

# EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

*And Many Explanatory Notes.*

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LUKE XXI. 5–9.

<p>5 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,</p> <p>6 <i>As for</i> these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.</p> <p>7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign</p>	<p>will <i>there be</i> when these things shall come to pass?</p> <p>8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am <i>Christ</i>; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.</p> <p>9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.</p>
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LET us notice in this passage, *our Lord Jesus Christ's words about the temple at Jerusalem*. We read that some spake of it, "how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts." They praised it for its outward beauty; they admired its size, its architectural grandeur, and its costly decorations: but they met with no response from our Lord. We read that He said, "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

These words were a striking prophecy. How strange and startling they must have sounded to Jewish ears, an English mind can hardly conceive. They were spoken of a building which every Israelite regarded with almost idolatrous veneration; they were spoken of a building which contained the ark, the holy of holies, and the symbolical furniture formed on a pattern given by God Himself. They were spoken of a building associated with most of the principal names in Jewish history; with David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah. They were spoken of a building towards which every devout Jew turned his face in every quarter of the world, when he offered up his daily prayers. (1 Kings viii. 44; Jonah ii. 4; Dan. vi. 10.) But they were words spoken advisedly. They were spoken in order to teach us the mighty truth that the true glory of a place of worship does not consist in outward ornaments. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth." (1 Sam. xvi. 7.) Man looketh at the outward appearance of a building: the Lord looks for spiritual worship, and the presence of the Holy Ghost. In the temple at Jerusalem these things were utterly wanting, and therefore Jesus Christ could take no pleasure in it.

Professing Christians will do well to remember our Lord's words in the present day. It is meet and right, beyond doubt, that buildings set apart for Christian worship should be worthy of the purpose for which they are used. Whatever is done for Christ ought to be well done. The house in which the Gospel is preached, and the Word of God read, and prayer offered up, ought to lack nothing that can make it comely and substantial; but let it never be forgotten that the material part of a Christian Church is by far the least important part of it. The fairest combinations of marble, and stone, and wood,

and painted glass, are worthless in God's sight, unless there is truth in the pulpit, and grace in the congregation. The dens and caves in which the early Christians used to meet, were probably far more beautiful in the eyes of Christ, than the noblest cathedral that was ever reared by man. The temple in which the Lord Jesus delights most, is a broken and contrite heart, renewed by the Holy Ghost.

Let us notice, for another thing in this passage, *our Lord Jesus Christ's solemn warning against deception*. His striking words about the temple drew from His disciples an important question: "Master, when shall these things be? and what sign will there be, when these things shall come to pass?" Our Lord's reply to that question was long and full. And it began with a pointed caution, "Take heed that ye be not deceived."

The position which this caution occupies is very remarkable. It stands in the forefront of a prophecy of vast extent and universal importance to all Christians; a prophecy reaching from the day in which it was delivered, to the day of the second advent; a prophecy revealing matters of the most tremendous interest both to Jews and Gentiles; and a prophecy of which a large portion remains yet to be fulfilled. And the very first sentence of this wondrous prophecy is a caution against deception: "Take heed that ye be not deceived."

The necessity of this caution has been continually proved in the history of the Church of Christ. On no subject perhaps have divines made so many mistakes as in the interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy; on no subject have they shown so completely the weakness of man's intellect, and confirmed so thoroughly the words of St. Paul, "We see through a glass darkly:—we know in part." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) Dogmatism, positiveness, controversial bitterness, obstinacy in maintaining untenable positions, rash assertions and speculations, have too often brought discredit on the whole subject of the prophetic Scriptures, and caused the enemies of Christianity to blaspheme. There are only too many books on prophetic interpretation, on the title-pages of which might be justly written, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?"

Let us learn, from our Lord's warning words, to pray for a humble teachable spirit, whenever we open the pages of unfulfilled prophecy. Here, if anywhere, we need the heart of a little child, and the prayer, "Open thou mine eyes." (Psalm cxix. ] 8.) Let us beware, on the one side, of that lazy indifference which turns away from all prophetic Scripture, on account of its difficulties; let us beware, on the other side, of that dogmatical and arrogant spirit, which makes men forget that they are students, and talk as confidently as if they were prophets themselves. Above all, let us read prophetic Scripture with a thorough conviction that the study carries with it a blessing, and that more light may be expected on it every year. The promise

remains in full force: "Blessed is he that readeth. At the time of the end, the vision shall be unsealed." (Rev. i. 3; Dan. xii. 9.)

NOTES. LUKE XXI. 5-9.

5.—[*Some spake...temple.*] The feeling with which all Jews, in our Lord's time, regarded the temple, was something far beyond what we can imagine in the present day. This should be borne in mind, in order to estimate rightly the effect which our Lord's words, in this place, must have produced on those who heard them.

[*Goodly stones.*] The enormous size of the stones with which the temple was built by Herod at its last restoration, is specially mentioned by Josephus. He says that "many of them were about twenty-five cubits in length, eight in height, and twelve in breadth." A cubit was about twenty-two inches of our measure.

[*Gifts.*] Tacitus, the Roman historian, and Josephus, the Jewish writer, both mention the enormous riches contained in the temple, consisting chiefly of offerings given by pious persons, or by rulers who wished to testify respect for the building. In particular there was a golden vine given by Herod, with clusters of grapes as tall as a man. Many of these offerings were suspended in the portico of the temple, so that all could see them.

6.—[*Not be left one stone upon another.*] These words were literally fulfilled when Titus took Jerusalem, and Turrus Rufus, one of his officers, ploughed up the foundations of the temple.

It may be well to remember that these words do not necessarily apply to the substructure on the side of the hill on which the temple stood. There are remains of a wall built of enormous stones still seen at Jerusalem, which the best informed travellers agree in thinking must have been standing when our Lord spoke this prophecy.

Burkitt remarks, "Sin will undermine and blow up the most magnificent and famous structure. Sin brings cities and kingdoms, as well as particular persons, to their end."

8.—[*Take heed...be not deceived.*] The caution given by our Lord is very significant. The mistakes that theologians have made about the fulfilment of prophecy, in every age of the Church, have been many and great. In our own day we see some putting a literal meaning on figurative prophecy, and others putting a figurative meaning on literal prophecy.—Some can see nothing but "the Church" in passages where Israel is mentioned. Others can see nothing but Israel in every prophecy in the Bible.—Some say that nearly all prophecy is fulfilled. Others say that it is nearly all unfulfilled.—Some see the Church of Rome everywhere in prophecy. Others cannot see Rome in prophecy at all.—Some can see no antichrist except the Pope. Others can see no antichrist except a future general antichrist yet to be revealed.—Some think that events around us are fulfilling the book of Revelation. Others think that every word of Revelation remains yet to be fulfilled.—Amidst this tangled maze of discordant opinions, we need greatly the solemn warning of our Lord: "Take heed that ye be not deceived."

[*Many shall come saying...I am Christ.*] There were many impostors who appeared in the latter days of Jewish history, who pretended to be the Messiah. It must not surprise us if some in like manner shall arise and make similar claims about the time of the second advent of Christ.

9.—[*By and by.*] The Greek word so rendered is almost always translated in the New Testament, "immediately," "forthwith," or "straightway." This is clearly the meaning in this place.