

Dark days prophesied by Jesus

Matthew 24 vv.1-42.

Mark 13 vv.1-32.

Luke 21 vv.5-36.

A few men are to be seen walking by the temple buildings. They have just left the house of the Lord. They set out in the direction of the Mount of Olives. Who are they? ... O, you know already I expect. They are the Lord Jesus and His disciples. It is now the evening of that same day.

The whole of Tuesday the Lord Jesus has been in the temple, and we told you in the last chapter some of the things He there did and spake.

The disciples walk silently behind their Master. They are saddened and downcast. The Sanhedrin will have nothing to do with Jesus. They are trying to kill Him. The people too reject their Master. The Lord is repeatedly in danger for His life. To the disciples things are not going at all well. They walk on deep in sober thought.

The Lord had just been saying, as He left the temple: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

Perhaps they are now thinking about those words.

Suddenly, one of the disciples pointing to the beautiful temple glistening in the sunlight says: "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"

It does not look at all likely that it will all be left desolate. He does not understand what the Lord meant by those words. That is why he makes this remark.

Calmly, but with a solemn voice the Lord replies: "Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

We may be certain that these words made a deep impression upon the disciples feelings. They realise that terrible things shall come to pass. Anxiety rises up in their hearts. They were gloomy enough before, and now this as well. Shall everything then be destroyed and cast to the ground? ... What of the kingdom then which their Master shall set up? ... He is surely the Messiah, the long ~~xxxx~~ awaited King? And the Messiah surely, shall sit upon the throne of David? ... He shall rule, shall He not, for ever and ever? ... To all these questions they can find no ready answer. Everything is turning out so different from what they had expected.

In silence they descend the mountains upon which Jerusalem is built. Silently they climb the Mount of Olives which is close to Jerusalem. In silence they sit down on the top of the Mount and look with saddened faces upon the glittering city of Jerusalem, which lies there in front of them.

The dying sunbeams are reflected from the marble white stones of the house of God and from other great buildings in the city. It really is a fine sight, and then to think that it all shall become desolate.

The men shake their heads sadly. No, the disciples are in no sense happy and cheerful. ...

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All at once the silence is broken. Some of the disciples ask Him: "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?"

They look at their beloved Master with questioning eyes.

Jesus knows the care and sadness which fills their hearts. He knows what is going on in their thoughts. Therefore He is going to tell them what things shall take place. He is going to warn them beforehand, then they can look out for it. Then it will not be so unexpected.

Let us listen too, boys and girls. Pay careful attention thought, for it is difficult. I shall not deal with everything, for you would probably not understand it all. But I will tell you some of it.

The Jewish nation rejected the Lord Jesus. They, as a people, would not acknowledge Him as the Saviour. They did not believe that He was the Son of God. They are about to deliver Him to the Romans and they shall crucify Him.

But the Lord is righteous and perfectly sinless. The fearful punishment of that wicked, unthankful people shall surely come. The Jews think now that they can do just as they like. They forget that God sees and hears everything.

You also forget that very often, do you not?

For the Jewish people terrible times shall come. Already the Romans rule over them. Already they are oppressed, but it shall become far worse than that.

"There shall," says the Lord, "be wars and rumours of wars. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places." He tells them that enemies shall lay waste the land, destroy the harvests; men and women, children

and grey-beards shall die of the pestilence; houses and palaces shall crash to the ground because of the earthquakes. This judgment of God shall surely come, for God will not be insulted with impunity.

The disciples listen with solemn faces as the Lord foretells all this to them.

And, what was the outcome? ... Those dark times did come. Forty years later the Jews rebelled against the Romans. They wanted to drive out the hated Romans. But they did not succeed. The Jewish armies were defeated time and time again. The Jewish cities and strongholds were conquered and burned down. Finally the Roman armies laid seige to Jerusalem. Upon the same Mount, on which we have described the Lord now sitting with His disciples, stood forty years later the tents of the Roman soldiers. In the city a terrible famine raged. Pestilence broke out among the Jewish people. Thousands died. In one night 40,000 corpses were thrown over the walls. Mothers slew and ate up their own children. At last, after a desperate defence, the city was taken. The beautiful temple was set on fire by a Roman soldier. The Romans destroyed that fine building so completely, that no stone remained upon another.

O children, all that ~~is~~ the Lord foretold upon the Mount of Olives, came literally to pass. Later you will hear more about it.

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But come, let us return to the Mount of Olives where Jesus sits with His disciples. The sufferings of the Jews were not to finish with the destruction of Jerusalem. O no, there was yet more to come. Just listen!

The Lord foretells to them that the Jews shall be slain by the sword. Thousands shall be killed in that gruesome war. And the remainder shall be carried away captive. They shall be sold as slaves. They shall be forced to serve their enemies. They shall be handled cruelly and without pity by their foes. The Jewish nation shall be persecuted, despised and hounded. Hostile armies shall march through Jerusalem's streets. The Jewish nation shall be ~~driven~~ driven out of its beloved fatherland and the heathen shall dwell in their land, and act as overlords. The Jews shall wander about the earth like vagabonds.

This prophecy too has been literally fulfilled. More than a million Jews Perished miserably in the desperate struggle. Tans of thousands were thrust out and driven from their land as exiles. They were sold as slaves. For centuries the land of Canaan was inhabited by the heathens. Strange nations occupied the

land for hundreds of years, and for the Jews there was no room. They wandered as exiles over the whole world.

Truly the Jews were very heavily punished. They cried out: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!" That blood DID come upon them.

What a solemn example for you, boys and girls. God did not spare the Jewish people. Shall He then spare you, if you cast all God's many warnings to the wind? Do you think that God has changed? ... Do you think that you ~~xxxx~~ insult and anger Him with impunity? ... God is not to be mocked. He did not allow Himself to be mocked by the Jews; neither will He let Himself be mocked by our nation. The Jews are walking witnesses of God's righteous vengeance upon the world. May we take notice of this.

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In my thoughts I can see the disciples sitting and listening to the solemn words of the Lord Jesus. Yes, now they realise that dark days are ahead. Times of anxiety and fear. Times full of suffering and sadness. Yes, now they believe that the beautiful City of Jerusalem shall become one great smoking ruin. Sadness fills their hearts, for now they know that the judgment must and shall come.

They look at the Lord with anxious eyes. Their hearts tremble to hear the sound of the approaching disasters. And what shall become of them? ...

Nothing is hidden to the all-knowing eyes of the Saviour. Not even their fears. So the Lord Jesus gives them words of encouragement. Just listen!

The Lord assures them that God will take care of His people. God will not forsake them. True, they shall be hated, they shall be persecuted, but His heavenly Father shall watch over them. True, they shall be cast into prison, but God shall yet be with them. God shall grant them His love and His grace.

Yes, the Lord Jesus advises them to flee when those fearful days shall dawn. Then they are to leave Jerusalem and fly to the mountains. There they will be safe. There shall their cruel enemies be unable to do them harm.

"But take heed;" says the Lord Jesus, "behold, I have foretold you all things;" and again, He says: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads."

All this also came to pass. When, forty years later, the Romans marched on Jerusalem, the Christians fled. God's people did not remain in Jerusalem. They left the city and fled to the little town of Pella. Pella lay across the

Jordan, in the country where once Sihon and Og had lived. And while in Jerusalem thousands of people died of hunger and pestilence; while the streets ran red with the blood of Jewish soldiers - then God's people found safety in Pella. Not one of God's people perished in Jerusalem. God saw to that.

How blessed God's people are, don't you agree? Oh, may you one day envy those who fear and serve the Lord in truth. Never make fun of them, but ask the Lord to bless you and make you just like them. It can still take place. You are yet alive. There is still hope of salvation.

Seek the Lord then, while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Is it not worth your trouble to plead with God for mercy? ...

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Perhaps some of you are thinking: "But we don't live in Jerusalem." I know that too of course, but the Lord Jesus also said that He shall come upon the clouds of heaven. Yet, before He thus comes, terrible times shall come upon the whole earth. Wars and rumours of ~~war~~; earthquakes in various places. Men shall long for death. The whole world shall be full of anxiety and fear. The world shall be filled with ~~xxx~~ cruelty.

Boys and girls, you are still young. You are full of plans and dreams for the future. You expect, perhaps, to get everything out of this life. But you are mistaken. Fearful times shall come. No, rather, they HAVE COME already. Frightful ~~times~~ ~~are~~ ~~being~~ ~~waged~~. Millions are perishing. And what more shall take place? ... I do not know. Only God knows that.

When Lot stood outside of Sodom the Lord said to him: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, ~~xx~~ neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

In all earnestness, I would call unto you: "Escape for thy life. Depart from iniquity, and bow before God."

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