

CHAPTER 21

In this chapter we have,

- I.** The notice Christ took, and the approbation he gave, of a poor widow that cast two mites into the treasury (v. 1-4).
- II.** A prediction of future events, in answer to his disciples' enquiries concerning them (v. 5-7).
 - 1.** Of what should happen between that and the destruction of Jerusalem — false Christs arising, bloody wars and persecutions of Christ's followers (v. 8-19).
 - 2.** Of that destruction itself (v. 20-24).
 - 3.** Of the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world, under the type and figure of that (v. 25-33).
- III.** A practical application of this, by way of caution and counsel (v. 34-36), and an account of Christ's preaching and the people's attendance on it (v. 37, 38).

LUKE 21:1-4

CHRIST COMMENDETH THE POOR WIDOW

This short passage of story we had before in Mark. It is thus recorded twice, to teach us,

- 1.** That *charity* to the poor is a *main matter* in religion. Our Lord Jesus took all occasions to commend it and recommend it. He had just mentioned the barbarity of the scribes, who devoured *poor widows* (Luke 20); and perhaps this is designed as an aggravation of it, that the poor widows were the best benefactors to the public funds, of which the scribes had the disposal.
- 2.** That Jesus Christ has his eye upon us, to observe what we give to the poor, and what we contribute to works of piety and charity. Christ, though intent upon his preaching, looked up, to see what *gifts were cast into the treasury*, v. 1. He observes whether we give largely and liberally, in proportion to what we have, or whether we be sneaking and paltry in it; nay, his eye goes further, he observes whether we give charitably and with

a willing mind, or grudgingly and with reluctance. This should make us afraid of coming short of our duty in this matter; men may be deceived with excuses which Christ knows to be frivolous. And this should encourage us to be abundant in it, without desiring that men should know it; it is enough that Christ does; he sees in secret, and will reward openly.

3. That Christ observes and accepts the charity of the poor in a particular manner. Those that have nothing *to give* may yet *do* a great deal in charity by ministering to the poor, and helping them, and begging for them, that cannot *help* themselves, or *beg* for themselves. But here was one that was herself poor and yet *gave* what little she had to the treasury. It was but *two mites*, which make a farthing; but Christ magnified it as a piece of charity exceeding all the rest: *She has cast in more than they all*. Christ does not blame her for indiscretion, in giving what she wanted herself, nor for vanity in giving among the rich to the treasury; but commended her liberality, and her willingness to part with what little she had for the glory of God, which proceeded from a belief of and dependence upon God's providence to take care of her. *Jehovah-jireh — the Lord will provide*.

4. That, whatever may be called *the offerings of God*, we ought to have a respect for, and to our power, yea, and beyond our power, to contribute cheerfully to. These have *cast in unto the offerings of God*. What is given to the support of the ministry and the gospel, to the spreading and propagating of religion, the education of youth, the release of prisoners, the relief of widows and strangers, and the maintenance of poor families, is given to the *offerings of God*, and it shall be so accepted and recompensed.

LUKE 21:5-19

JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

See here,

I. With what admiration some spoke of the external pomp and magnificence of the temple, and they were some of Christ's own disciples too; and they took notice of it to him *how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts*, v. 5. The outside was built up with goodly stones, and within it was beautified and enriched with the *presents* that were offered

up for that purpose, and were *hung up* in it. They thought their Master should be as much affected with those things as they were, and should as much regret the destruction of them as they did. When we *speak of the temple*, it should be of the presence of God in it, and of the ordinances of God administered in it, and the communion which his people there have with him. It is a poor thing, when we speak of the church, to let our discourse dwell upon its pomps and revenues, and the dignities and powers of its officers and rulers; for the king's daughter is all *glorious within*.

II. With what contempt Christ spoke of them, and with what assurance of their being all made desolate very shortly (v. 6): “*As for those things which you behold*, those dear things which you are so much in love with, *behold, the days will come*, and some now living may live to see them, *in which there shall not be left one stone upon another*. This building, which seems so beautiful that one would think none could, for pity, pull it down, and which seems so strong that one would think none would be able to pull it down, shall yet be utterly ruined; and this shall be done as soon as ever the spiritual temple of the gospel church (the substance of that shadow) begins to flourish in the world.” Did we by faith foresee the blasting and withering of all external glory, we should not set our hearts upon it as those do that cannot see, or will not look, so far before them.

III. With what curiosity those about him enquire concerning the time when this great desolation should be: *Master, when shall these things be?* v. 7. It is natural to us to covet to know future things and the time of them, which *it is not for us to know*, when we are more concerned to ask what is our duty in the prospect of these things, and how we may prepare for them, which it is for us to know. They enquire *what sign there shall be when these things shall come to pass*. They ask not for a *present* sign, to confirm the prediction itself, and to induce them to believe it (Christ's word was enough for that), but what the future signs will be of the approaching accomplishment of the prediction, by which they may be put in mind of it. These *signs of the times* Christ had taught them to observe.

IV. With what clearness and fulness Christ answers their enquiries, as far as was necessary to direct them in their duty; for all knowledge is desirable as far as it is in order to practice.

1. They must expect to hear of false Christs and false prophets appearing, and false prophecies given out (v. 8): *Many shall come in my name*; he does not mean *in the name of Jesus*, though there were some deceivers who pretended commissions from him (as ~~493~~ Acts 19:13), but usurping the title and character of the Messiah. Many pretended to be the deliverers of the Jewish church and nation from the Romans, and to fix the time when the deliverance should be wrought, by which multitudes were drawn into a snare, to their ruin. They shall say, *hoti ego eimi* — *I am he*, or *I am*, as if they would assume that incommunicable name of God, by which he made himself known when he came to deliver Israel out of Egypt, *I am*; and, to encourage people to follow them, they added, “*The time draws near when the kingdom shall be restored to Israel, and all who will follow me shall share in it.*” Now as to this, he gives them a needful caution

(1.) “*Take heed that you be not deceived*; do not imagine that I shall myself come again in external glory, to take possession of the throne of kingdoms. No, you must not expect any such thing, for my kingdom is not of this world.” When they asked solicitously and eagerly, *Master, when shall these things be?* the first word Christ said was, *Take heed that you be not deceived*. Note, Those that are most *inquisitive* in the things of God (though it is very good to be so) are in most danger of being imposed upon, and have most need to be upon their guard.

(2.) “*Go you not after them*. You know the Messiah is come, and you are not to look for any other; and therefore do not so much as hearken to them, nor have any thing to do with them.” If we are sure that Jesus is the Christ, and his doctrine is the *gospel, of God*, we must be deaf to all intimations of another Christ and another gospel.

2. They must expect to hear of great commotions in the nations, and many terrible judgments inflicted upon the Jews and their neighbours.

(1.) There shall be *bloody wars* (v. 10): *Nation shall rise against nation*, one part of the Jewish nation against another, or rather the whole against the Romans. Encouraged by the false Christs, they shall wickedly endeavour to throw off the Roman yoke, by taking up arms against the Roman powers; when they had rejected the liberty with which Christ would have made them free they were left to themselves, to grasp at their civil liberty in ways that were *sinful*, and therefore could not be *successful*.

(2.) There shall be *earthquakes*, great earthquakes, *in divers places*, which shall not only frighten people, but destroy towns and houses, and bury many in the ruins of them.

(3.) There shall be *famines* and *pestilences*, the common effects of war, which destroys the fruits of the earth, and, by exposing men to ill weather and reducing them to ill diet, occasions infectious diseases. God has various ways of punishing a provoking people. The four sorts of judgments which the Old-Testament prophets so often speak of are threatened by the New-Testament prophets too; for, though spiritual judgments are more commonly inflicted in gospel times, yet God makes use of temporal judgments also.

(4.) There shall be *fearful sights* and *great signs from heaven*, uncommon appearances in the clouds, comets and blazing stars, which frighten the ordinary sort of beholders, and have always been looked upon as *ominous*, and *portending* something *bad*. Now, as to these, the caution he gives them is, “*Be not terrified*. Others will be frightened at them, but be not you frightened, v. 2. As to the *fearful sights*, let them not be fearful to you, who look above the visible heavens to the throne of God's government in the highest heavens. *Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the heathen are dismayed at them,* ²⁰¹⁰Jeremiah 10:2. And, as to the *famines* and *pestilences*, you fall into the hands of God, who has promised to those who are his that *in the days of famine they shall be satisfied*, and that he will keep them from the *noisome pestilence*; trust therefore in him, and *be not afraid*. Nay, when you hear of wars, when without are fightings and within are fears, yet then *be not you terrified*; you know the worst that any of these judgments can do to you, and therefore be not afraid of them; for,”

[1.] “It is your interest to *make the best of that which is*, for all your fears cannot alter it: *these things must first come to pass*; there is no remedy; it will be your wisdom to make yourselves easy by accommodating yourselves to them.”

[2.] “There is *worse behind*; flatter not yourselves with a fancy that you will soon see an end of these troubles, no, not so soon as you think of: *the end is not by and by, not suddenly*. Be not *terrified*, for, if you begin so quickly to be discouraged, how will you bear up under what is yet before you?”

3. They must expect to be themselves for *signs* and *wonders* in Israel; their being *persecuted* would be a prognostic of the destruction of the city and temple, which he had now foretold. Nay, this would be the *first* sign of their ruin coming: “*Before all these, they shall lay their hands on you.* The judgment shall begin at the house of God; you must smart first, for warning to them, that, if they have any consideration, they may consider, *If this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?*” See ~~4017~~¹ Peter 4:17, 18. But this is not all; this must be considered not only as the *suffering* of the *persecuted*, but as the *sin* of the *persecutors*. *Before* God's judgments are brought upon them, they shall fill up the measure of their iniquity by *laying their hands on you.*” Note, The ruin of a people is always introduced by their sin; and nothing introduces a surer or sorer ruin than the sin of persecution. This is a *sign* that God's wrath is coming upon a people to the uttermost when their *wrath* against the servants of God *comes to the uttermost.* Now as to this,

(1.) Christ tells them what hard things they should suffer for his name's sake, much to the same purport with what he had told them when he first called them to follow him, Matthew 10: They should know the wages of it, that they might *sit down and count the cost.* St. Paul, who was the greatest labourer and sufferer of them all, not being now among them, was told by Christ himself what *great things he should suffer for his name's sake* (~~4016~~¹ Acts 9:16), so necessary is it that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus should count upon persecution. The Christians, having themselves been originally Jews, and still retaining an equal veneration with them for the Old Testament and all the essentials of their religion, and differing only in ceremony, might expect fair quarter with them; but Christ bids them not expect it: “No, they shall be the most forward to *persecute you.*”

[1.] “They shall use their own church-power against you: *They shall deliver you up to the synagogues* to be scourged there, and stigmatized with their *anathemas.*”

[2.] “They shall incense the magistrates against you: they shall *deliver you into prisons*, that you may be *brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake*, and be punished by them.”

[2.] “Your own relations will betray you (v. 16), *your parents, brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends*; so that you will not know whom to put a confidence in, or where to be safe.”

[4.] “Your religion will be made a capital crime, and you will be called to *resist unto blood*. *Some of you shall they cause to be put to death*; so far must you be from expecting honour and wealth that you must expect nothing but death in its most frightful shapes, death in all its dreadful pomp. Nay.”

[5.] “*You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake*.” This is worse than death itself, and was fulfilled when the apostles were not only *appointed to death*, but made a *spectacle to the world*, and counted as the *filth of the world*, and the *offscouring of all things*, which every body loathes, ~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 4:9, 13. They were hated of *all men*, that is, of all bad men, who could not bear the light of the gospel (because it discovered their evil deeds), and therefore hated those who brought in that light, flew in their faces, and would have pulled them to pieces. The wicked world, which hated to be reformed, hated Christ the great Reformer, and all that were his, for his sake. The rulers of the Jewish church, knowing very well that if the gospel obtained among the Jews their usurped abused power was at an end, raised all their forces against it, put it into an ill name, filled people's minds with prejudices against it, and so made the preachers and professors of it odious to the mob.

(2.) He encourages them to bear up under their trials, and to go on in their work, notwithstanding the opposition they would meet with.

[1.] God will bring glory both to himself and them out of their sufferings: “*It shall turn to you for a testimony*, v. 13. Your being set up thus for a mark, and publicly *persecuted*, will make you the more taken notice of and your doctrine and miracles the more enquired into; your being brought *before kings and rulers* will give you an opportunity of preaching the gospel to them, who otherwise would never have come within hearing of it; your suffering such severe things, and being so hated by the worst of men, men of the most vicious lives, will be a testimony that you are good, else you would not have such bad men for your enemies; your courage, and cheerfulness, and constancy under your sufferings will be a testimony for you, that you believe what you preach, that you are supported by a divine power, and that the Spirit of God and glory rests upon you.”

[2.] “God will stand by you, and own you, and assist you, in your trials; you are his advocates, and you shall be well furnished with instructions, v. 14, 15. Instead of setting your hearts on work to contrive an answer to informations, indictments, articles, accusations, and interrogatories, that

will be exhibited against you in the ecclesiastical and civil courts, on the contrary, *settle it in your hearts*, impress it upon them, take pains with them to persuade them *not to meditate before what you shall answer*; do not *depend* upon your own wit and ingenuity, your own prudence and policy, and do not *distrust* or *despair* of the immediate and extraordinary aids of the divine grace. Think not to bring yourselves off in the cause of Christ as you would in a cause of your own, by your own parts and application, with the common assistance of divine Providence, but promise yourselves, for I promise you, the special assistance of divine grace: *I will give you a mouth and wisdom.*” This proves Christ to be God; for it is God's prerogative to *give wisdom*, and he it is that *made man's mouth*. Note, *First*, A *mouth* and *wisdom* together completely fit a man both for services and sufferings; *wisdom* to know what to say, and a *mouth* wherewith to say it as it should be said. It is a great happiness to have both *matter* and *words* wherewith to honour God and do good; to have in the mind a *storehouse* well furnished with things *new and old*, and a *door of utterance* by which to *bring them forth*. *Secondly*, Those that plead Christ's cause may depend upon him to give them *a mouth and wisdom*, which way soever they are called to plead it, especially when they are brought before magistrates for his name's sake. It is not said that he will send an angel from heaven to answer for them, though he could do this, but that he will give them a *mouth* and *wisdom* to enable them to answer for themselves, which puts a greater honour upon them, which requires them to use the gifts and graces Christ furnishes them with, and redounds the more to the glory of God, who *stills the enemy and the avenger out of the mouths of babes and sucklings*. *Thirdly*, When Christ gives to his witnesses a *mouth and wisdom*, they are enabled to say that both for him and themselves which *all their adversaries are not able to gainsay or resist*, so that they are silenced, and put to confusion. This was remarkably fulfilled presently after the pouring out of the Spirit, by whom Christ gave his disciples this *mouth and wisdom*, when the apostles were brought before the priest and rulers, and answered them so as to make them ashamed, Acts 4, 5, and 6.

[3.] “You shall suffer no real damage by all the hardships they shall put upon you (v. 18): *There shall not a hair of your head perish.*” Shall some of them lose their heads, and yet not lose a hair? It is a proverbial expression, denoting the greatest indemnity and security imaginable; it is frequently used both in the Old Testament and New, in that sense. Some

think that it refers to the preservation of the lives of all the Christians that were among the Jews when they were cut off by the Romans; historians tell us that not one Christian perished in that desolation. Others reconcile it with the deaths of multitudes in the cause of Christ, and take it figuratively in the same sense that Christ saith, *He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it*. “Not a hair of your head shall perish but,” *First*, “I will take *cognizance* of it.” To this end he had said (~~418~~ Matthew 10:30), *The hairs of your head are all numbered*; and an account is kept of them, so that none of them shall perish but he will miss it. *Secondly*, “It shall be upon a *valuable consideration*.” We do not reckon that *lost* or *perishing* which is laid out for good purposes, and will turn to a good account. If we drop the body itself for Christ's name's sake, it does not perish, but is well bestowed. *Thirdly*, “It shall be abundantly recompensed; when you come to balance profit and loss, you will find that nothing has perished, but, on the contrary, that you have great gain in present comforts, especially in the joys of a life eternal;” so that though we may be losers for Christ we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end.

[4.] “It is therefore your duty and interest, in the midst of your own sufferings and those of the nation, to maintain a holy sincerity and serenity of mind, which will keep you always easy (v. 19): *In your patience possess ye your souls*; get and keep possession of your souls.” Some read it as a promise, “You *may* or *shall* possess your souls.” It comes all to one. Note, *First*, It is our duty and interest at all times, especially in perilous trying times, to secure the possession of our own souls; not only that they be not destroyed and lost for ever, but that they be not distempered now, nor our possession of them disturbed and interrupted. “*Possess your souls*, be your own men, keep up the authority and dominion of reason, and keep under the tumults of passion, that neither grief nor fear may tyrannize over you, nor turn you out of the possession and enjoyment of yourselves.” In difficult times, when we can keep possession of nothing else, then let us make that sure which may be made sure, and keep possession of our souls. *Secondly*, It is by patience, Christian patience, that we keep possession of our own souls. “In suffering times, set patience upon the guard for the preserving of your souls; by it keep your souls composed and in a good frame, and keep out all those impressions which would ruffle you and put you out of temper.”

JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

Having given them an idea of the times for about thirty-eight years next ensuing, he here comes to show them what all those things would issue in at last, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter dispersion of the Jewish nation, which would be a little day of judgment, a type and figure of Christ's second coming, which was not so fully spoken of here as in the parallel place (Matthew 24), yet glanced at; for the destruction of Jerusalem would be as it were the destruction of the world to those whose hearts were bound up in it.

I. He tells them that they should see Jerusalem besieged, *compassed with armies* (v. 20), the Roman armies; and, when they saw this, they might conclude that *its desolation was nigh*, for in this the siege would infallibly *end*, though it might be a long siege. Note, As in mercy, so in judgment, when God begins, he will make an end.

II. He warns them, upon this signal given, to shift for their own safety (v. 21): “*Then let them that are in Judea quit the country and flee to the mountains; let them that are in the midst of it*” (Of Jerusalem) “*depart out, before the city be closely shut up, and*” (as we say now) “*before the trenches be opened; and let not them that are in the countries and villages about enter into the city, thinking to be safe there. Do you abandon a city and country which you see God has abandoned and given up to ruin. Come out of her, my people.*”

III. He foretels the terrible havoc that should be made of the Jewish nation (v. 22): *Those are the days of vengeance* so often spoken of by the Old-Testament prophets, which would complete the ruin of that provoking people. All their predictions must now be fulfilled, and the blood of all the Old-Testament martyrs must now be required. *All things that are written must be fulfilled* at length. After days of patience long abused, there will come *days of vengeance*; for reprieves are not pardons. The greatness of that destruction is set forth,

1. By the inflicting cause of it. It is *wrath upon this people*, the wrath of God, that will kindle this devouring consuming fire.

2. By the particular terror it would be to women with child, and poor mothers that are nurses. *Woe to them*, not only because they are most subject to frights, and least able to shift for their own safety, but because it will be a very great torment to them to think of having borne and nursed children for the murderers.

3. By the general confusion that should be all the nation over. There shall be *great distress in the land*, for men will not know what course to take, nor how to help themselves.

IV. He describes the issue of the struggles between the Jews and the Romans, and what they will come to at last; in short,

1. Multitudes of them *shall fall by the edge of the sword*. It is computed that in those wars of the Jews there fell by the sword above eleven hundred thousand. And the siege of Jerusalem was, in effect, a military execution.

2. The rest shall be *led away captive*; not into *one* nations, as when they were conquered by the Chaldeans, which gave them an opportunity of keeping together, but *into all nations*, which made it impossible for them to *correspond* with each other, much less to *incorporate*.

3. Jerusalem itself was *trodden down of the Gentiles*. The Romans, when they had made themselves masters of it, laid it quite waste, as a *rebellious and bad city, hurtful to kings and provinces*, and therefore hateful to them.

V. He describes the great frights that people should generally be in. Many frightful *sights* shall be *in the sun, moon, and stars*, prodigies in the heavens, and here in this lower world, the *sea and the waves roaring*, with terrible storms and tempests, such as had not been known, and above the ordinary working of natural causes. The effect of this shall be universal confusion and consternation *upon the earth, distress of nations with perplexity*, v. 25. Dr. Hammond understands by the *nations* the several governments or tetrarchies of the Jewish nation, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; these shall be brought to the last extremity. *Men's hearts shall fail them for fear* (v. 26), *apopsychonton anthropon* — *men being quite exanimated, dispirited, unsouled*, dying away for fear. Thus those are *killed all the day long* by whom Christ's apostles were so (⁴¹⁸⁶Romans 8:36), that is, they are all the day long in fear of being killed; sinking under that which lies upon them, and yet still trembling for fear of worse,

and *looking after those things which are coming upon the world*. When *judgment begins at the house of God*, it will not end there; it shall be as if all the world were falling in pieces; and where can any be secure then? The *powers of heaven shall be shaken*, and then the pillars of the earth cannot but tremble. Thus shall the present Jewish policy, religion, laws, and government, be all entirely dissolved by a series of unparalleled calamities, attended with the utmost confusion. So Dr. Clarke. But our Saviour makes use of these figurative expressions because at the end of time they shall be literally accomplished, when the *heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll*, and all their powers not only shaken, but broken, and the *earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up*, ~~and~~ 2 Peter 3:10, 12. As that day was all terror and destruction to the unbelieving Jews, so the great day will be to all unbelievers.

VI. He makes this to be a kind of *appearing of the Son of man*: *Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory*, v. 27. The destruction of Jerusalem was in a particular manner an act of Christ's judgment, the judgment committed to the Son of man; his religion could never be thoroughly established but by the destruction of the temple, and the abolishing of the Levitical priesthood and economy, after which even the converted Jews, and many of the Gentiles too, were still hankering, till they were destroyed; so that it might justly be looked upon as *a coming of the Son of man, in power and great glory*, yet not visibly, but *in the clouds*; for in executing such judgments as these *clouds and darkness are round about him*. Now this was,

1. An *evidence* of the first coming of the Messiah; so some understand it. Then the unbelieving Jews shall be confined, when it is too late, that Jesus was the Messiah; those that would not see him coming in the power of his grace to *save them* shall be made to see him coming in the power of his wrath to *destroy them*; those that would not have him to *reign over them* shall have him to *triumph over them*.

2. It was an *earnest* of his second coming. *Then* in the terrors of that day they shall *see the Son of man coming in a cloud*, and all the terrors of the last day. They shall see a *specimen* of it, a faint resemblance of it. If this be so terrible, what will that be?

VII. He encourages all the faithful disciples in reference to the terrors of that day (v. 28): "*When these things begin to come to pass*, when

Jerusalem is besieged, and every thing is concurring to the destruction of the Jews, *then* do you look *up*, when others are looking down, look heavenward, in faith, hope, and prayer, and *lift up your heads* with cheerfulness and confidence, *for your redemption draws night.*”

1. When Christ came to destroy the Jews, he came to redeem the Christians that were persecuted and oppressed by them; *then had the churches rest.*

2. When he comes to judge the world at the last day, he will *redeem* all that are his, from all their grievances. And the foresight of that day is as pleasant to all good Christians as it is terrible to the wicked and ungodly. Their death itself is so; when they see that day approaching, they can *lift up their heads with joy*, knowing that *their redemption draws nigh*, their removal to their Redeemer.

VIII. Here is one word of prediction that looks further than the destruction of the Jewish nation, which is not easily understood; we have it in v. 24: *Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

1. Some understand it of what is past; so Dr. Hammond. The Gentiles, who have conquered Jerusalem, shall keep possession of it, and it shall be purely Gentile, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, till a great part of the Gentile world shall have become Christian, and then after Jerusalem shall have been rebuilt by Adrian the emperor, with an exclusion of all the Jews from it, many of the Jews shall turn Christians, shall join with the Gentile Christians, to set up a church in Jerusalem, which shall flourish there for a long time.

2. Others understand it of what is yet to come; so Dr. Whitby. Jerusalem shall be possessed by the Gentiles, of one sort or other, for the most part, till the time come when the nations that yet remain infidels shall embrace the Christian faith, when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christ's kingdoms, and then all the Jews shall be converted. Jerusalem shall be inhabited by them, and neither they nor their city any longer trodden down by the Gentiles.

~~(21)~~ LUKE 21:29-38

JUDGMENTS PREDICTED

Here, in the close of this discourse,

I. Christ appoints his disciples to observe the signs of the times, which they might judge by, if they had an eye to the foregoing directions, with as much certainty and assurance as they could judge of the approach of summer by the budding forth of the trees, v. 29-31. As in the kingdom of nature there is a chain of causes, so in the kingdom of providence there is a consequence of one event upon another. When we see a nation filling up the measure of their iniquity, we may conclude that their ruin is nigh; when we see the ruin of persecuting powers hastening on, we may thence infer that *the kingdom of God is nigh at hand*, that when the opposition given to it is removed it shall gain ground. As we may lawfully prognosticate the change of the seasons when second causes have begun to work, so we may, in the disposal of events, expect something uncommon when God is already *raised up out of his holy habitation* (~~(30B)~~ Zechariah 2:13); then *stand still and see his salvation*.

II. He charges them to look upon those things as neither *doubtful* nor *distant* (for then they would not make a due impression on them), but as *sure* and very *near*. The destruction of the Jewish nation,

1. Was *near* (v. 32): *This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled*. There were some now alive that should see it; some that now heard the prediction of it.

2. It was *sure*; the sentence was irreversible; it was a *consumption determined*; the decree was gone forth (v. 33): "*Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than any word of mine: nay, they certainly shall pass away, but my words shall not; whether they take hold or no, they will take effect, and not one of them fall to the ground,*" ~~(30B)~~ 1 Samuel 3:19.

III. He cautions them against security and sensuality, by which they would unfit themselves for the trying times that were coming on, and make them to be a great surprise and terror to them (v. 34, 35): *Take heed to yourselves*. This is the word of command given to all Christ's disciples: "*Take heed to yourselves, that you be not overpowered by temptations,*

nor betrayed by your own corruptions.” Note, We cannot be *safe* if we be *secure*. It concerns us at *all* times, but especially at *some* times, to be very cautious. See here,

1. What our *danger* is: that *the day* of death and judgment should *come upon us unawares*, when we do not *expect* it, and are not *prepared* for it, — lest, when we are called to meet our Lord, that be found the *furthest* thing from our thoughts which ought always to be laid *nearest* our hearts, lest it *come upon us as a snare*; for so *it will come upon* the most of men, who *dwell upon the earth*, and mind *earthly things only*, and have no converse with heaven; to them it will be *as a snare*. See ²⁰⁰²Ecclesiastes 9:12. It will be a *terror* and a *destruction* to them; it will put them into an inexpressible fright, and hold them fast for a doom yet more frightful.

2. What our *duty* is, in consideration of this danger: we must *take heed lest our hearts be overcharged*, lest they be burdened and overloaded, and so unfitted and disabled to do what must be done in preparation for death and judgment. Two things we must watch against, lest our hearts be overcharged with them: —

(1.) The indulging of the appetites of the body, and allowing of ourselves in the gratifications of sense to an excess: *Take heed lest you be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*, the immoderate use of meat and drink, which burden the heart, not only with the guilt thereby contracted, but by the ill influence which such disorders of the body have upon the mind; they make men dull and lifeless to their duty, dead and listless in their duty; they stupify the conscience, and cause the mind to be *unaffected* with those things that are most *affecting*.

(2.) The inordinate pursuit of the good things of this world. The heart is overcharged with the *cares of this life*. The former is the snare of those that are given to their pleasures: this is the snare of the men of business, that *will be rich*. We have need to guard on both hands, not only lest at the time when death comes, but lest *at any time* our hearts should be thus overcharged. Our caution against sin, and our care of our own souls, must be *constant*.

IV. He counsels them to prepare and get ready for this great day, v. 36. Here see,

1. What should be *our aim*: that we may be *accounted worthy to escape all these things*; that, when the judgments of God are abroad, we may be preserved from the malignity of them; that either we may not be involved in the common calamity or it may not be that to us which it is to others; that in the day of death we may escape the sting of it, which is the wrath of God, and the damnation of hell. Yet we must aim not only to *escape that*, but to *stand before the Son of man*; not only to stand *acquitted* before him as our Judge (^{<405>}Psalm 1:5), to have boldness in the day of Christ (that is supposed in our *escaping* all those things), but to *stand before him*, to attend on him as our Master, to stand continually before his throne, and serve him day and night in his temple (^{<407>}Revelation 7:15), always to *behold his face*, as the angels, ^{<480>}Matthew 18:10. The saints are here said to be *accounted worthy*, as before, ^{<215>}Luke 20:35. God, by the good work of his grace in them, *makes them meet* for this happiness, and, by the good will of his grace towards them, *accounts them worthy* of it: but, as Grotius here says, a great part of our worthiness lies in an acknowledgment of our own unworthiness.

2. What should be our *actings* in these aims: *Watch therefore, and pray always*. Watching and praying must go together, ^{<649>}Nehemiah 4:9. Those that would escape the wrath to come, and make sure of the joys to come, must *watch* and *pray*, and must do so always, must make it the constant business of their lives,

(1.) To keep a guard upon themselves. “Watch against sin, watch to every duty, and to the improvement of every opportunity of doing good. Be awake, and keep awake, in expectation of your Lord's coming, that you may be in a right frame to receive him, and bid him welcome.”

(2.) To keep up their communion with God: “*Pray always*; be always in an habitual disposition to that duty; keep up stated times for it; abound in it; pray upon all occasions.” Those shall be accounted worthy to live a life of praise in the other world that live a life of prayer in this world.

V. In the last two verses we have an account how Christ disposed of himself during those three or four days between his riding in triumph into Jerusalem and the night in which he was betrayed.

1. He was *all day teaching in the temple*. Christ preached on week-days as well as sabbath days. He was an indefatigable preacher; he preached in the

face of opposition, and in the midst of those that he knew sought occasion against him.

2. At night he went out to lodge at a friend's house, in the mount of Olives, about a mile out of town. It is probable that he had some friends in the city that would gladly have lodged him, but he was willing to retire in the evening out of the noise of the town, that he might have more time for secret devotion, now that his hour was at hand.

3. Early in the morning he was in the temple again, where he had a morning lecture for those that were willing to attend it; and the people were forward to hear one that they saw forward to preach (v. 38): *They all came early in the morning*, flocking to the temple, like doves to their windows, *to hear him*, though the chief priests and scribes did all they could to prejudice them against him. Sometimes the taste and relish which serious, honest, plain people have of good preaching are more to be valued and judged by than the opinion of the witty and learned, and those in authority.