793)

21:11 *signs from heaven*. Jesus speaks of natural disasters and physical disturbances. The historian Josephus reported such events before the destruction of the temple. (TLSB)

“fearful events” is from the same Greek root that gives us “phobia”; “great signs” is the very generic sameia magalla, “great indicators” or “signs of great significance,” implying items that defy description. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 4)

Note that the signs described in 21:10–11 are preludes to the destruction of *the temple*. All the events described thus far could be located during the Jewish war of A.D. 66–73. Parallel signs will be described at the beginning of Jesus’ description of *the end of the world* (21:25), but the very fact that Luke repeats those items in another section of eschatological discourse suggests two similar but distinct events. It will *seem* as if the end of the world is near when the temple is destroyed, for it will be a sign of judgment by God on Israel for rejecting her Messiah—and a portent of God’s final judgment upon all who reject the Christ. (CC p. 793)

21:12 *before all this* – Before Jerusalem’s fall, the disciples will have to endure various persecutions because they are Christians (1Pt 4:12). (TLSB)

πρὸ δὲ τούτων πάντων—The reference here is to what Jesus describes in 21:10–11 concerning the signs that precede the end of the world. (CC p. 784)

The structure for Jesus’ description of the persecution of Christians that precedes the destruction of the temple (πρὸ δὲ τούτων πάντων, “before all these things” [21:12]) has at the center another dominical warning, but this time, in keeping with the theme of this section, the frame is about betrayal:

21:12 **A** *Betraying* (παραδιδόντες) *Christians to the Jews and Gentiles on account of Jesus’ name* (ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματός μου)

21:13 for witness/martyrdom.

21:14–15 **B** *Warning: Do not worry beforehand*. “So place in your hearts not to be concerned beforehand to defend yourselves.

For I myself will give you a mouth and wisdom which all those who oppose you will not be able to stand against or speak against.”

21:16–18 **A’** *Christians will be betrayed* (παραδοθήσεσθε) *by family and friends because of Jesus’ name* (διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου).

21:19 “Gain your souls!”

Jesus has been speaking about the destruction of the temple (21:5–6) and signs of that destruction (21:7–11). When Jesus interjects talk of persecution here, he is therefore referring first of all to the period preceding A.D. 70, which portends the universal conflagration at the parousia. He warns his disciples that they will suffer betrayal just as he is about to be betrayed and that they must be prepared if they are to persevere to the end. By using the word for Jesus’ betrayal in the frame of this section (παραδίδομι in 21:12, 16; see textual note on 21:12), Jesus links his catechumens to his own suffering, and he

foreshadows the persecution of the apostles and Christians as the Christian church emerges in Acts. This is the first explicit suggestion that the trials of Jesus are prophetic for the trials of his disciples.

J. Neyrey, *The Passion according to Luke*, 87–88, sees 21:12–15 as programmatic for the narrative in Acts: “What binds Jesus’ trials with the trials of the Church in Acts is not just the conscious fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecies in Acts. In Luke’s gospel, Jesus himself is the archetype and model of the Church’s experience, and so the essential items of the prediction are dramatized in Jesus’ own story.” (CC pp. 793-794)

The details show how horrible the betrayal will be. (CC pp. 793-794)

delivering you up to the synagogues. Synagogues were used not only for worship and school, but also for community administration and confinement while awaiting trial. (CSB)

παραδιδόντες—παραδίδωμι is part of Luke’s passion vocabulary when used of Jesus’ betrayal by Judas. See comments at 9:44; 22:21, 22, 48; 24:7, 20. The verb occurs again in 21:16. (CC p. 784)

Jesus begins with betrayal to and persecution by Jews (“synagogues”) and Gentile authorities (“prisons,” both in 21:12), just what Jesus will experience in his trials before the (Jewish) Sanhedrin (22:66–71), the Roman governor Pilate, and the half-Jewish client king Herod (23:1–25). This foreshadows what will happen in Acts when hands will be laid on Christians. (Acts 4:3; 5:18; 12:1; 21:27) Christians will be persecuted,

διώκω, “persecute,” is also in used Acts 7:52, citing the persecution of OT prophets; in Acts 9:4–5 and 22:7, where Jesus is persecuted by Saul; and in Acts 22:4 and 26:11, where Saul confesses he persecuted the church. (CC p. 794)

brought to synagogues, (Acts 9:2; 22:19; 26:11) imprisoned (Acts 5:18–19, 22, 25; 8:3; 12:4–6, 17; 16:16–40; 22:4, 19; 26:10) and brought before kings (Acts 12:1–11; 25:13–26:32) and governors. (Acts 23:24–24:27; 25:1–26:32) But Jesus ends with what may be the most devastating words for catechumens. *They will also be betrayed by family and friends* (Lk 21:16). The hearer knows that Jesus has already prepared the disciples for this by overturning the old kinship laws and establishing the new kinship through his Word (see comments at 8:19–21; 12:51–53; 14:25–27). Jesus’ family is not created *by blood* but *by his Word*. Christians will find consolation in the communion of saints during the persecution that lies ahead. (CC p. 794)

for my name’s sake – ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματός μου—Jesus first used a similar expression in the final Lukan beatitude at 6:22. ὄνομα occurs three times in this section (also 21:8, 17). The animosity and violence disciples suffer is really directed at Jesus, whom they represent (9:48; 10:16). (CC pp. 784-785)

But there is more to the frame than betrayal, for betrayal is “on account of my name” (21:12) and hatred by all is “because of my name” (21:17). Christians will experience persecution for no other reason than their connection with Jesus. The name of Jesus defines their identity, for *Christians bear in their bodies Jesus, the new temple*. For that reason, Christians are living stones and their bodies are temples. (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Pet 2:4–6) The opponents will hate them because the presence of God has shifted from the temple of Jerusalem to where Christ has promised to be present: in those baptized *in his name*, in the Gospel, in his Supper. How ironic that the temple of Jerusalem is destroyed *by God* because the people refused to believe that a shift in divine presence had taken place and that Christians will be killed because they proclaim that this presence now dwells among them! (CC p. 794)

21:13 *bear witness* – Persecution provides an opportunity to proclaim Jesus publicly (Ac 4:1–12; 5:17–32; 26). (TLSB)

ἀποβήσεται ὑμῖν εἰς μαρτύριον—The sense of this phrase is “lead to testifying” RSV This will be a time for you to bear testimony.” One is tempted to translate, “It will result for you in *martyrdom*” because of the context of persecution here. Martyrdom is the strongest form of testifying. (CC p. 785)

But there is one more part to Luke’s frame. Just as Jesus’ death was his testimony (μαρτύριον; 1 Tim 2:6) to the world that a new creation was breaking forth and the end times had arrived in him, so persecution is an opportunity for Christians to witness (μαρτύριον) to the world the testimony of Jesus (Lk 21:13). (Cf. Acts 4:33; 1 Cor 1:6; μαρτυρία in Rev 6:9; 12:11, 17; 20:4) This witness may result in their own martyrdom (21:16). Jesus exhorts, “By your perseverance [ἐν τῇ ὑπομονῇ ὑμῶν], gain your souls” (21:19). Jesus calls the faithful to remember in the parable of the sower (8:15) those who heard the Word, held it fast, and bore fruit with steadfast endurance (ἐν ὑπομονῇ; the only other place in Luke where ὑπομονή is used). One kind of fruit borne by faithful catechumens is faithful testimony in the face of persecution. To remain faithful in the midst of this persecution is a proclamation *to the world* of their faith in the testimony/martyrdom of Jesus. Jesus’ testimony will save them *eternally*, even if it costs their life *physically* (Rev 6:9; 12:11; 20:4). This is why Jesus can comfort them by telling them, “A hair from your head will not perish” (Lk 21:18), although he has just spoken about their possible death (21:16). They will gain their souls, and is not one’s soul one’s very life? (There is a twofold meaning of ψυχή in 21:19: “soul” *and* “life.” Soul *is* life.) Even though they suffer and die, they will be alive eternally. (CC pp. 794–795)

21:14-15 Jesus reassures the disciples that God will protect and provide for them in tribulation. Through the Holy Spirit, He will provide irrefutable words and thoughts. Hus: “He it is who feeds his sheep by his word and example and by the food of His body.... He is the bishop holding supreme guardianship over his flock, because he sleeps not nor is he, that watches over Israel, weary” (*The Church*, p 120). (TLSB)

21:14 *in your minds* – θέτε οὖν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις—On this phrase, see 1:66 (cf. 9:44). The Greek reflects the Hebrew expression found in Ezek 40:4; 44:5; Job 1:8; 2:3; Dan 1:8. προμελετᾶν—The meaning could be “plan, practice, or prepare beforehand” or “think about, be concerned about beforehand.” (CC p. 785)

Pre-meditate how you will respond, such as by memorizing a canned response. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 4)

Thus, the order in each part of the frame is the same: persecution and death because of the name of Jesus is testimony to the presence of Christ among his people and even in their bodies—the temples—and through this presence of Christ they will gain salvation. This is nothing more and nothing less than Jesus’ principle of the Great Reversal applied in an eschatological context. *In similar language* Jesus had included in his first teaching on discipleship the paradox that “whoever wishes to save his life [ψυχὴν] will lose it; whoever loses his life on account of me [ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ], this one will save it” (9:24). In another eschatological context he said, “Whoever seeks to preserve his life [ψυχὴν] will lose it; whoever loses it will preserve it alive” (17:33). (CC p. 795)

The center of this section seems anticlimactic next to the Lukan frame, but it is significant because it continues the theme of warning as catechumens prepare for God’s coming either in their death or at the parousia. Jesus uses imperatival language again, telling the catechumens, “Place in your hearts [θέτε οὖν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν] not to be concerned beforehand to defend yourselves” (21:14). The warning here is of a different nature, for it does not preclude all-important preparation to survive *in faith* at the coming persecution. Rather, the warning is against anxiety and worry about future testimony when persecuted. (CC p. 795)

This warning would be of great comfort to catechumens who were concerned about the eloquence or erudition of the words they might confess when persecution comes. In essence Jesus is telling them to relax and not even think about how they will make their defense of the faith.

The Greek verb in 12:11 and 21:14 for “to defend” is ἀπολογέομαι. From the same Greek root come “apologetics” and “apology,” as in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession. (CC p. 795)

For Jesus himself will give them words (a mouth) and wisdom that their opponents will not be able to refute. This he will do through the Holy Spirit, who brings Jesus’ presence to the world through Christ’s Word and testifies to that presence. (This echoes 12:11–12: “And when they bring you to the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how or what you will say in defense [ἀπολογέομαι, as in 21:14] or what you should say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what things it is necessary to say.”) The Spirit-borne wisdom of Christ is foolishness to the world, but it is the power of God for salvation (1 Cor 1:18–25). It comes through preaching and teaching his Word; through Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire (Lk 3:16); and through the Breaking of the Bread that accompanies the apostolic doctrine and perseverance in the faith (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7). No wonder Jesus was so insistent on teaching his disciples about proper stewardship of the mysteries in an eschatological setting, where the gifts of his presence are distributed at the Table (see comments at 12:35–48, which is intimately connected with 12:11–12). (CC pp. 795-796)

21:15 *none ... will be able to withstand or contradict.* See Ac 6:9–10. (CSB)

Literally, I will give you “a mouth and wisdom.” An archaic use was to complement a great orator by saying he had a “golden mouth” (great speaking skills). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 4)

21:16 *you will be delivered up* – People will hand them over just as Jesus was handed over by Judas. (TLSB)

even by parents and brothers and relatives friends – The hearer knows that Jesus has already prepared the disciples for this by overturning the old kinship laws and establishing the new kinship through his Word (see comments at 8:19–21; 12:51–53; 14:25–27). Jesus’ family is not created *by blood* but *by his Word*. Christians will find consolation in the communion of saints during the persecution that lies ahead. (CC)

21:17 *by all* – Hyperbole, an exaggeration for the sake of emphasis (Ac 2:47; 3:9), but strongly emphasizing that Jesus’ followers will experience persecution. (TLSB)

for my name’s sake – μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου—This is an echo of the Lukan beatitude in 6:22: “Blessed are you when men hate you [μισήσωσιν] and when they exclude you and insult you and throw out your name [τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν] as evil on account of the Son of Man.” (CC p. 785)

21:18 Although persecution and death may come, God is in control, and the ultimate outcome will be eternal victory. (CSB)

Proverbial statement of God’s protection. (TLSB)

not a hair of your head will perish. In view of v. 16 this cannot refer to physical safety. The figure indicates that there will be no real, i.e., spiritual, loss. (CSB)

21:19 Such perseverance is a sure indication of salvation (cf. Heb 3:14; 6:11–12; 10:36. (CSB)

by your endurance – “ἡπόμονα - Endurance” is the oft-used NT word for “patient endurance.” KJV often renders it “longsuffering” (Col. 1:11).. It is a superlative tyoe of “hyper-endurance” when undergoing trials. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 4)

Luth: “You are children of the kingdom, your sins are forgiven, the devil has been overcome and laid low under your feet, sin and death will do you no harm; but you are blameless. Therefore bear the hostile curses with equanimity” (AE 5:146.) (TLSB)

gain your lives – κτήσασθε—The manuscript tradition is rather equally divided between the future indicative κτήσεσθε and the aorist imperative κτήσασθε. The imperative is unexpected here and so is followed as the more difficult reading. The imperatival exhortation holds out the encouraging promise of salvation for those who persevere. Cf. 2 Tim 2:12; Didache 16:5 for promises. (CC p. 785)

21:10-19 The disciples will endure various persecutions along with Jerusalem’s fall. Today, when put to the test, we cannot rely on our own strength. Jesus promises guidance in the persecutions His disciples face. He is our strength in the midst of all trials. • Lord, give us Your wisdom to bear witness in every persecution. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Foretells Destruction of Jerusalem

20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, 22 for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. 23 Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

21:20-24 Jerusalem’s destruction is a preview of the world’s end. (TLSB)

Now that Jesus has described the persecution Christians will start to experience before the destruction of the temple, he returns to the theme of destruction (21:7–11), but this time it is the city of Jerusalem and not just the temple. The end of the temple means also the end of the time when God’s presence and salvation are tied to a specific location—Jerusalem—in which the people of God gather to worship with animal sacrifices and priests are determined by family line. The temple, Judea, and ethnic Israel become obsolete in the arrival of him for whom they prepared. Divine protection gone, Jerusalem, Judea, and the people of Israel will suffer devastation and anguish as the temple is destroyed. The prophecy of Simeon will continue to come true after Jesus’ earthly ministry, for he is “destined for the fall ... of many in Israel” (2:34). Of course, Jesus’ earnest desire is for the salvation of the people of Jerusalem, even though he foresees the earthly city’s destruction (13:31–35). In the evangelist’s structure, Luke frames a brief woe (21:23a) with two statements on how the destruction of Jerusalem fulfills Scripture (21:20–22) and how the anguish of the land and people continues until the appointed times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (21:23b–24): (CC p. 796)

21:20–22 **A** *Destruction in fulfillment of the Scriptures.*

“But when you see **Jerusalem** [Ἰερουσαλήμ] being encircled by armies, then know that her devastation has drawn near! Then those in Judea must flee into the mountains! And those in the midst of her must travel out! And those in the country must not enter her, because these are days of vengeance, for all the things written **to be fulfilled** [πλησθῆναι].”

- 21:23a **B** *Woe to those encumbered by natural cares.* “Woe for those who have in the womb and for those nursing in those days.”
- 21:23b–24 **A’** *Destruction until fulfillment of the appointed times of the Gentiles.* “For there will be a great distress over the land and wrath for this people, and they will fall by the mouth of the sword, and they will be taken as captives to all the Gentiles, and **Jerusalem** [Ἱερουσαλήμ] will continue to be trodden upon by Gentiles until the appointed times of the Gentiles **are fulfilled** [πληρωθῶσιν].”

21:20 *surrounded by armies.* † See 19:43. The sign that the end was near (cf. v. 7) would be the surrounding of Jerusalem with armies. Associated with this event would be the “abomination that causes desolation.” (CSB)

Rome’s encirclement meant Jerusalem’s end was near. The city was leveled in AD 70, with much of its population killed. (TLSB)

κυκλουμένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἱερουσαλήμ—A similar expression is used of Jerusalem’s destruction at 19:43: περικυκλώσουσίν σε, “they will surround you.” (CC p. 785)

There are two significant parts in A and A’: the status of Jerusalem and the idea of fulfillment. This section begins with Jerusalem surrounded by armies (A—21:20a) and ends with her being trodden upon by the Gentiles (A’—20:24c). The warning of destruction for the impenitent (13:1–5) will become a reality for Jerusalem. The pattern of the frame is to move from potential destruction to actual destruction. In the first part, the sign that Jerusalem is doomed is the encircling army, recalling Jesus’ earlier prophecy *before* he entered the city (19:43). The general prophecy of “wars and insurrections” (21:9) now takes a specific shape. This disastrous circumstance prompts four imperatives that announce and warn. The first one announces that an eschatological moment is upon the city: “Then know [γνῶτε] that her [Jerusalem’s] devastation has drawn near [ἤγγικεν]” (A—21:20b). Jesus has already warned the disciples about false Christs with false Christologies and eschatologies who announce that “the appointed time has drawn near” (21:8; ἤγγικεν). But now the true Christ tells them how to recognize that Jerusalem’s devastation is imminent.

If one looks at the three occasions in the gospel when the imperative of γινώσκω, “to know,” is used in connection with the eschatological ἐγγίζω, “to draw near, arrive,” there are three stages of eschatology. When the preaching and miracles of the seventy (-two) are rejected by certain villages, the seventy (-two) are to announce, “Know this—that the kingdom of God has come near” (10:11). This announcement is the judgment that comes *now* when the Gospel is rejected. Sins are retained, not absolved. Here in 21:20, Jesus warns the people of imminent judgment on Jerusalem (fulfilled in A.D. 70) *for the rejection of the Gospel*. And in the next section, when they see signs in the heavens and the Son of Man coming on a cloud, then (as when the fig tree puts out leaves) they must “know that the kingdom of God is near” (21:31). There Jesus is telling them about the judgment at the end of the world. The movement is from A.D. 30 to 70 to the parousia. But in each case, at each stage, the kingdom of God is near, for the resurrection is the eschatological event that ushers in the kingdom even though it has *not yet* come in its fullness. (CC p. 797)

The command to know that Jerusalem’s devastation is near governs this entire section. If one knows this, says Jesus, then one must do three things. The three are neatly placed in synonymous parallelism:

“Then [τότε] those [οἱ] in Judea must flee [φευγέτωσαν] into the mountains!
 And those [οἱ] in the midst of her must travel out [ἐκχωρείτωσαν]!
 And those [οἱ] in the country must not enter [μὴ εἰσερχέσθωσαν] her.”

The common thought in these three warnings is this: avoid Jerusalem! Normally in war, a walled city is the safest haven, but not in this devastation. The city is the object of God's wrath and so it is the worst place to be. And the historical events confirmed this, for great destruction and much suffering came with the fall of Jerusalem. According to Josephus, over one million died (*War* 6.420–21 [6.9.3]), and in his chronicles of the war this historian was loathe to describe the depths of human misery that reduced the inhabitants to the utmost vulgarity (cannibalism, etc.). Jesus gives the reason for the destruction: these are the days of her vengeance *in fulfillment of Scripture*. The days of Jerusalem's vengeance result from her indifference to the time of her visitation (19:44; cf. Hos 9:7). That the Scriptures must be fulfilled is a major Lukan theme (cf. Lk 4:21; 18:31; 22:37; 24:44). Jerusalem's destruction too conforms to the prophecies in the OT. The OT is replete with passages predicting the fall of Jerusalem. (E.g., Jer 6:1–8; 7:14–26, 30–34; 16:1–9; 17:27; 19:10–15; 26:1–6; Ezekiel 4–24; Micah 3:12; Zeph 1:4–13) God allowed her to fall to Babylon in 587 B.C. then returned her exiles to rebuild her. But the repentance of the nation was fleeting, and she grew ripe for destruction again. Jesus has already lamented and wept over the impending devastation (Lk 13:31–35; 19:41–44; cf. 20:9–19), even as Jeremiah mourned the first destruction (Lamentations). Thus Jesus and the fall of Jerusalem fulfill the words of the prophets. (CC p. 797-798)

21:21 Three warnings.

flee to the mountains. When an army surrounds a city, it is natural to seek protection inside the walls, but Jesus directs his followers to seek the safety of the mountains because the city was doomed to destruction. (CSB)

Where there was a better chance of survival. (TLSB)

φευγέτωσαν ... ἐκχωρείτωσαν ... μὴ εἰσερχέσθωσαν—These three imperatives are all translated with “must”: “must flee! ... must travel out! ... must not enter. (CC p. 785)

city depart – The Church historian Eusebius reported that Christians in Jerusalem found refuge at Pella, a small town near the Sea of Galilee. (TLSB)

let not...enter – Those outside Jerusalem should not seek protection in the doomed city. (TLSB)

21:22 *days of vengeance*. God's retributive justice as the consequence of faithlessness (cf. Isa 63:4; Jer 5:29; Hos 9:7). (CSB)

God's judgment for failure to receive His Messiah (13:35; 19:43–44). (TLSB)

fulfill all that has been written – Prophets had issued many warnings over the centuries (Jer 6:8; Mi 3:12; Zec 14:1). (TLSB)

21:23 *women that are pregnant* – Parents will face additional tragedy. (TLSB)

The seriousness of Jesus' warnings is evident in a woe that reverses the normal state of affairs in God's creation (B—21:23a). The expectant birth of a child or the gentle nursing of a baby are occasions for joy and signs of God's blessing (e.g., Psalm 127). But in the city marked for destruction those who have *dependents* will face additional pain and tragedy. They are to be pitied, because it will be more difficult for them to escape, and they will be haunted by the suffering of their loved ones, which will intensify their own pain. Josephus recorded many heart-wrenching examples in his history of the war. The message

is clear once again: get out of the city! Woe to those who are hindered. No one dare tarry, not even out of love for one's own child. (CC p. 798)

A woman once spoke a beatitude to Jesus: "Blessed the womb that carried you and the breasts that you sucked." But Jesus replied, "Rather, blessed those who hear the Word of God and keep it" (11:27–28). How that woman's beatitude stands in stark contrast to Jesus' woe here! Even Mary is more blessed for hearing and receiving the Word than for bearing and nursing her child. In the eschatological moment, it is not the normal blessings of creation that are vital, but whether one is blessed with redemption as a hearer of the Word and thereby is prepared through catechesis for the coming end. Jesus will echo this bleak image of the hopelessness of humanity unprepared for the unleashing of God's eschatological wrath, when, on his way to the cross, he tells the daughters of Jerusalem who are weeping for him to weep for themselves instead: "For behold days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren women and the wombs that did not give birth and the breasts that did not nurse' " (23:29). (CC p. 798)

upon earth – ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς—The reference is to the land of Judea, but God's judgment against Israel is a portent of his judgment of the entire world at Christ's return. (CC p. 785)

against this people – τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ—This is a reference to the Jewish nation, but again, what befalls it serves as a warning that God is going to judge all peoples in fulfillment of Is 66:16; Jer 25:31 and as indicated later in Lk 21:35. (CC p. 785)

Israel, but ultimately all people (v 35). (TLSB)

21:24 *they will fall...be led captive* – πεσοῶνται ... αἰχμαλωτισθήσονται—The subject of these verbs is the people of the Jewish nation; see the textual notes on the previous verse (21:23). On αἰχμαλωτισθήσονται εἰς cf. Tobit 1:10; 1 Macc 10:33; BAGD s.v. αἰχμαλωτίζω, 1. (CC p. 785)

First-century historian Flavius Josephus states that more than a million died and 97,000 were carried away captive. (TLSB)

the sword – στόματι—It is good Greek to refer to the "foremost part" of a weapon (point, edge) as its στόμα (LSJ III 1). But כַּרְבֵּן־יָד is a common Hebrew expression. (CC p. 785)

times of the Gentiles. The Gentiles would have both spiritual opportunities (Mk 13:10; cf. Lk 20:16; Ro 11:25) and domination of Jerusalem, but these times will end when God's purpose for the Gentiles has been fulfilled. (CSB)

Period of Gentile domination of Jerusalem. Still today, large portions of the city are inhabited by people of non-Jewish descent. (TLSB)

The tragedy of those who are not prepared is described in the second part of the frame (A'—21:23b–24). Jesus begins with a sweeping description of the "great distress over the land [Judea] and [God's] wrath for this people [Israel]." Distress flows out over land and people when the judgment of God visits temple and city. The encircling army has Jerusalem and Mt. Zion as the target but brings much woe to land and people elsewhere too. This destruction, moreover, comes *from the Gentiles*, even as the heathen nations of Assyria and Babylonia were the instruments of God's wrath in the fall of Israel (722 B.C.) and of Judah (587 B.C.), respectively (e.g., 2 Kings 17; Ezekiel 21–24). *The Gentiles* will pollute and defile the holy city by entering her and plundering her. Ethnic Israel is trampled and scattered. When the Romans destroy the holy city, the "appointed times of the Gentiles" (Lk 21:24) begin. (CC p. 799)

Jesus' words are prophetic. As this commentary assumes a pre-70 date for the composition of Luke's gospel, these prophecies are not yet fulfilled when Luke writes. The words of L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 326, are apt:

Luke is certainly circumspect in his description, so much so that one is not compelled to assert that the city had already fallen. For most of Luke's readers, however, the fact that these events had occurred, and in a way consistent with the words of Jesus, must have had a powerful impact. In the first place, it demonstrated graphically how the rejection of the Prophet *did* lead to the rejection of the rejectors, and thus validate Jesus' prophetic claims. In the second place, it lent more weight to the predictions concerning the coming of the Son of Man. If what the prophet predicted about their past came true, his words about our future can be trusted (emphasis Johnson). (CC p. 799)

The idea of eras in history appointed by God, during which certain nations or peoples are given sanction to conquer and destroy, is found in passages such as Daniel 2 and 7 and Revelation 13 and 17 (as well as the many OT passages that speak of God using Assyria to punish Israel and Babylon to chastise Judah). Daniel 2 and 7 portray four successive world empires (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome) and promise the advent of God's Messiah and the inauguration of God's eternal kingdom during the fourth era—the Roman Empire. That promise finds clear fulfillment in the birth of Christ under Roman rule, as carefully noted by Luke (1:5; 2:1–2; 3:1). (CC p. 799)

The general idea in 21:24 is also in harmony with Daniel 8 and 9 as well as Revelation 13 and 17: God allows the powers of evil to exercise dominion—but their power is limited, and it is exercised for a limited period of time. God's forbearance will expire; eventually he will completely vanquish the evil forces and forever free his people from their ill effects. Some interpreters attempt to determine the chronology of future events based on time notices such as the two thousand three hundred days in Dan 8:14; the seventy sevens in Dan 9:24–27; or the forty-two months in Rev 13:5. However, a clear or detailed calendar of future events is not provided in the Holy Scriptures inspired by God. Nonetheless, the reassurance that God *is* in control and *does* have a timetable is comforting.

Luke portrays “the appointed times of the Gentiles” (Lk 21:24) as a time of persecution for God's people. Another perspective is found in Romans 9–11. St. Paul refers to Christ as the “stone” (Rom 9:33) and draws on OT themes similar to those discussed in the comments above on Lk 21:5–6. During the trampling of Israel, the Gospel, rejected by most of the Jewish people, spreads among the Gentiles. No longer is the Jerusalem temple the site of salvation.

How should Gentile Christians react to the trampling of Jerusalem? Jesus has already instructed his disciples in the proper attitude toward the misfortunes of others. In Lk 13:1–5, when asked about a causal relationship between sin and tragedy, Jesus used the occasion to teach the need for personal repentance. In the vivid portrayal of Jerusalem's fall, the Gentile hearer must not forget that the same fate awaits the entire world—and that is in fact the next topic in Jesus' discourse (21:25–36). Whether Jewish or Gentile, disciples need to beware of pride or gloating—forms of the leaven of hypocrisy (12:1). St. Paul will remind the Christians in the city whose army plundered Jerusalem that they are the wild branches grafted into the olive tree at the expense of the natural branches (Rom 11:11–24; cf. also Jn 4:22; Rom 3:1 ff.; 3:27; 9:1–18). The apostle uses the fall of Israel as an occasion to instill humility and repentance in Gentile Christians. (Similarly, Obadiah rebuked the Edomites who gloated at the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and warned that Jerusalem's fate awaited them too.) (CC pp. 799-800)

21:20-24 Jesus foretells Jerusalem's destruction, pointing ahead to the judgment of all the world. God's impending judgment cannot be ignored. However, we can face the judgment unafraid, because Jesus has

already borne God's vengeance for our sakes and takes away the cause of judgment: our sins. • Lord, keep us ever watchful and repentant until Your return. Amen. (TLSB)

The Coming of the Son of Man

25 “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

21:25-36 The shift to the second part of Luke's eschatological discourse, from prophecy about the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem (21:5–24) to predictions about the end the world (21:25–36), is subtle. Luke gives no signals in his framework: no change of audience, location, or time. But both *form* and *content* are now apocalyptic.

L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 330, comments on what is distinct about Luke's shaping of Jesus' final eschatological discourse: “There are two remarkable aspects of this final stage of the prophecy. The first is that it entirely lacks any temporal reference or time-table. ... The second striking feature is the attention given to moral exhortation.” (CC p. 800)

The chief feature in Luke's arrangement of the prophecy is the coming of the Son of Man (21:27–36), but a brief yet powerful reference to the signs and conditions that accompany the end of the world comes first. This brief section *is the only time in Luke that he describes the signs that will accompany the end of the world!* (CC p. 800)

21:25-26 These verses describe a world that is coming apart. Everything that was dependable is no longer so. Even scientific laws don't work in this end time scenario. The disciples asked for signs, and here they are, signs in sun, moon, and stars. What kind of signs? Quite likely the signs that Jesus referred to in Matt 24:29, quoting from Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7 and Joel 2:30-31). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

The chaos on the earth before the creation (Gen 1:2) has returned, and nations cannot fathom what is happening. No fiction writer could create a more frightening picture than this one, for the “heavenly bodies” and those on the earth are being “shaken” like a rag doll in a puppy's mouth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

The fearful portents and signs from heaven in 21:11 are unusual natural phenomena, which go with the other natural and historical disasters of that verse. But those in 21:25–26 are apocalyptic, catastrophic changes in the sky that indicate that the world is coming unglued. God's orderly creation becomes unstable and reverts toward chaos as the Creator begins to withdraw his benevolence. God's goodwill toward the originally good work of his hands is increasingly turning into anger as his patience runs out with corrupt and perverse humanity. (CC p. 801)

Those who have invested everything in this world and this life will be shocked and literally “scared to death” by what the end of time brings. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

21:25 Jesus focuses more directly on the events relating to the end of the world. (TLSB)

signs. Cosmic events (eclipses, comets) and earthly events (storms, tidal waves) prepare for the ultimate catastrophe; creation itself is torn apart. (TLSB)

Note that the signs described in 21:10-11 are preludes to the destruction of the temple. All the events described thus far could be located during the Jewish war of A.D. 66-73. Parallel signs are described at the beginning of Jesus' description of the end of the world, but the very fact that Luke repeats those items in another section of eschatological discourse suggests two similar but distinct events. It will seem as if the end of the world is near when the temple is destroyed, for it will be a sign of judgment by God on Israel for rejecting her Messiah – and a portent of God's final judgment upon all who reject the Christ. (CC p. 793)

earth – γῆς—“Earth,” not “land” as in 21:23, for the focus has spread from Israel to the whole earth. (CC p. 786)

nations – ἐθνῶν—“Nations,” not just “Gentiles” as in its three occurrences in 21:24, because the entire world, Jews and Gentiles, is now in focus. (CC p. 786)

Worldwide confusion at these events. (TLSB)

distress...perplexity – ἀπορία ἤχους θαλάσσης—The genitive following ἀπορία, “in perplexity,” identifies that which evokes the perplexity (CC p. 786)

roaring of the sea and waves – The sea itself is its own storm center, and the wind itself is driven by the sea and not the other way around. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

21:26 *people fainting* – Reaction moves from confusion to fear. (TLSB)

ἀποψυχόντων ἀνθρώπων—This genitive absolute describes the impact the “anguish of nations in perplexity at the sound and tossing of the sea” from the previous verse has upon human beings. (CC p. 786)

Note from Revelation **21:1** NO LONGER ANY SEA – To ancient people the sea held a terror especially when its boiling waves threatened and often destroyed human life (e.g., Ps 107:23-30). In the early stage of creation the waters were associated with the darkness and the primeval formlessness and chaos (Gen. 1:2). The sea is the home to the evil serpent (Amos 9:3), Leviathan. In the earthly ministry of Jesus too, the sea was a threat to the apostles, a threat which Jesus conquered (e.g., Mt. 8:24-27; 14:24-33). The sea is the primeval ocean, symbol of chaos; its disappearance is assurance of God's total victory. The absence of the sea from the new heaven and earth in the context of 21:1-8 suggests not the absence of water in the geo-physically renewed earth, but an absence of any fear of water and terror that the sea evoked, especially the absence of any painful reminder that God's saints had once been separated from him. (CC pp. 593, 595)

foreboding of what is coming – φόβου καὶ προσδοκίας—This is probably a hendiadys, “fearful expectation.” The co-ordination of two ideas, one of which is dependent on the other. (CC p. 786)

heavens will be shaken – To waver, be toppled, stirred up, disturbed, incited or even destroyed – God’s orderly creation becomes unstable and reverts toward chaos as the Creator begins to withdraw his benevolence. God’s goodwill toward the originally good work of his hands is increasingly turning into anger as his patience runs out with corrupt and perverse humanity. (CC p. 801)

21:27-36 The coming of the Son of Man only intensifies the fear of unbelievers. But for the faithful it is Good News. Therefore Jesus gives to his catechumens five final words to help them prepare “to stand in the presence of the Son of Man” (21:36b; the outer frame). These consist of four admonitions, with a promise in the center. The admonitions are governed by imperative verb forms (21:28—ἀνακόψατε [“straighten up”] and ἐπάρατε [“lift”]; 21:29–31—ἴδετε [“see”] and γινώσκετε [“know”]; 21:34–35—προσέχετε [“beware”]; 21:36a—ἀγρυπνεῖτε [“be watchful, awake”]). In the center (21:32–33), however, stands a prediction (future indicative) surrounded by two emphatic promises (each with οὐ μὴ the first with an aorist subjunctive and the second with a future indicative). This whole center section is introduced by ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, “truly I say to you.” These words are the climax of Jesus’ teaching in this section. (CC p. 803)

21:27 *they will see the Son of Man coming.* The time of Christ’s second coming (see Da 7:13). Often the predictions in this discourse refer ultimately to the end times, while at the same time describing the more imminent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. (CSB)

The visible return of the crucified and glorified Christ. (TLSB)

in a cloud – This indicates the glory associated with God (Ex. 40:34; Acts 1:9). (TLSB)

great glory – which means a very large number. Glory is doxa

Glory that brings about great dignity, honor, praise and worship. This is not reflected light like that of the moon but it is the light of the sun itself. The glory of the Lord is also shown in Exodus 40:34 when the Lord filled the tabernacle in the wilderness and in 1 Kings 8:11 when the ark is brought into Solomon’s temple. It is a very special way that shows his people that he keeps his promises.

21:28 *straighten up* – To unbend and rise. Luke 13:10-13 describes a woman who was bent over for eighteen years. Jesus heals her and she straightens up. While others look down (doing so is often a sign of shame or guilt), Christians posture is erect because they know the Savior is coming. (CC p. 803)

raise your heads. Do not be downcast at the appearance of these signs, but look up in joy, hope and trust. (CSB)

Confident expectation of a blessed event. (TLSB)

ἀνακόψατε—While unbelievers cower in fear and hide their faces from the signs in the heavens, Jesus’ disciples are to stand erect and lift up their heads to see the Son of Man coming to liberate them. (Cf. 13:11, concerning the woman who, for eighteen years, could not straighten herself because of her bondage to Satan.) (CC p. 786)

The Psalmist writes, “He makes the clouds His chariot and rides on the wings of the wind,” while Isaiah declares, “See the Lord rides on a swift cloud” (Ps. 104:3; Is. 19:1). God’s redemption makes His followers stand tall and lift up their heads in confident expectation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 2, Part 1)

redemption. Final, completed redemption. (CSB)

Deliverance from all forces of sin and evil. (TLSB)

ἡ ἀπολύτρωσις—Luke has few references to redemption, but they are important and frame his gospel. Toward the beginning of the gospel comes the hope for the “redemption” (λύτρωσις) of God’s people Israel (1:68) and Jerusalem (2:38). Toward the end of the gospel that same hope for the redemption (λυτρόομαι) of Israel will be expressed by the disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:21). Here in 21:28, also toward the gospel’s end and in a section pertaining to the world’s end, Jesus speaks of the “redemption” of his disciples throughout the world even after Jerusalem’s destruction. (The only additional occurrence of any derivative of λυτρόομαι in the Lukan corpus is λυτρωτής in Acts 7:35.) (CC p. 786)

21:25–28 Jesus points to signs preceding His return. Today, fear and uncertainty should lead us to focus on His redemption. Pray earnestly for that day. Jesus’ return brings us full deliverance from all evil of this world. • Lord, keep us always expectant as we anticipate Your return. Amen. (TLSB)