



The ancient temple in Jerusalem was considered one of the great wonders of the ancient world. It was set on a massive platform whose retaining walls rose 150 feet above the floor of the Kidron Valley. The platform itself occupied more than 35 acres and was extended for more than a mile around its outer edges.

An ancient Roman historian concluded that its exterior “wanted nothing that could astound the mind or the eye.” Some of the stones used in the construction of the temple were forty-two feet long, eleven feet high, fourteen feet deep, and weighed over a million pounds. The magnitude of the temple platform and the stones used in its construction exceeded those of every other temple in the ancient world in their scope and size (Strauss p. 569).

The temple itself rose another 15 stories above the plaza. Its walls were covered in gold plates, which reflected the sun with ‘so fiery a flash that persons straining to look at it were compelled to avert their eyes. (Strauss p. 569)

A famous rabbinic proverb said, “He who has not seen Herod’s temple has never seen a beautiful building in his life.”

As impressive as the temple was, Jesus predicted, “Not one stone will be left on another.” The destruction of the temple, which occurred a mere forty years after Jesus’ prediction, marked the beginning of the end.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE (vv. 1-4)

1. Why would the temple have been a source of wonder and national pride for those who believed in the One True God and were born into the nation of Israel? What are some of the things in which we take great pride as a nation? What are some of the things we take personal pride in?
2. How was Israel’s pride misplaced? What are some ways our nationalistic pride can be misplaced? What are some ways our personal pride can be misplaced?
3. What should we ultimately take pride in?

SIGNS THAT ARE NOT REALLY SIGNS (vv. 5-12)

1. While Jesus’ disciples asked him for a definitive sign, Jesus begins by listing many things that people look to as signs, but are really not signs

at all. What are some of the general conditions we might expect to live under as we await the return of Christ?

2. How does Jesus’ warning prepare us for living as Christians in a culture that is becoming increasingly hostile to Christ and the truth of the gospel?
3. What should be our priority as we live in the “final days”?
4. How can we expect God’s help, as we stand up for our faith in difficult and trying circumstances?
5. What do you think are some of the general prerequisites for the Holy Spirit to use us as we take a stand for Christ in difficult and trying times?

TWO INDESCRIBABLE SIGNS (vv. 14-27)

1. What are the two signs that Jesus mentions in these verses that indicate the end is near?
2. Daniel first predicted the “abomination that causes desolation” and his prophecy was partially fulfilled a couple of centuries later when the Greek general Antiochus Epiphanies occupied the temple. The prediction is picked up by Jesus, and would find partial fulfillment in the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. Its fullest and final fulfillment will come at the end of the age. How would you explain the difference between “near” and “far” fulfillment of prophecy? How does this help you understand and fill out the biblical story?
3. How will God’s grace show up in the destruction of the temple and in the final days?
4. How will God’s grace ultimately be revealed?

TWO STORIES THAT PREPARE US FOR WHAT LIES AHEAD (vv. 28-37)

1. How would you describe the lesson of the fig tree? What are some of the general signs that we are living in the last days?
2. How would you describe the lesson of the man going on a journey? How does it prepare us for life in the last days?
3. Go back through this entire passage and mark all commands (you can skip the commands about running for the hills in verses 14-20). What do these commands tell us about how we should live in light of Christ’s immanent return?