

Introductory

This text has parallels in Matthew (24:1-14) and Luke (21:5-19). None of those texts are appointed to be read in the TLH one-year lectionary. In LW, Matthew 24:3-14 and this text are appointed to be read on Pentecost 25, Series A and B respectively.

Luke 21:5-19 is appointed for the Third-to-Last Sunday in Series C, and Matthew 24:1-14 is the alternate reading for the Second-to-Last Sunday. Luke 21:5-28 (29-36) is appointed to be read on Proper 28C in LSB.

We pick up this week where we left off last week. Jesus is in Jerusalem, it's Holy Week, and He has been teaching in the Temple. He has just finished warning the masses against the abuses of the Scribes and used the widow and her mite as an object lesson to teach about the true smallness or largeness of a person's giving to God.

Now He exits the Temple for the last time and heads for the Mount of Olives, just east of the city. He will return to the city, but not to the Temple. Google Maps puts the distance between those two places at 1K (.62 miles), and Mark tells us that part of the conversation on that very short journey had to do with the Temple.

Glancing at the magnificent structure in the rear-view mirror, an unnamed disciple makes a comment on the grandeur of the buildings. The response of Jesus to that comment had to have been chilling, as He tells what is in the future for Temple; its complete and total destruction. When they get to their destination, Jesus elaborates about the future.

We may want to brush up on Temple basics. Begin by distinguishing between Temple, of which there was only one at any given time, and synagogue, of which there are many, and some of the hearers may have seen one. There is a fairly sizable Jewish community in Rock Island, IL, served by the Tri-City Jewish Center.

I went to school with many of their members. Across the River in Davenport, you will find Temple Emmanuel, the first synagogue in the state of Iowa. In preaching, I will often reference those places of worship to bring a sense of reality to the concept of Judaism, and to help the hearer to understand that there are Jewish people in our community.

Those people actually "go to church" on Saturday, et al. Even in small-town Iowa, where there is not a large Jewish population, and where many may never even have knowingly

met a Jewish person, they can very well understand the concept of a Jewish community, and lots of other kinds of communities, in the city.

The one Temple was located on Mt. Zion. The first Temple was Solomon's Temple, a magnificent building, adorned extravagantly with precious metals and wood, as described in the OT. That Temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Nebuchadnezzar II in 587 B.C. Those twin events marked the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity.

The Second Temple is generally known as Ezra's Temple, and it was constructed by "The Remnant," Jews allowed to return from captivity to Jerusalem, beginning in 516 B.C. Ezra's Temple was dowdy as Solomon's was magnificent, and we are told that when the old men saw the new, they wept tears of sorrow, not of joy.

They had in their youth beheld the first building – and they cried on account of how the appearance of the new paled when compared to the old. The Temple at the time of Jesus approached the splendor of Solomon's Temple and was a truly magnificent building. Ezra's Temple was undergoing major work during His lifetime; a substantial make-over.

There seem to be scholarly differences of opinion as to whether to refer to the Temple in the time of Jesus as a third temple and call it Herod's Temple, or to call it a major rebuild of Ezra's (Second) Temple. It's like doing a major expansion and rebuild of any public building; a church, a ballpark, old college or university structures.

At some point the remodel, rebuild and expansion become an entirely new building that dwarfs the old and makes it almost inconsequential, architecturally speaking. When they landed the spacecraft on top of Soldier Stadium in Chicago, was that simply a major reno, or is it a new and different stadium? So, Herod's work on Temple.

John 2:20 indicates that it was common knowledge that the construction project took forty-six years to complete, and we have noted on previous occasions that this would have been considered quick work in the ancient construction world. For most of human history, such structures have been build using manual labor, tasks powered by human and animal muscle.

Medieval church builders measured building time by generation, not by year, and it was not unusual for those projects to take well over one hundred years. Construction on the Cologne Cathedral began in 1248 and was completed in the 19th Century, and even churches like the National and the reno on St. Louis Cathedral took a lot of time.

Of the city of Jerusalem and these buildings, Edersheim says that the city and buildings

stood out a mass of snowy marble and of gold, glittering in the sunlight against the halfencircled green background of Olivet. In all his wanderings the Jew had not seen a city like his own Jerusalem. Not Antioch in Asia, not even imperial Rome herself, excelled its architectural splendor. Nor has

there been, either in ancient or modern times, a sacred building equal to the Temple, whether for situation or magnificence... (*The Temple and its Service*).

We should explain again what happened to Temple; just what Jesus said would happen to it, happened to it. It was destroyed by the Romans in 70 B.C., and it hasn't been rebuilt, and Judaism has become what it was already becoming at the time of Jesus; a religion of the Book, not the Building.

The Muslims have built holy buildings on Temple Mount and that site is not coming down without a fight, and that's all okay because we don't need Temple and Temple stuff because we have Jesus, as the writer of the Hebrews says. It served its purpose, and it was good when it was there, and it is no longer needed.

If you talk like that, your hearer might wonder why her Fundamentalist neighbor and that guy on the radio are very keen on the idea that the Temple should be, has to be rebuilt so that Messiah can come. The hearer's neighbor probably doesn't know that Fundamentalist Jews also want to rebuild the Temple for the same reasons.

From the pulpit we proclaim the Gospel every Sunday, and along the way we teach people about our religion, understanding that one of the reasons why they come to church on Sunday morning is for the same reason that they listen to Christian radio and read Christian books; they want to learn more about our religion.

Like a good shepherd we lead them to those green pastures for feeding on the Word, and we also steer them away from dangerous or harmful food, i.e. false teaching. If we also listen to them, then we will know what they are thinking. If they spend a lot of time in the Christian bookstore or listening to Christian radio, they may say things not Lutheran

Especially for them, it is important to note that the signs of the end; war, earthquakes, famine, hatred, etc. have been there from the beginning. In fact, as we shall see, He says as much here. The Church has always, and still does, believe that the end is imminent, because the signs have always been there, but we just don't know exactly how imminent.

Textual Notes

1. When we last left Jesus, He was in the Temple, teaching, using a woman He had not brought from home as an object lesson to teach about the nature of Christian giving. Now, Mark tells us that “ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ - He was going out of the Temple,” and you wonder why He was leaving, and we are about to find out.

As they were journeying away from there, “λέγει αὐτῷ εἷς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ - one of His disciples says” to Him. The noun “μαθητῶν – disciples” is used in a general way to talk in a general way about people who are learning from another person. In this case, people have been learning from Jesus in Temple, and now they are following Him away from it.

To review, an “Apostle” is a category within the category of “disciple,” and the word refers to the Twelve (plus Luke’s Seventy, plus Paul, Matthias, and Barnabas). It was those disciples who had been sitting at the feet of Jesus, who had been learning from Him, who spoke to Him as they were leaving that magnificent building.

To review, an “Apostle” is a category within the category of “disciple,” and the word refers to the Twelve (plus Luke’s Seventy, plus Paul, Matthias, and Barnabas). They implore Jesus “Διδάσκαλε, ἴδε ποταποὶ λίθοι καὶ ποταπαὶ οἰκοδομαί – teacher, behold what kind of stones and the what kind of buildings.”

We note that the two nouns “stones” and “buildings” are plural in number, not singular, leaving it open as to whether those people were only talking about the Temple complex (made up of several separate buildings) or also talking about other buildings as well. Here Matthew and Luke assist, making it clear that he is talking only about the Temple complex.

These people who have been learning from Jesus are clearly interested in religion and may well even be religious, and they can appreciate a beautiful holy place as much as the next guy. The first time I walked into Canterbury Cathedral I was absolutely gob smacked, and the stained glass at places like St. Patrick in Dublin is truly magnificent.

Even some American churches have that effect. The National Cathedral in D.C. takes your breath away, as does the newly remodeled Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, MO. You have seen churches that are magnificent, and so have your hearers. Cause them to feel pathos by recalling how it felt to be in them, and their own church may do.

The people who wanted Jesus to comment on their worship space were justifiably proud of the facility, and they wanted Jesus to be on board with them in their awe.

The adjective “ποταπό – what kind of” occurs seven times in the NT, and two of those occurrences are here, used once each to modify both of those nouns; “stones” and “buildings.” There seems to be some uncertainty about the building material used to construct Herod’s Temple.

Edersheim – he says it in the above quote and in other places – thinks that marble was used, as does the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, but they were probably parroting Edersheim, who wrote in the later nineteenth century. Modern scholarship seems to be in agreement that limestone, not marble was used.

The Building

According to the Internet, some Canadian Baptists seem to know the most about recent excavations at the Temple. These particular Canadian Baptists are connected with Crandall University in New Brunswick, eh. Their web site contains a great deal of very thorough and very useful information about Temple and points out that,

The stones used are described by Josephus as ‘hard and white’ (lithoi leukoi te kai krataioi) (*Ant.* 15.11.3; 392).

<http://www.abu.nb.ca/courses/ntintro/jerusaltempl4.htm>.

Josephus’s description of Temple stones as “hard and white” could be applied to either limestone or marble, which can be found in a lot of colors, including white. An article republished last year, available at biblicalarcheology.org last year says that “Horizontally layered local limestone was used to build Herod’s Temple.”

An e-mail reply from Dr. Barry Smith of Crandall to my inquiry says that “the ashlar (blocks) used in the construction of Herod’s Temple were limestone. Parts of the outer wall still exist.”

Marble is more rare and expensive than limestone, and while it is often used as facing in ancient and modern times for large buildings, like the Washington Monument in D.C. and the Aon Center (Standard Oil Building) in Chicago, not many entire structures – the few include the Lincoln Memorial in D.C. and the Pantheon in Rome – are built entirely of marble. But we ought not to think that just because the Temple was not constructed with marble, but with limestone, that it was not magnificent.

When Americans think of limestone they think of the stuff you drive on and the dusty stuff that farmers spread on their fields. Cut limestone is actually a very desirable building stone, and pleasing to the eye. The Lutherans in Pittsburg, KS will speak with pride of their beautiful church made of Indiana Bedford Limestone. The WIK article on Indiana Limestone lists such buildings as the Empire State Building, the Pentagon, and Yankee Stadium as being made from limestone. The Temple was a pretty building, especially when the sunlight shone on it, and it seemed almost to glow.

But when the Jerusalemites wanted Jesus to behold the magnificent stones and buildings of the Temple, they were probably referencing the size and scale, rather than the stones themselves. The main structure was seventy feet high, and some of the stones used in construction weighed four hundred tons! When they exclaim to Jesus “what manner of stones and what buildings,” it sounds a lot like the sounds of awe that people make when looking at an awesome building. When I first entered Canterbury, I did not say “look at

how big this is,” nor does the hick from western Illinois say that on the occasion of his first visit to downtown Chicago. We make other sounds.

2. Jesus rains on the man’s parade, directing him to “βλέπεις ταύτας τὰς μεγάλας οἰκοδομὰς – See these large buildings,” and then directing them away from the buildings by telling them that they were not long for this world. We note that there is no indication that He takes any joy in telling them what will happen to this holy place in the near future.

By this time Judaism has been for several hundreds of years transitioning from being a religion of the Building, centered on the Temple and the Priestly work there, to becoming a religion of the Book. The Diaspora was the primary cause of that shift; as Jews moved away from the Building, it simply became a non-factor in their religious life.

The move from Building to Book could not have happened until the OT canon was fixed, and now that it was, it could, and it did. The synagogue became the Holy Place, replacing animal and other sacrifices with a service centered around the Word. Like us, both the sacrificial and the sacramental portions of the service drew heavily on the Bible for content.

So, they beckon Him look and He tells them “βλέπω – to see.” The verb is in the indicative mood, not the imperative, more a statement of the obvious than a command. They want Him to look at the buildings and behold their beauty, and He wants them to look at those same buildings and behold that they are going to be destroyed utterly.

Predicting the coming destruction of those buildings, He twice uses two negatives “οὐ” and “μὴ,” saying “οὐ μὴ ἀφεθῇ ὧδε λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον ὃς οὐ μὴ καταλυθῇ – there will not be left here one stone upon stone that will not be thrown down. In the American language, when we use two negatives, the second cancels out the first.

To say that a person “didn’t not go home” is to say that the person *did* go home. In the Greek language, when two negatives are used, it strengthens the negative. FGG calls “οὐ μὴ emphatic denial” (p. 193). Phrases like “over my dead body” and “no way” or “no way in heck” come to mind as ways that we might express emphatic denial in our language.

We might take His emphatic denial about there being even one “stone on stone” to be hyperbole, a figure of speech that He uses in other places, except that when Josephus describes the state of Jerusalem and Herod’s Temple after the Romans got done destroying them, it sounds like not one stone was left upon another stone.

Clarke, quoting Josephus @ biblehub.com, says,

“This part of our Lord's prediction was fulfilled in the most literal manner. War, book vii. c. 1: ‘Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the whole city and temple, τε πολιν ἀπασαν καὶ τὸν νεὼν κατασκεπτειν, except the three towers, Phaselus, Hippicus, and Mariamne, and a part of the

western wall, and these were spared; but, for all the rest of the wall, it was laid so completely even with the ground, by those who dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.

Clark continues to quote,

Maimonides, a Jewish rabbin, in Tract. Taanith, c. 4, says, ‘That the very foundations of the temple were dugged up, according to the Roman custom.’ His words are these: "On that ninth day of the month Ab, fatal for vengeance, the wicked Turnus Rufus, of the children of Edom, ploughed up the temple, and the places round about it, that the saying might be fulfilled, Zion shall be ploughed as a field." This Turnus, or rather Terentius Rufus, was left general of the army by Titus, with commission, as the Jews suppose, to destroy the city and the temple, as Josephus observes.

It should not surprise us that the Romans were so thorough in their destruction of the main city of Judaism and their holy place. Theirs was a culture that very highly regarded the rule of law, and there was no greater crime than treason, and rebellion was always dealt with harshly, and the Jews rebelled much.

In a manner reminiscent of Carthage, they furthermore dispersed these people by rendering utterly uninhabitable their cultural, geographic, social, and religious center. The only part not destroyed is the “western wall” commonly called the “wailing wall,” not actually a part of the buildings, but what we would call a “retaining wall” to hold back earth.

It worked. Until the beginning of the last century, the inhabitants of the city were numbered in the ten thousands, or even in the thousands. Approaching two thousand years since the Romans laid it waste, due to the Zionist movement and a little help from her Christian friends, Jerusalem is now a modern, growing city with a population nearing one million.

But the Temple has not been rebuilt, and as far as I can tell it will not be rebuilt anytime soon. While the Muslims controlled Jerusalem, they built the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque on Temple Mount. If you’re going to build a Temple, they you’re going to have to tear down those buildings, with predictable results.

But that’s okay; we have Jesus. I would expect Jewish fundamentalists to desire a Temple, but fundamentalist Christians who want to do that are troubling. Do they understand the Person and Work of Christ, and have they read the book of Hebrews, and do they hear what people like Paul and Jesus say about Judaism in the Age of the Christ?

3. He is leaving the Temple in Jerusalem, where He had been teaching, destination the Mount of Olives, where we find Him “καθημένον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν – sitting

on the mountain of the Olives,” which is said to be “κατέναντι τοῦ ἱεροῦ - opposite the Temple.” The preposition has connotations of “opposite, in front (of), over against.”

This spot has become something of a home base for Jesus and His followers. This isn’t the only time we find Him and them here, and they will famously go there on Maundy Thursday to pray and to be betrayed. Mark makes Temple and Mt. Olive and either/or; compare and contrast what happens in Temple with what happens on this mountain.

As far as classrooms go, the Temple is the place where teaching would normally take place. That teaching would normally take place by Scribes, and He has just told them what He thinks of the Scribes. It’s almost like He wanted to take them out of that toxic theological climate and get them away to this place where He could teach without all that baggage.

Some of them “ἐπηρώτα αὐτὸν κατ’ ἰδίαν – asked Him among themselves,” and they are names “ἰδίαν Πέτρος καὶ Ἰάκωβος καὶ Ἰωάννης καὶ Ἀνδρέας – behold Peter and James and John and Andrew.” The translations have this dual pair of fishers asking Jesus in “private,” and Jesus assumes the teaching position; “καθημένου αὐτοῦ - He was sitting.”

4. This appears to be a teachable moment, “Εἰπὼν ἡμῖν, πότε ταῦτα ἔσται, καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα – Tell us, when these things will be, and what will be the sign that these things are all to be concluded.” The aorist imperative of λέγω, an exhortation to Him to “tell us,” actually turns out to be a two-part question.

The first part is a question about time and timing, especially about the timing of the destruction of the Temple, “πότε ταῦτα ἔσται – when will this be?” The second part is about a related topic; they want to know what “sign – σημεῖον” will indicate that the time is here “μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα – when all things conclude.”

The verb συντελέω means that something that was supposed to reach completion has now reached that completion. Unlike religions who teach that everything – including life – is just one big circle, the Christian religion teaches that this thing not only has a beginning, but that history is going somewhere, and this thing also has an end.

5. It is extremely noteworthy that the first words out of the mouth of Jesus in response to the question about the End Times and the signs of its coming are a caution to not be led astray in this matter by false teachers. Looking around and looking at history, we would voice the same warning; there’s a lot out there, and most of it is wrong

There have been in the church a plethora of false teachers throughout her entire history, and twentieth century Americans had tired of nineteenth century false alarms about the End times, but with the establishment of the nation of Israel post – WWII, the thing has gotten entirely out of hand. There’s a lot out there, and most of it is wrong.

Mark tells us that Jesus “ἤρξατο λέγειν αὐτοῖς – began to say to them” The aorist verb “began – ἤρξατο” is a clear indication that what He is about to say is a direct response to their questions. In a warning manner, using the same word He used to warn about the Scribes, He says “βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ - see that none should lead you astray,”

The present imperative form of the verb βλέπετε is “abnormal...usually focusing upon some special connection between the doer and the action to be done” (FGG 219). According to Voelz, those connections can be: demands for continual action, repeated action, emphatic action, or “signal action to commence.”

How about all of the above? Jesus recognizes that when He is gone from this earth, He will no longer be on this earth, and that people will mistakenly or deliberately misrepresent His words. He also knows that when that happens, when He is gone, people will no longer be able to directly ask Him – like these men are asking Him – clarifying questions.

The thing warned about, that somebody would lead you “astray” occurs here as an aorist subjunctive (πλανήσῃ) and biblehub says that it means “properly, go astray, get off-course; to *deviate* from the correct path (circuit, course), *roaming* into error, *wandering*; (passive) be misled.” In the next verse, the word is used in the future tense.

6. He further explains that “ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι μου – many will come in My Name.” As we have noted before, “name” carried more weight in that day than it does in ours. Your name encompassed your very being, as when God calls Himself “I am,” and name also often meant power, like when proclaiming or doing things “in the name of Jesus.”

The concept comes down to us in phrases like “my good name,” a phrase that you don’t hear as much as you used to, and concepts like enhancing or disparaging the family name, i.e. the surname. It also comes down to us in TV preachers and other charlatans doing odd things using “the name of Jesus,” and see the Second Commandment.

What He is clearly saying here is that people will come after Him who will say that they are Him. What they are specifically saying about themselves is “ἐγὼ εἰμι, - I am.” Most of the translations feel a need to add a predicate nominative, having Jesus say that He is something; the Christ, the Messiah, He, etc.

They mean well, but they lose the essence of the statement for their English readers. We may recognize the term “ἐγὼ εἰμι, - I am” from its many occurrences in John. It is the personal name of God, the name first told to Moses from the burning bush, the one that captures the essence of Jesus impersonators, which are actually legion.

The verb here translated “saying” is the present active participle “λέγοντες,” i.e. they said it more than once. The false Christ proclaims to anybody, anywhere, anytime that he is the Christ, sent from God, that he is God. From this time until the present, at any given time there is any number of false Christs in the world.

We don't hear about them probably because nobody cares, probably because they are quickly recognized for the goofballs that they are. A gain a following, like Rev. Sun Myung Moon and David Koresh. For a listing of others who have claimed to be Jesus and gotten noticed, see the WIK article entitled, "List of people claimed to be Jesus."

And sadly, what Jesus says will happen – the future tense of that verb that also occurred in the previous verse – actually does happen; many are lead astray by those false Christs, and we fear that something worse than the fires of Waco will greet them in the afterlife. It is for that reason that Jesus and us talk about those people and condemn their teachings.

7. He now says that "when you hear of wars and reports (ἄκοὰς) of wars, you should not be disturbed – θροεῖσθε." The verb is a present imperative middle/passive of θροέω – to be upset and maybe to cry out in anguish over an upsetting thing, the kinds of things that war brings; death, destruction, pain and suffering.

The translations generally render ἄκοὰς as "rumors," and we must conclude that what we have here is yet another case of LBT (Lazy Bible Translator Syndrome). The KJV has "rumors," which in 1611 meant "reports," but the word has sort of morphed in the last five hundred years to mean something completely different, hasn't it?

We hear reports of wars, meaning that they are actually going on, but rumors are things we hear about the reclusive neighbors or that one unmarried co-worker. When you hear about those wars, the reason why you should not be disturbed is "δεῖ γενέσθαι ἀλλ' οὐπω τὸ τέλος, - it is necessary to happen, but not yet (is) the completion."

If you haven't done that word study on "δεῖ," then this would be a good time to do that. The word refers to an uncomfortable thing or things, products of a fallen world, and that will be followed by a comfortable thing or things. It is because of sin that war exists, and wars, even the "just war" would not exist if not for sin.

We who grew up with Vietnam tend to think of war as inherently bad, a view that holds sway for most of the western world, but we haven't always thought like that. In *Occidentalism; the West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*, Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit say that at the turn of the twentieth century it was a given that war was good.

Among other things, war was a way to keep young men strong. David Steyn, in *America Alone*, makes the case that war is good for nations, and at any rate, it seems as if the more we try to avoid war, the more wars there are. Those things will happen, Jesus says, and then adds emphatically "ἀλλ – but not yet (is) the completion."

8. He continues to talk about war, making it more personal, putting it in terms of "ἔθνος ἐπ' ἔθνος καὶ βασιλεία ἐπὶ βασιλείαν – ethnic group against ethnic group and kingdom

against kingdom.” This verse and verses like it often use the word “nations” or “Gentiles” for “ἔθνος.” The best translation is neither.

When you see the word “Gentile” in an English translation, you will find the word “ἔθνος” in the original. The word “Gentile” is not really a part of the vernacular, unless you are a Jew or a Mormon, and “nation” is better but not the best. In the world of Jesus, you were either Jewish or “ἔθνος,” and that was almost completely a racial distinction.

There was a time when “ἔθνος” essentially mean the same thing as “nation,” and so it made perfect sense for the KJV to translate this word “nation.” If you lived in England in 1611, you were almost certainly English – especially since the Jews had been expelled from England long ago, but not so much today.

These days, a few nations are ethnically homogeneous, but a lot of them are not. It’s not like we don’t understand the concept of “ethnic group.” From the genesis of our nation, we Americans have been dealing with it, and we probably know better than most about getting along with other ethnic groups, and we’re actually pretty good at it.

Jesus then predicts that there will be earthquakes and famines and calls them “ἡ ἀρχὴ τῶν ὀδυνῶν ταῦτα. – the beginning of birth pangs.” If you know anything about birth pangs, then you know that the first pain is merely a precursor to the pain that is to come, and that the worst pain for a woman comes in the actual delivery of the child.

9. Again using the present imperative “Βλέπετε – see, beware,” He makes it clear that what He is about to say is not about things to come in the distant future, but that they will happen to “you yourselves - ὑμεῖς αὐτοὺς.” What follows is a litany of things that will happen to them, and they will actually happen to them pretty soon.

The things also sound a lot like things that have already happened or will in just a few days happen to Jesus; they will be handed over to the Sanhedrin and the synagogue, they will be beaten, they will be brought before governors and kings. Taking ownership, He says that all of these things will happen, “ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ – because of me.”

According to the Helps word studies (at biblehub.com), the preposition ἕνεκεν (because) “introduces the *basis* (*root-cause*) which shapes (determines) the end-outcome of the verbal idea.” It is because of Jesus, and because they follow Jesus, and because they proclaim Jesus, that they are persecuted in these ways.

But their suffering, unlike much suffering, will not be in vain, but has a purpose; “εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς – for a testimony to them.” As is often the case with Jesus, contact with oppressors is seen as opportunity to testify to Jesus and the things of Jesus. Much of the work of missionaries has historically been done in the midst of suffering.

The four who are named, and whoever else is there and hearing this, will be able to testify, in a courtroom sense, to others about things that they have witnessed. In the last three years, a lot of people have seen and heard a lot of things about and from Jesus, and they can bear witness to others what they have heard and seen.

Of particular importance are those who can bear witness regarding what will become the preeminent theological question in first century Palestine; did Jesus rise from the dead, or didn't He? At the beginning of that wonderful Resurrection chapter, Paul says (I Cor 1:6) Paul names names, and then says that over five hundred people saw Jesus alive after death.

It was often the proclamation of the Resurrection that raised the ire of listeners, in Acts and in other places. The question was always considered a closed question by Christians until modern times when, sadly, a lot of pastors, mimicking their seminary teachers, feed the flock on the dung of the alleged rotting, stinking corpse of a dead Messiah.

10. Having spoken in v. 8 of the “ἔθνος,” He references them again here, instructing His disciples to go to them first “εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη πρῶτον – into all the non-Jews.” This verse and Matthew 24:14 seem to be the basis for the fundamentalist belief that the Second Coming will not take place until the Gospel is proclaimed to every last group of people.

When that happens, they teach, then Jesus will come. When that happened in the early 50s, those people openly wondered where's Jesus? In this Internet age, they must wonder it even more. But the Matthew verse does not teach that, and this one teaches an old idea in the teaching of Jesus to His disciples; go first to other people, and then to our people.

Mark's account (6:7-13) of the sending of the Twelve does not include any specific instruction to which group of people they should go to first, but Matthew's account (10:6) tells them to go to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” It is noteworthy that He does not tell them to go first to the house of Judah, but of Israel, which is lost.

Presumably it would not have been as palatable to them to go to that group as it would have been to go to their own people, and hence our old friend “δεῖ,” as in “it is necessary - δεῖ κηρυχθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον – that the Gospel should be preached. How else to explain and account for the “δεῖ” in that sentence?

The number of seminarians who want to go overseas to work with people not like us is small. Most want to work with people who are like us. These words and words like them may have been the only thing keeping the Twelve and the rest going as they were one by one – except for John – being persecuted and martyred by people strange to them.

11. He now tells them in no uncertain terms exactly what to expect when they go with the Gospel to those who are not like us; “ὅταν ἄγωσιν ὑμᾶς παραδιδόντες – when they should lead you away and deliver you up” is stated not as an “if,” but as a when; this is going to happen, you are going to be led away and arrested.

If Jesus was the social liberator that Liberation Theologians think, then at this point He would have been instructing His followers on how to do things like: wreak havoc, avoid prison, and oppose The Man. He does not, and instead of telling them that, He seems to assume that the only thing that they will do is speak, and He's talking about preaching.

He knows that speaking under the circumstances under which they will be laboring will be hard and tells them not to worry about what to say “ἀλλ’ ὁ ἐὰν δοθῇ ὑμῖν ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ, τοῦτο λαλεῖτε – but whatever might be given you in that hour, speak.” The emphatic “but” is in contrast to preaching anxiety for those commanded (present imperative) to preach.

There is a reason why they don't need to be anxious about preaching, “οὐ γάρ ἐστε ὑμεῖς οἱ λαλοῦντες ἀλλὰ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον – because it is not you the preaching, but the Holy Spirit.” This happens when the preacher does his exegesis, and the sermon grows out of that exegesis, so that he is actually preaching God's Word.

If you look at some of the preaching and confessing done by Christians in the book of Acts, we see just this sort of thing coming to pass. Whether we're talking about Peter and John or later on Stephan or Paul, their words are the right words for the situation. We might even say that they spoke God's Word, because they did.

12. But wait. There's more. A man will deliver his brother for arrest even if it means death to the brother who is delivered. Fathers will do the same to their children. In other cases, children will turn on and turn in their own parents, and thereby “θανατώσουσιν αὐτούς – put them to death,” an extremely abnormal thing in a civilized society.

These things all happened then, and they still happen now. Blood is thicker than water, but religion is one of the few things that can be thicker than blood. But they don't happen in America because we have freedom of religion. We are unusual in that regard, but the movement seems to be catching in the West, but in the East not so much.

13. But wait. There's more. “καὶ ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου – and you will be hated by all on account of my name.” That term “my name” means that it is at the calling and directing of Jesus that preachers preach the Gospel. He is the one Who, working through the Church, authorizes people to do that.

He is also the one who works through that word, which is His Word, to work miracles in the hearts of sinners; to make them Christians. And what will they get for their troubles? To be hated by “all” seems to be hyperbole, but not by much, and it's probably worse some places than others, and sometimes people even love us.

To those pioneers of the Faith, going as they were to Gentiles and pagans, people who were different from them, it must have seemed like the whole world was against them. To the modern American missionary, going to people with whom he has little in common, it must seem like the same thing, and increasingly it seems like it to the faithful American Pastor.

Oh, and one more thing, “ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος, οὗτος σωθήσεται – whoever endures to the end will be saved.” He’s talking about enduring until the last day, or until death, whichever come first. The promise is that if we make it that far, we will receive the eternal salvation of our souls. It almost makes it worth it, doesn’t it?

Law/Gospel

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