

## Comparison of Destructions of Jerusalem

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Delivered:

- Romans 11:22 – *“Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.”*
  - God is a kind God – the fact that He promises salvation to His people is proof of that
  - But He is also severe to those who are not His people
- 2 Peter 2:4-9
  - God will protect His own
  - But He will also punish those who deserve punishment
- 2 Peter 3:9-10
  - God is also patient with us – the only reason He has not come back yet is because He is waiting for as many as will repent to do so
  - But His patience will eventually cease
- Take the story of the flood for instance
  - Genesis 6:5 – *“The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”*
    - Though the exact details are omitted, apparently it was much worse (or at least on a much larger magnitude) than the Israelites sins in the wilderness
    - After Moses was on Mount Sinai for so long, the Israelites talked Aaron into making them a golden calf to worship
    - In Exodus 32:22, Aaron says: *“You know how prone these people are to evil.”*
  - Noah found favor in God’s eyes though (vs 8)
  - In vs 14, God tells Noah to make an ark to protect him and his family from the impending destruction
  - But God did not bring this destruction without warning the people of it’s coming and giving them a chance to be saved while Noah was building the ark
  - 1 Peter 3:18-20 and 2 Peter 2:5 indicate that while the ark was being built, people were being preached to
  - No doubt to repent of their ways in preparation for the impending destruction
  - So you can see God’s kindness in His patience here – but this did not last forever
  - Genesis 7:10-13 tells us that the flood came and only Noah and his family were saved
- Also, consider the story of Sodom and Gomorrah
  - In Genesis 18:20-21, the Lord did not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah without giving them a chance to repent
  - In fact, Genesis 18:22-33 tells us that the cities were given numerous chances to repent
    - Starts with for the sake of 50, the cities would be spared
    - Makes it all the way down to 10
  - But finally, destruction came in Genesis 19:23-29
  - And only Lot and his 2 daughters were spared

- His Word tells us and history tells us that God is very patient, but He eventually punishes those who deserve punishment and spares the righteous from that punishment
- The destructions of Jerusalem in 586BC by Babylon and 70AD by Rome were no different
- 2 Samuel 5:6-10 and 1 Chronicles 11:4-9 tells how David took control of Jerusalem from the Jebusites
- David ruled over the 12 united tribes as did his predecessor Saul and his successor Solomon
- But under Rehoboam, the kingdom split
- 10 tribes (all minus Judah and Benjamin) seceded from Rehoboam and made Jeroboam their king (1 Kings 12, 2 Chronicles 10)
  - Judah & Benjamin = Judah under Rehoboam
  - 10 others = Israel under Jeroboam
- Eventually, during the reign of Hoshea, Israel was taken captive by Assyria after not having even 1 righteous king (2 Kings 17)
- Judah was not far behind them though – as they had a mix of righteous and wicked kings
- Judah eventually became a vassal kingdom under Babylon after they defeated the united front of Egypt + Assyria in Carchemish (Jeremiah 46:2)
- While under Babylon’s rule, Judah was constantly rebellious, resulting in the eventual destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 36, Jeremiah 52)
- However, after Persia dethroned Babylon as the world power at the time, the Jewish captives were sent back to Jerusalem and eventually rebuilt the city beginning in 539BC (Ezra 1:1-4)
- The Jews apparently did not learn their lesson though
- It wasn’t long afterwards that God destroyed Jerusalem a second time in 70AD – this time by the hand of the Romans (Matthew 24 & Revelation)
- In a period of 656 years, Jerusalem was destroyed twice
- We have many details on the first destruction, but only prophecies of the second
  - **This sermon references Josephus at various points, but note that Josephus is merely a history book – not inspired scripture**
- Let’s take a look at both and offer some similarities and differences, beginning with some differences
- **Difference 1: the state of affairs of the governments**
- 586BC
  - Though they were not faithful to God, the Jews still had a kingship in place when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586BC – so in a sense, they still had somewhat of an organized government
  - 2 Kings 24:18 tells us that Zedekiah was king of Judah at this time
  - He was king basically in name only as the Babylonians were in ultimate charge at this time – Zedekiah was a Babylonian vassal (2 Chronicles 36:13)
  - In fact, the last 3 kings of Judah were Babylonian vassals (Jehoiakim – 2 Kings 24:1, Jehoiachin – 2 Kings 24:8-17, Zedekiah – 2 Chronicles 36:13)
  - The last 4 kings of Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord (Jehoahaz – 2 Kings 23:32, Jehoiakim – 2 Kings 23:37, Jehoiachin – 2 Kings 24:9, Zedekiah – 2 Kings 24:19)

- **Romans 13:1** – “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”
- Though the last 4 kings did evil in the eyes of the Lord, He did allow them to be in power for 22 years & 6 months
- Likely because God knew that the last 3 would rebel against Babylon’s rule, which eventually led to Babylon destroying Jerusalem (you’d think one of them would have learned from the previous)
- 70AD
  - Though there was somewhat of an organized Jewish government during the first destruction, there was absolutely no government the 2<sup>nd</sup> time
  - There were 3 rebel leaders at the start of the Roman siege – John of Gischala, Eleazar ben Simon, Simon bar Giora (Josephus)
    - John & Eleazar controlled the temple area on the eastern side of Jerusalem and Simon controlled basically everything else (Josephus)
    - Eleazar was betrayed by John and what was left of Eleazar’s men after the betrayal joined forces with John, including Eleazar himself (Josephus)
  - The people in the city had no chance – these military leaders fought the civilians and each other’s men in the city more than they fought the Romans – even after the siege began (Josephus)
  - Josephus states multiple times that the civilians inside the city longed to get outside of the city walls and take their chances with the Romans
  - When the Lamb opened the 2<sup>nd</sup> seal in Revelation 6:3-4, a fiery red horse appeared
    - This horse took peace from the earth and made men slay each other
    - Civil war – exactly what was happening at this time
  - We read of numerous examples of God confusing Israel’s enemies militaristically
    - Exodus 23:27
    - Exodus 14:24-25
    - Joshua 10:10
  - It sounds like God did the same thing here – except this time, it was the Jews who received the confusion
  - We see in Romans 13:1 that God controls governments, in this case – the lack of government
- **Difference 2: the Jewish populace inside the city**
- 586BC
  - By 586BC, most of the Jewish population inside Jerusalem had actually already been led to Babylon
  - The Babylonian Captivity happened in 3 stages, so many lives were spared in this regard
    - 1<sup>st</sup> stage – 2 Kings 24:1 (under Jehoiakim - ~606-605BC)
      - Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego exiled during this stage (Daniel 1:1-21)

- At this time, it was mostly members of the royal family and of nobility that were exiled (Daniel 1:3)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> stage – 2 Kings 24:8-17 (under Jehoiachin - 597BC)
    - During this stage, Ezekiel was exiled (Ezekiel 1:1-3)
    - Officers, the city’s fighting men, craftsmen, artisans were exiled – numbering 10,000 in all (24:14)
    - 24:14 tells us that only the poorest of Jerusalem were left in the city after this exile
    - Which really makes you wonder how Zedekiah expected his rebellion against Babylon to succeed – after he saw Jehoiakim’s and Jehoiachin’s fail with the city’s fighting men – now he tries to rebel without the city’s fighting men? Not a wise decision.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> stage – 2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 36, Jeremiah 52 (under Zedekiah – 586BC)
    - This is when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem
    - 25:11 tells us that for the most part, what was left of the population was carried into exile at this point save some folks who Babylon left to work the vineyards and fields (25:12)
    - Babylon camped outside the city for 2 years with intent to starve the remaining inhabitants out (2 Kings 25:3, Ezekiel 4, Ezekiel 5)
    - Finally laid siege to it (2 Kings 25:4-25)
- So for the most part, there wasn’t actually many people in the city compared to what was there when Josiah was king
- 70AD
  - The exact opposite can be said for the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem
  - Josephus writes that the Roman siege began around the time of the Passover
  - So Jews from all over the world made the trip to Jerusalem and were trapped in the city when the siege began
  - Given the state of affairs of the government discussed in the previous section, they were unable to get out of the city
  - Josephus writes that ~1.1 million people died in the siege (Romans, Jews, civilians in Jerusalem)
    - Not all of that number are Jews, but the biggest part of it is
- Difference 3: 70AD was worse
  - **Matthew 24:21** – *“For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again.”*
  - Exactly how? I can’t be sure – but I know it was, because Jesus said so
  - The fact that there was somewhat of an organized government in 586BC vs no government in 70AD likely made it worse
  - The fact that the Jews got to return to Jerusalem and rebuild it after the first destruction (Ezra 1:1-4), but not after the second likely made it worse as well

- Perhaps even moreso, the amount of people inside the city certainly made the death toll more significant
- Again, we have all the details that God determined that we needed (**Deuteronomy 29:29**)
- Though we don't have all the specifics, we have Jesus' words in Matthew 24:21 confirming that the tribulation caused by the 70AD destruction was unmatched to that time in history and will remain unmatched
- Think about the following examples
  - The US Civil War decimated our country in the 1860's – it took one of the greatest presidents in US history to unite us again
  - Britain lost a great amount of world power when we became an independent country following the Revolutionary War in 1783
  - Germany came within a hair of controlling the entirety of Europe during WWII in the 1940's
  - Rome burned Carthage to the ground just ~200 years prior in 146BC
- None of the tribulation of these events matches 70AD and nothing ever will (Matthew 24:21)
- Now, let's discuss the similarities
- **Similarity 1: The Jews were warned both times**
- 586BC
  - **Deuteronomy 30:15-20**
    - God lays out a proposition to the Israelites
    - You will have life and prosperity if you are obedient
    - Death and destruction if you are disobedient
    - Sadly, they chose death and destruction by their actions
  - 2 Chronicles 33:10 – Manasseh was warned (by God likely through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, or Zephaniah) – Manasseh paid no attention
  - Jeremiah 26:1-6, 11, 20-23 – Jehoiakim warned by Jeremiah & Uriah
    - Jehoiakim did not listen – killed Uriah and threatened to kill Jeremiah
  - Jeremiah 27:1-4, 12-22 – Zedekiah did not listen to Jeremiah causing a severe famine in Jerusalem (brutality of famine can be read about in Ezekiel 4, 5) until Babylon finally sieged the city
  - Jeremiah 32:1-5 – rather than listening to further warnings from Jeremiah, Zedekiah had him imprisoned
  - 2 Chronicles 36:15-16 – God sent word to the Jews again and again, but the prophets were mocked, despised, and scoffed at
  - Jeremiah 25:1-7 – Jeremiah and other prophets warned the Jews for 23 years
- 70AD
  - **Matthew 23:37-39**
    - Of the prophets and those sent to Jerusalem – the Jews killed them
    - They even killed Jesus – the Son of God

- Luke 19:41 tells us that Jesus wept over the city because He knew what was in its future – ultimately because they did not recognize the time of God’s coming (vs 44)

- **Similarity 2: There was nothing left of Jerusalem**

- 586BC

- 2 Kings 25:9-10 – the temple, the royal palace, and every house in Jerusalem was set on fire. The walls were broken down.
- 2 Chronicles 36:19 – everything of value was destroyed
- Ezra 3 describes how the people had to rebuild the foundation of the temple – Babylon apparently destroyed the temple all the way down to and including the foundation
- Nehemiah 1:3 – the gates of the wall were burnt with fire
- Nehemiah 2:17 – as Nehemiah was inspecting Jerusalem’s broken walls and burnt gates, he writes that Jerusalem lie in ruins
- When God intends to do something – He does it thoroughly without leaving any stone unturned
- For example, consider Peter healing the crippled man in Acts 3:1-10
  - This man was crippled from birth – had never walked in his life
  - However, after he was healed, he was walking and jumping immediately – no learning was needed on his part on how to walk or jump apparently
- Similarly, in this case – when God intends to do something, He does it fully
- Including when He brings punishment

- 70AD

- Luke 19:41-44 – Jesus tells us that Jerusalem’s enemy would dash them to the ground, not leaving one stone on another
- Matthew 23:38 – Jerusalem’s house would be left desolate
- Matthew 24:2 – not one stone will be left on another (speaking of the temple)
- Josephus writes that someone passing by the area that was Jerusalem after its destruction in 70AD would not have even known that there was once a city there

- **Similarity 3: God delivered His people**

- 586BC

- We’ve already discussed how the Babylonian Captivity occurred in 3 stages, thus minimizing the death toll during the first siege
  - 1<sup>st</sup> stage – 2 Kings 24:1 (under Jehoiakim)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> stage – 2 Kings 24:8-17 (under Jehoiachin)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> stage – 2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 36, Jeremiah 52 (under Zedekiah)
- Jeremiah 23:3 describes these as the remnant
  - Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Ezekiel were all part of the remnant (Daniel 1:1-21, Ezekiel 1:1-3)

- 70AD

- **Matthew 24:15-21**

- Jesus gives anyone who hears His words or reads His words the sign to get out of Jerusalem
  - If there is any doubt about what the abomination that causes desolation is, turn and read the Luke 21:20 account
  - When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, leave – flee to the mountains
  - Get out immediately – if you’re on the roof of your house, don’t even take the time to go back inside your house to gather your belongings – that’s how urgent this is
  - If you’re in the field, don’t even go back to get your cloak – just leave
  - If you’re a Christian and knew this was coming, probably not a good idea to get pregnant at this time
  - But you may say, history tells us that Vespasian circled Jerusalem and then pulled out in 68AD – didn’t come back until 70AD. Why would Christians need to get out immediately?
  - History also tells us that Simon Giora (one of the rebel leaders we discussed previously) circled the city with his men literally within days of the Romans pulling out
  - If Christians tried to get out of Jerusalem and pass by the Roman army lines, the Romans would let them – Simon did not
  - There was literally a window of 1-3 days that people had to get out of the city after Rome initially surrounded the city – those that didn’t get out at that time were trapped
  - So you can sense the urgency here in Jesus’ instructions
- In Revelation 7, we read of 4 angels holding back the 4 winds of the earth until God sealed His people
- There are several other similarities and differences we could note, but I feel as if we hit the highlights
- **James 1:22-25**
  - It does us no good to know the facts, and not do anything about it
  - Therefore, let’s take a look at what we can learn from this
- **1 – God is patient with us**
  - 2 Peter 3:9 - the only reason He has not come back yet is because He is waiting for as many as will repent to do so
  - 1 John 1:9 – He is faithful to forgive our sins as long as we come back to Him
  - He destroyed Jerusalem the first time and then allowed His remnant to return
- **2 – God will punish the ungodly**
  - Revelation 21:8 – gives us a list of ungodly actions. Those who practice these actions have a lake of burning sulfur to look forward to
  - If at any point in your life that you consider leaving God for worldly pleasures, remember the countless examples we have of God’s total punishment – the flood, Sodom & Gomorrah, Jerusalem twice as we discussed in this sermon

- 3 – God will save His people

- As Christians, we are not promised an easy life – in fact, the exact opposite
- 2 Timothy 3:12 – “*In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*”
- Though we don’t face physical persecution today (and I hope we never do), but we may face exclusion from friends, etc.
- But look at the larger picture – the narrow road that we are on leads to life and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:14)
- Regardless of what happens in this life, strive to find and stay on that road
- The plan of salvation is simple and will never change
  - **Step 1: Hearing the gospel** – *Romans 10:13-17*
    - Gospel = Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, arose, and appeared to many – *1 Corinthians 15:1-8, Romans 1:16*
  - **Step 2: Believing the gospel** – *Mark 16:16, John 3:16*
  - **Step 3: Confession that Jesus is Lord** – *Romans 10:8-10, 1 John 1:9*
  - **Step 4: Repentance of sins** – *Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38*
    - Repentance: a turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and a turning back to God. Change of mind that produces a change in action.
  - **Step 5: Baptism into Christ** – *Galatians 3:27, Acts 2:38, Romans 6:1-10, 1 Peter 3:21-22*
    - Baptism: immerse or submerge
  - **Step 6: Live faithfully** – *Revelation 2:10*