

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A.D. 70 IN BIBLICAL PROPHECY

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## **Justin Martyr (Approx. AD 150)**

CHAP. XLVII.--DESOLATION OF JUDAEA FORETOLD.

That the land of the Jews, then, was to be laid waste, hear what was said by the Spirit of prophecy. And the words were spoken as if from the person of the people wondering at what had happened. They are these: "Sion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. The house of our sanctuary has become a curse, and the glory which our fathers blessed is burned up with fire, and all its glorious things are laid waste: and Thou refrainest Thyself at these things, and hast held Thy peace, and hast humbled us very sore."(6) And ye are convinced that Jerusalem has been laid waste, as was predicted. And concerning its desolation, and that no one should be permitted to inhabit it, there was the following prophecy by Isaiah: "Their land is desolate, their enemies consume it before them, and none of them shall dwell therein."(7) And that it is guarded by you lest any one dwell in it, and that death is decreed against a Jew apprehended entering it, you know very well.(First Apology, Ch. 47.)

## **Irenaeus (Approx. AD 174)**

CHAP. IV.--ANSWER TO ANOTHER OBJECTION, SHOWING THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM, WHICH WAS THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING, DIMINISHED NOTHING FROM THE SUPREME MAJESTY' AND POWER OF GOD, FOR THAT THIS DESTRUCTION WAS PUT IN EXECUTION BY THE MOST WISE COUNSEL OF THE SAME GOD.

1. Further, also, concerning Jerusalem and the Lord, they venture to assert that, if it had been "the city of the great King,"(12) it would not have been deserted.(13) This is just as if any one should say, that if straw were a creation of God, it would never part company with the wheat; and that the vine twigs, if made by God, never would be lopped away and deprived of the clusters. But as these [vine twigs] have not been originally made for their own sake, but for that of the fruit growing upon them, which being come to maturity and taken away, they are left behind, and those which do not conduce to fructification are lopped off altogether; so also [was it with] Jerusalem, which had in herself borne the yoke of bondage (under which man was reduced, who in former times was not subject to God when death was reigning, and being subdued,

became a fit subject for liberty), when the fruit of liberty had come, and reached maturity, and been reaped and stored in the barn, and when those which had the power to produce fruit had been carried away from her [i.e., from Jerusalem], and scattered throughout all the world. Even as Esaias saith, "The children of Jacob shall strike root, and Israel shall flourish, and the whole world shall be filled with his fruit."(1) The fruit, therefore, having been sown throughout all the world, she (Jerusalem) was deservedly forsaken, and those things which had formerly brought forth fruit abundantly were taken away; for from these, according to the flesh, were Christ and the apostles enabled to bring forth fruit. But now these are no longer useful for bringing forth fruit. For all things which have a beginning in time must of course have an end in time also.

2. Since, then, the law originated with Moses, it terminated with John as a necessary consequence. Christ had come to fulfil it: wherefore "the law and the prophets were" with them "until John."(2) And therefore Jerusalem, taking its commencement from David,(3) and fulfilling its own times, must have an end of legislation(4) when the new covenant was revealed."

### **Origen (2nd Century)**

"I challenge anyone to prove my statement untrue if I say that the entire Jewish nation was destroyed less than one whole generation later on account of these sufferings which they inflicted on Jesus. For it was, I believe, forty-two years from the time when they crucified Jesus to the destruction of Jerusalem." (*Contra Celsum*, 198-199)

"Therefore he, also, having separated from her, married, so to speak, another, having given into the hands of the former the bill of divorcement; wherefore they can no longer do the things enjoined on them by the law, because of the bill of divorcement. And a sign that she has received the bill of divorcement is this, that Jerusalem was destroyed along with what they called the sanctuary of the things in it which were believed to be holy, and with the altar of burnt offerings, and all the worship associated with it... And what was more unseemly than the fact, that they all said in His case, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," and "Away with such a fellow from the earth"? And can this be freed from the charge of unseemliness, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children"? Wherefore, when He was avenged, Jerusalem was compassed with armies, and its desolation was near, and their house was taken away from it, and "the daughter of Zion was left as a booth in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and as a besieged city." And, about the same time, I think, the husband wrote out a bill of divorcement to his former wife, and gave it into her hands, and sent her away from his own house, and the bond of her who came from the Gentiles has been cancelled about which the Apostle Says, "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances, which was contrary to us, and He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross;" for Paul also and others became proselytes of Israel for her who came from the Gentiles." (COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW, Book 2., sec. 19.)

## **Tertullian (Approx. AD 200)**

### CHAP. VIII.-- OF JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION.

"Accordingly the times must be inquired into of the predicted and future nativity of the Christ, and of His passion, and of the extermination of the city of Jerusalem, that is, its devastation. For Daniel says, that "both the holy city and the holy place are exterminated together with the coming Leader, and that the pinnacle is destroyed unto ruin."(7) And so the times of the coming Christ, the Leader,(8) must be inquired into, which we shall trace in Daniel; and, after computing them, shall prove Him to be come, even on the ground of the times prescribed, and of competent signs and operations of His. Which matters we prove, again, on the ground of the consequences which were ever announced as to follow His advent; in order that we may believe all to have been as well fulfilled as foreseen.

"Therefore, when these times also were completed, and the Jews subdued, there afterwards ceased in that place "libations and sacrifices," which thenceforward have not been able to be in that place celebrated; for "the unction," too,(6) was "exterminated" in that place after the passion of Christ. For it had been predicted that the unction should be exterminated in that place; as in the Psalms it is prophesied, "They exterminated my hands and feet."(7) And the suffering of this "extermination" was perfected within the times of the lxx hebdomads, under Tiberius Caesar, in the consulate of Rubellius Geminus and Fufius Geminus, in the month of March, at the times of the passover, on the eighth day before the calends of April,(8) on the first day of unleavened bread, on which they slew the lamb at even, just as had been enjoined by Moses.(9) Accordingly, all the synagogue of Israel did slay Him, saying to Pilate, when he was desirous to dismiss Him, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children;"(10) and, "If thou dismiss him, thou art not a friend of Caesar;"(11) in order that all things might be fulfilled which had been written of Him.(An Answer to the Jews 8.)

## **Cyprian (approx. AD 250)**

6. That the Jews should lose Jerusalem, and should leave the land which they had received.

In Isaiah: "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers shall devour it in your sight; and the daughter of Zion shall be left deserted, and overthrown by foreign peoples, as a cottage in a vineyard, and as a keeper's lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a city which is besieged. And unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we should have been as Sodoma, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." [5] Also in the Gospel the Lord says: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and

thou wouldst not! Behold, your house shall be left unto you desolate."[6] (*THREE BOOKS OF TESTIMONIES AGAINST THE JEWS*, 6)

### **Lactantius (3rd Century)**

"But He also opened to them all things which were about to happen, which Peter and Paul preached at Rome; and also said that it was about to come to pass, that after a short time God would send against them a king who would subdue the Jews, and level their cities to the ground, and besiege the people themselves, worn out with hunger and thirst. Then it should come to pass that they should feed on the bodies of their own children, and consume one another. Lastly, that they should be taken captive, and come into the hands of their enemies, and should see their wives most cruelly harassed before their eyes, their virgins ravished and polluted, their sons torn in pieces, their little ones dashed to the ground; and lastly, everything laid waste with fire and sword, the captives banished for ever from their own lands, because they had exulted over the well-beloved and most approved Son of God. And so, after their decease, when Nero had put them to death, Vespasian destroyed the name and nation of the Jews, and did all things which they had foretold as about to come to pass." (Lactantius: *DIVINE INSTITUTES*, BOOK IV)

"Also Zechariah says: "And they shall look on me whom they pierced." Amos thus speaks of the obscuring of the sun: "In that day, saith the Lord, the sun shall go down at noon, and the clear day shall be dark; and I will turn your feasts into mourning, and your songs into lamentation." Jeremiah also speaks of the city of Jerusalem, in which He suffered: "Her sun is gone down while it was yet day; she hath been confounded and reviled, and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword." Nor were these things spoken in vain. For after a short time the Emperor Vespasian subdued the Jews, and laid waste their lands with the sword and fire, besieged and reduced them by famine, overthrew Jerusalem, led the captives in triumph, and prohibited the others who were left from ever returning to their native land. And these things were done by God on account of that crucifixion of Christ, as He before declared this to Solomon in their Scriptures, saying, "And Israel shall be for perdition and a reproach to the people, and this house shall be desolate; and every one that shall pass by shall be astonished, and shall say, Why hath God done these evils to this land, and to this house? And they shall say, Because they forsook the Lord their God, and persecuted their King, who was dearly beloved by God, and crucified Him with great degradation, therefore hath God brought upon them these evils." For what would they not deserve who put to death their Lord, who had come for their salvation? (Lactantius: *EPITOME OF THE DIVINE INSTITUTES*, Ch. 46)

### **Hippolytus of Rome (II/III Centuries)**

30. Come, then, O blessed Isaiah; arise, tell us clearly what thou didst prophesy with respect to the mighty Babylon. For thou didst speak also of Jerusalem, and thy word is accomplished. For

thou didst speak boldly and openly: "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by many strangers. The daughter of Sion shall be left as a cottage in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city."

What then? Are not these things come to pass? Are not the things announced by thee fulfilled? Is not their country, Judea, desolate? Is not the holy place burned with fire? Are not their walls cast down? Are not their cities destroyed? Their land, do not strangers devour it? Do not the Romans rule the country? And indeed these impious people hated thee, and did saw thee asunder, and they crucified Christ. Thou art dead in the world, but thou livest in Christ." (*Fragments of Dogmatic and Historical Works*)

### **Eusebius (A.D.314)**

"And all this prophecy of what would result from their insolence against the Christ has been clearly proved to have taken place after their plot against our Saviour. For it was not before it, but afterwards from that day to this that God turned their feasts into mourning, despoiled them of their famous mother-city, and destroyed the holy Temple therein when Titus and Vespasian were Emperors of Rome, so that they could no longer go up to keep their feasts and sacred meetings. I need not say that a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord has overtaken them all, in return for their rejection of the Word of God; since with one voice they refused Him, so He refuses them." (Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, X)

"When, then, we see what was of old foretold for the nations fulfilled in our own day, and when the lamentation and wailing that was predicted for the Jews, and the burning of the Temple and its utter desolation, can also be seen even now to have occurred according to the prediction, surely we must also agree that the King who was prophesied, the Christ of God, has come, since the signs of His coming have been shewn in each instance I have treated to have been clearly fulfilled." (*Demonstratio Evangelica* (Proof of the Gospel) ; BOOK VIII)

"If any one compares the words of our Saviour with the other accounts of the historian (Josephus) concerning the whole war, how can one fail to wonder, and to admit that the foreknowledge and the prophecy of our Saviour were truly divine and marvelously strange." (Book III, Ch. VII)

"It is fitting to add to these accounts the true prediction of our Saviour in which he foretold these very events. His words are as follows: "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day; For there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." The historian, reckoning the whole number of the slain, says that eleven

hundred thousand persons perished by famine and sword, and that the rest of the rioters and robbers, being betrayed by each other after the taking of the city, were slain. But the tallest of the youths and those that were distinguished for beauty were preserved for the triumph. Of the rest of the multitude, those that were over seventeen years of age were sent as prisoners to labor in the works of Egypt, while still more were scattered through the provinces to meet their death in the theaters by the sword and by beasts. Those under seventeen years of age were carried away to be sold as slaves, and of these alone the number reached ninety thousand. These things took place in this manner in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, in accordance with the prophecies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who by divine power saw them beforehand as if they were already present, and wept and mourned according to the statement of the holy evangelists, who give the very words which he uttered, when, as if addressing Jerusalem herself, he said: "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a rampart about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee and thy children even with the ground." And then, as if speaking concerning the people, he says, "For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." And again: "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." (Book III, Ch. VII)

"And the people of the governor that cometh will destroy the city and the holy place." Meaning that the city and the Holy Place are not only to be ruined by the leader to come, whom I have identified in my interpretation, but also by his people. And you would not be far wrong in saying, too, that the Roman general and his army are meant by the words before us, where I think the camps of the Roman rulers are meant, who governed the nation from that time, and who destroyed the city of Jerusalem itself, and its ancient venerable Temple. For they were cut off by them as by a flood, and were at once involved in destruction until the war was concluded, so that the prophecy was fulfilled and they suffered utter desolation (400) after their plot against our Saviour, which was followed by their extreme sufferings during the siege. You will find an accurate account of it in the history of Josephus." (Demonstratio Evangelica (Proof of the Gospel) ; BOOK VIII)

### **Athanasius (A.D.345)**

"He was like those sent by the householder to receive the fruits of the vineyard from the husbandmen; for he exhorted all men to render a return. But Israel despised and would not render, for their will was not right, nay moreover they killed those that were sent, and not even before the Lord of the vineyard were they ashamed, but even He was slain by them. Verily, when He came and found no fruit in them, He cursed them through the fig-tree, saying, "Let there be

henceforth no fruit from thee" [Matt. 21:19]; and the fig-tree was dead and fruitless, so that even the disciples wondered when it withered away.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet: "I will take away from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the scent of myrrh, and the light of a lamp, and the whole land shall be destroyed" [Jer. 25:10]. For the whole service of the law has been abolished from them, and henceforth and forever they remain without a feast." (St. Athanasius, *Letters* [vi])

"So the Jews are indulging in fiction, and transferring present time to future. When did prophet and vision cease from Israel? Was it not when Christ came, the Holy One of holies? It is, in fact, a sign and notable proof of the coming of the Word that Jerusalem no longer stands, neither is prophet raised up nor vision revealed among them. And it is natural that it should be so, for when He that was signified had come, what need was there any longer of any to signify Him? And when the Truth had come, what further need was there of the shadow? On His account only they prophesied continually, until such time as Essential Righteousness has come, Who was made the Ransom for the sins of all. For the same reason Jerusalem stood until the same time, in order that there men might premeditate the types before the Truth was known. So, of course, once the Holy One of holies had come, both vision and prophecy were sealed. And the kingdom of Jerusalem ceased at the same time, because kings were to be anointed among them only until the Holy of holies had been anointed. Moses also prophesies that the kingdom of the Jews shall stand until His time, saying, "A ruler shall not fail from Judah nor a prince from his loins, until the things laid up for him shall come and the Expectation of the nations Himself." And that is why the Savior Himself was always proclaiming "The law and the prophets prophesied until John." So if there is still king or prophet or vision among the Jews, they do well to deny that Christ is come; but if there is neither king nor vision, and since that time all prophecy has been sealed and city and temple taken, how can they be so irreligious, how can they so flaunt the facts, as to deny Christ Who has brought it all about?.. What more is there for their Expected One to do when he comes? To call the heathen? But they are called already. To put an end to prophet and king and vision? But this too has already happened. To expose the Goddenyingness of idols? It is already exposed and condemned. Or to destroy death? It is already destroyed. What then has not come to pass that the Christ must do? What is there left out or unfulfilled that the Jews should disbelieve so light-heartedly? The plain fact is, as I say, that there is no longer any king or prophet nor Jerusalem nor sacrifice nor vision among them; yet the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of God, and the Gentiles, forsaking atheism, are now taking refuge with the God of Abraham through the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Incarnation*, Ch. VI )

## Chrysostom

"For I will ask them, Did He send the prophets and wise men? Did they slay them in their synagogue? Was their house left desolate? Did all the vengeance come upon that generation? It is quite plain that it was so, and **no man gainsays it.**" (*Homily LXXIV*)

"But of wars in Jerusalem is He speaking; for it is not surely of those without, and everywhere in the world; for what did they care for these? And besides, He would thus say nothing new, if He were speaking of the calamities of the world at large, which are happening always. For before this, were wars, and tumults, and fightings; but He speaks of the Jewish wars coming upon them at no great distance, for henceforth the Roman arms were a matter of anxiety. Since then these things also were sufficient to confound them, He foretells them all.

Therefore He saith, they shall come not by themselves or at once, but with signs. For that the Jews may not say, that they who then believed were the authors of these evils, therefore hath He told them also of the cause of their coming upon them. "For verily I say unto you," He said before, "all these things shall come upon this generation," having made mention of the stain of blood on them." (*Homilies*)

## John Calvin

"Inconsequence of the obscurity of this passage it has been twisted in a variety of ways. At the end of the ninth chapter I have shewn the impossibility of its referring to the profanation of the Temple which occurred under the tyranny of Antiochus; on this occasion the angel bears witness to such a complete destruction of the Temple, as to leave no room for the hope of its repair and restoration. Then the circumstances of the time convinces us of this. For he then said, Christ shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and shall cause the sacrifices and oblation to cease. Afterwards, the abomination that stupifieth shall be added, and desolation or stupor, and then death will distill, says he, upon the astonished or stupefied one. The angel, therefore, there treats of the perpetual devastation of the Temple. So in this passage, without doubt;, he treats of the period after the destruction of the Temple; there could be no hope of restoration, as the law with all its ceremonies would then arrive at its termination. With this view Christ quotes this passage in Matthew 24, while he admonishes his hearers diligently to attend to it. Let him who reads, understand, says he. We have stated this prophecy to be obscure, and hence it requires no ordinary degree of the closest attention. First of all, we must hold this point; the time now treated by the angel begins at the last destruction of the Temple. That devastation happened as soon as the gospel began to be promulgated. God then deserted his Temple, because it was only founded for a time, and was but a shadow, until the Jews so completely violated the whole covenant that no sanctity remained in either the Temple, the nation, or the land itself. Some restrict this to those standards which Tiberius erected on the very highest pinnacle of the Temple, and others to



the statue of Caligula, but I have already stated my view of these opinions as too forced. I have no hesitation in referring this language of the angel to that profanation of the Temple which happened after the manifestation of Christ, when sacrifices ceased, and the shadows of the law were abolished. From the time, therefore, at which the sacrifice really ceased to be offered; this refers to the period at which Christ by his advent should abolish the shadows of the law, thus making all offering of sacrifices to God totally valueless. From that time, therefore. Next, from the time at which the stupefying abomination shall have been set up. God's wrath followed the profanation of the Temple. The Jews never anticipated the final cessation of their ceremonies, and always boasted in their peculiar external worship, and unless God had openly demonstrated it before their eyes, they would never have renounced their sacrifices and rites as mere shadowy representations. Hence Jerusalem and their Temple were exposed to the vengeance of the Gentiles. This, therefore, was the setting up of this stupefying abomination; it was a clear testimony to the wrath of God, exhorting the Jews in their confusion to boast no longer in their Temple and its holiness." (Commentary)

### **Bishop Jacques Benigne Bossuet (1670)**

"They have their book which they name Talmud, that is, doctrine, which they regard no less than the Scripture itself. It is a collection of tracts and sentences of their doctors; and though the parts comprising that great work be not all of equal antiquity, the latest authors quoted in it lived in the earliest ages of the Church. There, amidst numberless irrelevant fables, which take their rise for the most part after the time of our Lord, we find some beautiful remains of the ancient traditions of the Jewish people, and proofs that might convince them. And first, it is certain from the admission of the Jews, that the Divine vengeance did never more terribly nor more manifestly declare itself than in their last desolation."

"Let us remember only what Jesus Christ had foretold them." (Continuity of Religion)

### **Jonathan Edwards (1736)**

"Thus there was a final end to the Old Testament world: all was finished with a kind of day of judgment, in which the people of God were saved, and His enemies terribly destroyed." (vol. i. p. 445)

"'Tis evident that when Christ speaks of his coming; his being revealed; his coming in his Kingdom; or his Kingdom's coming; He has respect to his appearing in those great works of his Power Justice and Grace, which should be in the Destruction of Jerusalem and other extraordinary Providences which should attend it." (Miscellany #1199)

### **William Whiston (1737)**

"Josephus speaks so, that it is most evident he was fully satisfied that God was on the Romans' side, and made use of them now for the destruction of the Jews, which was for certain the true state of this matter, as the prophet Daniel first, and our Saviour himself afterwards had clearly foretold. (See Lit. Accompl. of Proph. p. 64, etc. (*Wars of the Jews*, VI,II,1))

### **Thomas Newton (1754)**

"As a general in the wars (Josephus) must have had an exact knowledge of all transactions, and a Jewish priest he would not relate them with any favour of partiality to the Christian cause. His history was approved by Vespasian and Titus (who ordered it to be published) and by King Agrippa and many others, both Jews and Romans, who were present in those wars..He designed nothing less, and yet as if he had designed nothing more, his history of the Jewish wars may serve as a larger comment on our Saviour's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem." (Newton, p. 433)

### **John Wesley (1754)**

"Josephus' *History of the Jewish War* is the best commentary on this chapter (Matt. 24). It is a wonderful instance of God's providence, that he, an eyewitness, and one who lived and died a Jew, should, especially in so extraordinary a manner, be preserved, to transmit to us a collection of important facts, which so exactly illustrate this glorious prophecy, in almost every circumstance." (*Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*)

### **Dom Toutee (1790)**

"St. Chrysostom shows that the destruction of Jerusalem is to be ascribed, not to the power of the Romans, for God had often delivered it from no less dangers; but to a special providence which was pleased to put it out of the power of human perversity to delay or respite the extinction of those ceremonial observances." (St. Cyril)

### **Adam Clarke (1837)**

"I conclude, therefore, that this prophecy has not the least relation to Judas Maccabeus. It may be asked, to whom, and to what event does it relate? .. to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity; which in the Gospel is called the coming of Christ and the days of vengeance, Matthew 16:28; Luke 21:22." (Isaiah 65, p. 513)

### **P.S. Desprez (1854)**

"The Lord came, as he said, to destroy Jerusalem, and to close the dispensation." (*The Apocalypse Fulfilled* Preface, p. vi).

"NO scriptural statement is capable of more decided proof than that the coming of Christ is the destruction of Jerusalem, and the close of the Jewish dispensation." (*The Apocalypse Fulfilled*, p.9)

### **Robert Roberts (1855)**

"The parousia, or proximity, of the Son of Man to Jerusalem in the crisis of its overthrow was to be in the lifetime of that generation, according to the words of Jesus, who said, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." (*The Signs of the Son of Man's Presence at the Destruction of Jerusalem*)

### **David Brown (1858)**

"Those who have not directed their attention to prophetic language will be startled if I answer, The coming of the Lord here announced is his coming in judgment against Jerusalem - to destroy itself and its temple, and with them the peculiar standing and privileges of the Jews as the visible Church of God.."

### **William Drool Killen (1859)**

"Nero died A.D. 68, and the war which involved the destruction of Jerusalem and of upwards of a million of the Jews, was already in progress. The holy city fell A.D. 70; and the Mosaic economy, which had been virtually abolished by the death of Christ, now reached its practical termination. At the same period the prophecy of Daniel was literally fulfilled; for "the sacrifice and the oblation" were made to cease, [168:5] as the demolition of the temple and the dispersion of the priests put an end to the celebration of the Levitical worship. The overthrow of the metropolis of Palestine contributed in various ways to the advancement of the Christian cause. Judaism, no longer able to provide for the maintenance of its ritual, was exhibited to the world as a defunct system; its institutions, now more narrowly examined by the spiritual eye, were discovered to be but types of the blessings of a more glorious dispensation; and many believers, who had hitherto adhered to the ceremonial law, discontinued its observances. Christ, forty years before, had predicted the siege and desolation of Jerusalem; [169:1] and the remarkable verification of a prophecy, delivered at a time when the catastrophe was exceedingly improbable, appears to have induced not a few to think more favourably of the credentials of the gospel. In another point of view the ruin of the ancient capital of Judea proved advantageous to the Church.

In the subversion of their chief city the power of the Jews sustained a shock from which it has never since recovered; and the disciples were partially delivered from the attacks of their most restless and implacable persecutors." (The Ancient Church)

### **Henry Alford (1868)**

"We may observe that our Lord makes "when the Lord cometh" *coincide with the destruction of Jerusalem*, which is incontestably the overthrow of the wicked husbandmen. This passage therefore forms an important key to our Lord's prophecies, and a decisive justification for those who, like myself, firmly hold that the coming of the Lord is, in many places, to be identified, primarily, with that overthrow." (On Matt. 21:33-46)

### **C.H. Spurgeon (1868)**

"The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world has ever witnessed, either before or since. Even Titus seemed to see in his cruel work the hand of an avenging God. (Commentary on Matthew, p. 412)

Truly, the blood of the martyrs slain in Jerusalem was amply avenged when the whole city became veritable Aceldama, or field of blood." (Commentary on Matthew, p. 412,413)

### **Philip Schaff (1877)**

"The destruction of Jerusalem would be a worthy theme for the genius of a Christian Homer. It has been called "the most soul-stirring of all ancient history." But there was no Jeremiah to sing the funeral dirge of the city of David and Solomon. The Apocalypse was already written, and had predicted that the heathen "shall tread the holy city under foot forty and two months." (p. 397-398)

"A few years afterwards followed the destruction of Jerusalem, which must have made an overpowering impression and broken the last ties which bound Jewish Christianity to the old theocracy. . . .

"The awful catastrophe of the destruction of the Jewish theocracy must have produced the profoundest sensation among the Christians. . . . It was the greatest calamity of Judaism and a great benefit to Christianity; a refutation of the one, a vindication . . . of the other. It separated them forever. . . . Henceforth the heathen could no longer look upon Christianity as a mere sect of Judaism, but must regard and treat it as a new, peculiar religion. The destruction of Jerusalem, therefore, marks that momentous crisis at which the Christian church as a whole burst forth forever from the chrysalis of Judaism, awoke to a sense of maturity, and in government and

worship at once took its independent stand before the world. (*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. I, pp. 403-404)

### **F.W. Farrar (1882)**

"the Fall of Jerusalem and all the events which accompanied and followed it in the Roman world and in the Christian world, had a significance which it is hardly possible to overestimate. They were the final end of the Old Dispensation. They were the full inauguration of the New Covenant. They were God's own overwhelming judgment on that form of Judaic Christianity which threatened to crush the work of St. Paul, to lay on the Gentiles the yoke of abrogated Mosaism, to establish itself by threats and anathemas as the only orthodoxy. Many of the early Christians and those especially who lived at Jerusalem were at the same time rigid Jews... No event less awful than the desolation of Judea, the destruction of Judaism, the annihilation of all possibility of observing the precepts of Moses, could have opened the eyes of the Judaisers from their dream of imagined infallibility. Nothing but God's own unmistakable interposition - nothing but the manifest coming of Christ - could have persuaded Jewish Christians that the Law of the Wilderness was annulled." (*The Early Days of Christianity*, p. 489, 490)

"It was to this event, the most awful in history - 'one of the most awful eras in God's economy of grace, and the most awful revolution in all God's religious dispensations' - that we must apply those prophecies of Christ's coming in which every one of the Apostles and Evangelists fixed these three most definite limitations - the one, that before that generation passed away all these things would be fulfilled; another, that some standing there should not taste death till they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom; and third, that the Apostles should not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come. It is strange that these distinct limitations should not be regarded as a decisive proof that the Fall of Jerusalem was, in the fullest sense, the Second Advent of the Son of Man which was primarily contemplated by the earliest voices of prophecy" (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 489)

### **Alfred Edersheim**

"[The] tribulation to Israel [was] unparalleled in the terrible past of its history, and unequalled even in its bloody future was about to befall them. Nay, so dreadful would be the persecution that, if Divine mercy had not interposed for the sake of the followers of Christ, the whole Jewish race that inhabited the land would have been swept away. There should have been no flesh saved." (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, two-volume ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1883] 1971) 2:449)

## **James Stuart Russell (1887)**

"There are not a few who seem to think that if our Lord's prophecy on the Mount of Olives, and the predictions of the apostles of the coming of Christ in glory, meant no more than the destruction of Jerusalem, and were fulfilled in that event, then all their announcements and expectations ended in a mere *fiasco*, and the historical reality answers very feebly and inadequately to the magnificent prophecy. There is reason to believe that the true significance and grandeur of that great event are very little apprehended by many. The destruction of Jerusalem was not a mere thrilling incident in the drama of history, like the siege of Troy or the downfall of Carthage, closing a chapter in the annals of a state or a people. It was an event which has no parallel in history. It was the outward and visible sign of a great epoch in the divine government of the world. It was the close of one dispensation and the commencement of another. It marked the inauguration of a new order of things. The Mosaic economy, which had been ushered in by the miracles of Egypt, the lightnings and thunderings of Sinai, and the glorious manifestations of Jehovah to Israel, after subsisting for more than fifteen centuries was now abolished... It was not an isolated fact, a solitary catastrophe, it was the center of a group of related and coincidental events, not only in the material, but in the spiritual world; not only on earth, but in heaven and hell; some of them being cognizable by the senses and capable of historical confirmation, and others not." (*The Parousia*, pp. 546, 547)

## **Philip Mauro (1921)**

"It is greatly to be regretted that those who, in our day, give themselves to the study and exposition of prophecy, seem not to be aware of the *immense significance* of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which was accompanied by the extinction of Jewish national existence, and the dispersion of the Jewish people among all the nations. The failure to recognize the significance of that event, and the vast amount of prophecy which it fulfilled, has been the cause of great confusion, for the necessary consequence of missing the past fulfilment of predicted events is to leave on our hands a mass of prophecies for which we must needs contrive fulfilments in the future. The harmful results are two fold; for first, we are thus deprived of the evidential value, and the support to the faith, of those remarkable fulfilments of prophecy which are so clearly presented to us in authentic contemporary histories; and second, our vision of things to come is greatly obscured and confused by the transference to the future of predicted events which, in fact, have already happened, and whereof complete records have been preserved for our information."

"Yet, in the face of all this, we have today a widely held scheme of prophetic interpretation, which has for its very cornerstone the idea that, when God's time to remember His promised mercies to Israel shall at last have come, He will gather them into their ancient land again, only to pour upon them calamities and distresses far exceeding even the horrors which attended the

destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This is, we are convinced, an error of such magnitude as to derange the whole program of unfulfilled prophecy." (Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation)

### **Dr. Burnett Hillman (1925)**

"It is impossible for us to realise the shock of A.D.70 to a community in which Jewish and Gentile members alike had been reared in the profoundest veneration of the immemorial sanctity of the Holy City and the Temple." (*The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins*, p. 516)

### **S.G.F. Brandon (1951)**

"The apparent cruciality of this event for Christianity has been the subject of our investigation, and the conclusion has been reached that that cruciality is a fact of profound historical significance for the understanding of the nature of Christian Origins. It would indeed not be an exaggeration to say that Christianity was in a certain sense reborn as a result of the Jewish catastrophe of A.D. 70... in the overthrow of the Jewish state the old wine-skins of Judaism were burst asunder and perished, liberating the new wine to flow freely abroad and to reach maturity in places more congenial to the original genius of its creator. Thus we may conclude that, after the Resurrection experiences, the next most crucial event in the life of the Christian Church was the overthrow of the Jewish nation, which was dramatically epitomized in the destruction of its holy city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70" (*The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, pp. 249, 251)

### **William Cox (1966)**

(On Matthew 24:21)

"We know that the great tribulation of A.D. 70 brought the Jewish state to its complete and final end." (Cox, p. 103)

### **Jack P. Lewis (1976)**

"All these things (*panta tauta*) is a crux of interpretation (cf. 23:36; 24:2,3,34). What it includes is uncertain. He is near could just as well be 'it is near' and refer to the summer (vs. 32), that is, to the doom of Jerusalem." (*The Gospel According to Matthew, Part 2*; Living Word Commentary: Sweet Publishing, p. 128)

## **G.W.H. Lampe (1984)**

"Jewish Christianity, as well as Gentile, had by this time established its own identity. . . . During the war and in the ensuing three or four decades . . . the separation of the Jewish Christians from Judaism became complete... the main principles of the Christian position had been established against Judaism well before the first Jewish war ended.. the decisive event which vindicated Jesus as the Christ, the Lord, the Son of God, was not the destruction of his enemies but his resurrection from the dead and his exaltation to God's right hand."

"From the letter to the Galatians Christians had learned that they were children of the Jerusalem which is 'above', the community which, because it enjoys the freedom of the Spirit, stands over against its antithesis, the earthly Jerusalem which is in servitude to the Law (Gal. 4:25–6, cp. Phil. 3:20). The foundations, once again, had been laid for the later development of the theme of the 'heavenly Jerusalem' in Hebrews (12:22), the 'new' or 'holy' Jerusalem which, according to the Revelation of John (3:12; 20:9; 21:2), is to descend from heaven and in which the presence of God will not be focussed or localised in any temple, and for the reinterpretation by the Fourth Evangelist of the idea of a holy place, established by God for worship, in terms of community which worships in the Spirit and truth (John 4:21–3). Paul had already taught that the holy temple of God, indwelt by the Spirit, is the congregation of Christian people, the temple of the living God in which his presence assures the fulfilment of the covenant promise, 'I will be their God and they shall be my people' (I Cor. 3:16–17; 2 Cor. 6:16); and Paul had also shown that in a secondary sense each individual believer is the temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19). In this ark of Christian theology, too, the foundations of later developments, such as the teaching of Eph. 2:21 and I Pet. 2:5, and, through a combination of the themes of the 'temple of the Spirit' and the 'body of Christ', of John 2:21, had been firmly laid in the years before the Jewish war." ("A.D. 70 in Christian Reflection," *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, eds. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D Moule (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 156-158.)

## **David Turner (1989)**

"'This generation' applies to Jesus' contemporaries who lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem; 'all these things' (Matt. 24:34) is limited by the contextual fig tree analogy to the events marking the course of the ages, particularly the events of A.D.70." ["The Structure and Sequence of Matthew 24," *Grace Theological Journal* 10 (Spr 1989): 3-27, p.3]

## **A. R. Tippit**

"The concept of Israel as the chosen people does not imply a certain divine favoritism, as some seem to think, but an opportunity of grace, a calling that



involved the assumption of the servant role among the nations. It was the fact that they had interpreted themselves as special objects of God's favor, and rejected the servant role, that led to their own rejection." (*Church Growth and the Word of God*)

### **Jim McGuigan (1991)**

"I can't remember when I didn't think Matt 24 all referred to Jerusalem's fall" (*A.D.70 Revisited; Northern Ireland: By the author, 1991, 75.*)

### **N.T. Wright (1996)**

"One of the main reasons, I suppose, why the obvious way of reading the chapter has been ignored for so long must be the fact that in a good deal of Christian theology the fall of Jerusalem has had no theological significance. This has meant not only that Mark 13 is found puzzling, but also that all the references to the same event elsewhere in the gospels -- even where it stares one in the face, as in Luke 13:1-5 -- have been read as general warnings of hellfire in an afterlife, rather than the literal and physical divine-judgment-through-Roman-judgment that we have seen to be characteristic of Jesus' story." (*Jesus and Victory of God*, pp. 343-344. Fortress Press, 1996).

### **Stafford North (1998)**

"Just as Daniel predicted, in 70 A.D., forty years after the anointed one was cut off, the Roman armies marched on Jerusalem. After a siege of 134 days, designed to weaken resistance, the Roman army broke through the walls, destroyed the city and burned the temple. Then, they put their ensigns over the eastern gate of the temple and offered sacrifices to them. (Josephus: War VI, vi. 1 [316]).

There could not have been a more precise fulfillment of the prophecies of both Daniel and Christ. The city was destroyed and desecrated. Even the stones of the temple were cast down and not one remained upon another." (*Armageddon Again? A Reply to Hal Lindsey*, Oklahoma City, OK: Author, 1991, p. 47-48)

### **R.C. Sproul (1998)**

"No matter what view of eschatology [the doctrine of the Last Days] we embrace, we must take seriously the redemptive-historical importance of Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70." (*The Last Days According to Jesus*, p. 26)

"The coming of Christ in A.D.70 was a coming in judgment on the Jewish nation, indicating the end of the Jewish age and the fulfillment of a day of the Lord. Jesus really did come in judgment at this time, fulfilling his prophecy in the Olivet Discourse." (*The Last Days According to Jesus*, p. 158)

"The most significant, redemptive, historical action that takes place outside the New Testament, is the judgment that falls on Jerusalem, and by which judgment the Christian Church now emerges as The Body of Christ." (R.C. Sproul, *Dust to Glory* video series, 1997)

"Russell's book has forced me to take the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem far more seriously than before, to open my eyes to the radical significance of this event in redemptive history. It vindicates the apostolic hope and prediction of our Lord's close-at-hand coming in judgment. My view on these matters remains in transition, as I have spelled out in *The Last Days According to Jesus*. But for me one thing is certain: I can never read the New Testament again the same way I read it before reading *The Parousia*. I hope better scholars than I will continue to analyze and evaluate the content of J. Stuart Russell's important work." ("Foreword," in *The Parousia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999)

### **Gary DeMar (1999)**

"All the signs listed in Matthew 24 have reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70."(*Last Days Madness*, GA: American Vision, p., 124)

### **Kenneth Gentry**

"The A.D. 70 catastrophe results from Christ's prophetic word, corroborating His Messianic authority in a dramatic way. AD. 70 proves His prophecy to be not only a true word from God (Deut. 18:22) but a *judgment word* against God's people. The disciples' request for a "sign" marking out "the end of the age" (Matt. 24:3) sparks the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25. Up through 24:34, Jesus focuses on Jerusalem's destruction: The devastation of the holy city and conflagration of its holy house become "the sign of the Son of man in heaven" (v. 30, KJV). Thus, when the first-century holocaust explodes upon Israel, it definitively signifies the divine authority of the One now in heaven (cf. Matt. 26:59-64; Luke 23:20-31). Too many Christians miss the meaning of Jesus' cloud-coming in Matthew 24:30 for two reasons. First, they are unfamiliar with Old Testament apocalyptic passages wherein divine judgments appear as cloud-comings (Isa. 19:1). Second, they overlook the interpretive clues in Matthew 24: mention of the temple's destruction (v. 2), the Judean focus (v. 16), and the temporal proximity of all the events between verses 4 and 34 (v. 34). Indeed, Jesus warns *the very men* who sit in judgment over Him: "Here after you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming

on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64b). This is certainly how the ancient church read Matthew 24. Referring to A.D. 70, Eusebius highlights "*the infallible forecast of our Saviour in which He prophetically expounded these very things*" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3:7:1)." (Tabletalk Mag., December 2001)

"The final collapse of Jerusalem and the Temple.. Through these events the Jews were to "see" the Son of Man in His judgment-coming in terrifying cloud-glory: clouds are symbols of divine majesty often entailing stormy destruction. The members of the Sanhedrin and others would experience such in their life times (Matt. 26:64; Mark 9:1; cf. Rev 1:7 with Rev 1:1,3)." (*ibid.* 348)

"The nature of the event has to do with a 'Cloud-Coming' of Christ. It is necessary here to understand the Old Testament backdrop for a proper comprehension of the matter. The Old Testament frequently uses clouds as indicators of divine judgment." (*Before Jerusalem Fell*; Bethesda, MD: Christian University Press, 1997; p. 121)

### **Eric M. Meyers (2003)**

"The destruction of the Temple necessarily had cataclysmic political and religious consequences. Because the Temple had functioned as a political and well as cultic center, its loss left a vacuum into which the rabbis would move."

"The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. constitutes, in most analyses, a watershed event for the Jews of antiquity. The elimination of the center, source of spiritual nourishment and preeminent symbol of the nation's identity, compelled Jews to reinvent themselves, to find other means of religious sustenance, and to adjust their lives to an indefinite period of displacement." (*Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, p. 117)

"The loss of the Jerusalem Temple also meant that the Jewish religion had to transform itself from a Temple-based, sacrificial cult to a culture rooted in domestic and local practices." (*Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, p. 163)

"The possibility that certain books might not be included in the canon and the institution of a category of "external books" (sefarim hitzonim) were the product of the rabbinic belief that prophecy had ceased with the destruction of the Temple." (*Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, p. 167)