

Luke 21:20-28: Fall of Jerusalem and her recapture to fulfil “the times of the Gentiles”. Careful study shows that v20-24 is already fulfilled and we are indeed in the end times.

**Summaries of relevant background information for related passages.**

**Summary of Luke 21:5-20 and reason for the Olivet Discourse:** In v5-6 the disciples are impressed by the temple’s beauty and Jesus then utters an amazing prophecy that it will be totally destroyed. As expected, the disciples later question Jesus in v7 regarding when this will occur and the impending sign. He starts with a warning on deceivers in v8 and historically there are many before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Even in that final year, there are three false messiahs. Next in v9-19, events that will preempt the city’s fall is given and it is answering the question regarding the “sign”, a collective term for all these occurrences. Historically in the reign of Claudius, Nero and Vespasian before the fall, there are wars and famines (9-10). Earthquakes are reported, the most renowned being Vesuvius’ eruption that covers up Pompeii, while signs in heaven are also recorded (11). Josephus in “Jewish War” (Bk. 6; Ch. 5) records a sword shaped star over Jerusalem for a year and also a special comet and he decries that they “fail to attend nor give credit to the signs that were so evident”. Then the persecution of believers in v12-19 definitely occurs and partly described in Acts. They are indeed delivered to synagogues (e.g. Acts 14:19) and prisons; and stood before kings and governors (e.g. Acts 26:1-2). But the key sign is in v20 when the Jerusalem is surrounded by armies, the Romans in 70 A.D.

**Summary of Olivet Discourse in Matt. 24 and Mk. 13:** A key point to note, that unlike Luke, in Matt. 24:15 and Mk. 13:14, Jesus predicts that the Abomination of Desolation will stand before the city. This is the antichrist predicted by Daniel (Dan. 12:11), who will take over the temple during 3½ years of the Tribulation (also in 2Thess. 2:4). So the Olivet Discourse in Matthew and Mark mainly focus on the end time that is still future while Luke is on the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. In line with this the word “tribulation” is mentioned in Matt. 24:21 and Mk. 13:19 but *not* in Luke. In fact Matt. 24:3 uniquely states that the “sign” here relates to His second “coming and of the end of the age”.

**Explaining the Passage and evidence for fulfillment: Luke 21:20-28**

Jerusalem’s fall as predicted in v20-24 is fulfilled to the letter as Titus surrounds the city with starvation so severe that mothers even devour their babies and later 97,000 captives were taken into exile. In v22, the fall is stated as His vengeance and this is judgment for Israel’s rejection of Christ. It is recorded that the Jewish Church actually obeyed v21 and fled north to Pella, so escaping the plight. Then v24 states that Jerusalem will be trampled until the end of the “times of the Gentiles”. It is a profound statement so similar to Rom. 11:25 but it definitely ended when Israel retakes the city in 1967. Next v25-26 is an obvious leap to the Tribulation as it is similar to Matt. 24:29 and Mk. 13:24 describing this period. Finally v27-28 is the second coming of Christ or the Son of Man in a cloud.

**Linkage to other passages:** In v24, the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled and with this in Rom. 11:25 is the end of partial hardening, matching so well with the emergence of the Messianic Jews. Then Rev. 11:1-2 predicts that the temple and the holy city (Jerusalem see 11:8) will be given to the nations or gentiles for 3½ years during the Tribulation. It confirms that God sees Israel as taking back the city in 1967 for it cannot be given to the nations in Rev. 11:2 if the Jews are not first of all in possession of it. Indeed they do now.