

The Days of Vengeance (Luke 21:22)

© Evert van Voorthuizen, April 2025.

Email: preteristadvocate@gmail.com.

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(Note: All underlining of Scripture quotations for emphasis has been added by the author.)

Luke 21:20-32:

²⁰ *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that her desolation is near.*

²¹ *Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country stay out of the city.*

²² *For these are the days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.*

²³ *How miserable those days will be for pregnant and nursing mothers! For there will be great distress upon the land and wrath against this people.*

²⁴ *They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations.*

And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

...

²⁷ *"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

²⁸ *When these things begin to happen, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."*

...

³¹ *"So also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.*

³² *Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened."*

This article focuses on Luke 21:22, underlined above.

Specifically, we will attempt to understand how the events associated with the 70 AD Roman destruction of Jerusalem constituted "the days of vengeance" that fulfilled all that is written.

It is well known that Jesus, in the Nazareth synagogue, excludes from his citation of Isaiah 61:1-2 the phrase "the day of vengeance of our God". See Luke 4:18-19.

But in this, the last week of his public ministry, having been rejected by the Jewish leaders and the people as a whole, he now specifically refers to such days.

The verses cited above from Luke 21 constitute a part of Jesus' Olivet Discourse, which is related also in Matthew 24 – 25 and Mark 13.

Jesus is here responding to the disciples' question concerning the temple's destruction (Lk 21:5-7; Mt 24:1-3).

Some further points from Luke 21:

- All of the described events would transpire in that generation (21:32).
- Jesus ties his second coming to the fall of Jerusalem (21:27).
- Jesus' followers were to "lift up [their] heads" because their "redemption" was drawing near (21:28).
- And they were to recognize that God's kingdom was imminent (21:31).

Which Days?

Jesus is clearly anticipating the Jewish-Roman War of 66-70 AD, which culminated in the five-month siege of Jerusalem by the Roman army. The temple and city were destroyed and the Jewish nation terminated. Vast numbers perished in this war; according to Josephus, 1.1 million Jews perished in Jerusalem alone. The War constituted for the Jews the Great Tribulation— a time of great suffering the scale of which would never be repeated (Mt 24:21).

A question naturally arises:

How do we know Jesus here isn't speaking about some latter days' war still in our future?

Answer: This is patently evident from Luke 21 itself:

When YOU see these things happening ... (21:31).

That generation would be the one to witness ALL these events (21:32).

Indeed, they and their contemporaries would (in some sense) see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, etc. (21:30).

We need to keep in mind that Jesus frequently refers to the events of the coming War.

Not just here in the Olivet Discourse, but also in Luke 19:41-44; 23:28-30.

Some of his parabolic teaching alludes to it as well: Matthew 21:33-46; 22:1-7; Luke 13:1-8; 19:27.

The Jewish War of 66-70 AD was not just one Day of the LORD / Day of Vengeance amongst others.

No, it represented the definitive fulfillment of Old Testament judgment prophecies.

How might this be so?

Especially since vengeance (in the Old Testament) is mostly directed against foreign oppressors — not the nation of Israel?

The answer to such questions is the subject of this article.

In fulfillment of all that is written

It is interesting that Matthew and Mark, in their reporting of the Olivet Discourse, omit Jesus' statement concerning the days of vengeance. No doubt the evangelists took great care when selecting which parts of the Discourse to include. We can put Luke's inclusion of this statement down to his interest in prophetic fulfillment. In both his gospel and its sequel (the book of Acts), Luke has a unique focus on the fulfillment of Old Testament promises and prophecy.

One sees this in his reporting of the "songs" of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon (Lk 1:46-55; 1:68-79; 2:29-32), his references to Israel's "redemption" and "consolation" (Lk 2:25, 38; 24:21) to be fulfilled through God's messianic Servant (cf. Isa 52:9), along with anticipations of the promised kingdom (Lk 21:31; 23:51; Ac 1:6).

Then we have Jesus' own declarations concerning prophetic fulfillment (Lk 4:21; 22:37; 24:25-27, 44-47), Luke's accounts of apostolic preaching (e.g., Ac 2:16ff.; 13:26ff.; 15:15-18; 26:22-23), and the way he summarizes the gospel as the proclamation of God's promised kingdom (Lk 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; Ac 1:3; 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31).

Given Luke's focus on fulfillment, the question arises as to what precisely was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning coming vengeance and judgment?

Two general categories should be considered:

1. Vengeance prophecies.

These often involve vengeance on the enemies and oppressors of God's people; in these instances, God's vengeance is connected to Israel's salvation.

Isaiah foretells specific days of vengeance on the nations, especially Edom (Isa 34:8; 61:2; 63:4).

Jeremiah similarly foretells vengeance against Babylon (Jer 50:15, 28; 51:6, 11, 24, 56).

However, sometimes the enemies are within Israel herself — often the nation's leaders.

2. Day of the LORD prophecies. These were directed:

Against Gentile nations: Babylon (Isa 13:6, 9); Egypt (Jer 46:10; Eze 30:3); Edom and other nations (Ob 1:15); the surrounding nations (Joel 3:14).

Against the apostates of Israel (Isa 2:12; Am 5:18) and Judah (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; Zeph 1:7, 14; Mal 4:5).

Note that such judgment would generally take the form of foreign invasion.

And it is often described using exaggerated apocalyptic language: cosmic or de-creation imagery.¹

¹ See page 9.

God's vengeance in the Pentateuch

With the exception of the vengeance inflicted on the Midianites in Numbers 31, vengeance in the Pentateuch relates to Israel herself:

Vengeance is threatened on account of Israel's own inevitable unfaithfulness to Yahweh and his covenant.

Leviticus 26:23-26

²³ *And if in spite of these things you do not accept My discipline, but continue to walk in hostility toward Me,*

²⁴ *then I will act with hostility toward you, and I will strike you sevenfold for your sins.*

²⁵ *And I will bring a sword against you to execute the vengeance of the covenant.*

Though you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

²⁶ *When I cut off your supply of bread, ...*

Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 detail both the blessings Israel would enjoy for obedience to God's covenant and the curses that God would inflict for disobedience. It is important to note here:

- "Vengeance of the covenant" (26:25) denotes punishment for covenant apostasy — for rebellion against the stipulations of the Mosaic Law. (Many versions have vengeance *for* the covenant here.)
- God threatens sevenfold punishment for disobedience (26:24; also in vss. 18, 21, 28).
- There is a triad of punishment: sword, famine, and plague (26:25-26).
- All this applies to Israel in covenant relationship with Yahweh, not to foreign nations that are not so privileged (cf. Amos 3:2).

Deuteronomy 32 (The Song of Moses)

Moses recited the words of this song to the whole Israelite assembly (Dt 31:30; 32:44).

He both recounts Israel's past ingratitude and anticipates her future apostasy and the resultant outpouring of God's covenant wrath upon the nation.

Concerning Israel, Moses declares (32:32-33):

³² *But their vine is from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah.*

Their grapes are poisonous; their clusters are bitter.

³³ *Their wine is the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras.*

Three of the subsequent verses specifically mention God's vengeance: verses 35, 41, 43.

In verse 35, God declares:

"Vengeance is Mine; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip;

for their day of disaster is near, and their doom is coming quickly."

God will judge Israel for her apostasy.

In verse 36, Moses declares:

For the LORD will vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants

when He sees that their strength is gone and no one remains, slave or free.

This verse seems to be something of a transition, where judgment gives way to compassion:
Moses now suggests that God will vindicate and show compassion to his chastised and humbled people.
Are these “servants” perhaps the faithful remnant within the nation — those who survive his judgments?

In verse 41, God declares:

*“when I sharpen My flashing sword, and My hand grasps it in judgment,
I will take vengeance on My adversaries and repay those who hate Me.”*

In verse 43, Moses concludes his Song:

*Rejoice, O heavens, with Him, and let all God’s angels worship Him.
Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His children.
He will take vengeance on His adversaries and repay those who hate Him;
He will cleanse His land and His people.*

God will avenge the shed blood of his children (32:43).

But just who are the adversaries in these latter verses? Are they foreign nations?

Yet it is these very nations that are bidden to rejoice along with God’s people.

Whatever the case, God will take vengeance on his enemies who hate him.

And despite Israel’s unfaithfulness, God will ultimately forgive them and restore them to their land.

We should also consider some other terms Moses uses to describe Israel

Verse 5 (my translation):

*They have corrupted themselves; they are not his children, but blemished —
a generation perverse and crooked.*

Verse 20 (ESV):

*“And he said, ‘I will hide my face from them; I will see what their end will be,
for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.’”*

Note the terms used: “perverse and crooked generation”; “perverse generation”; “no faithfulness”.

(The Hebrew words translated “perverse” are different in these two verses.)

Vengeance on the nations in the Prophets

Looking ahead now to the Old Testament (OT) prophets, divine vengeance is often directed against the enemies and oppressors of God’s people. Such vengeance is directly linked to Israel’s own deliverance.

An important point here:

The specific phrase “day of vengeance”, occurs three times in Isaiah: in 34:8; 61:2, 63:4.

It’s very likely that Jesus in Luke 21:22 had these passages in mind.

The phrase is also found in Jeremiah 46:10.

Vengeance in Isaiah

Both Isaiah 61:1-3 and 63:1-6 relate to the redemptive accomplishments of Yahweh's Servant, who was first introduced in Isaiah 42:1-7. From the New Testament we know that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies.

In Isaiah 63:4, this Servant accomplishes the "day of vengeance" and the "year of [Israel's] redemption".

His wrath is directed towards Edom, which stands as the archetype of all the enemies of Israel.²

But of course, the primary enemies of God's people are their own sin and liability to death and judgment.

Jesus has dealt with these, through his substitutionary death and his resurrection.

As earlier mentioned, Isaiah 61:1-2 is cited by Jesus as being fulfilled in his ministry, though he pointedly excludes in his citation the phrase "the day of vengeance of our God" (Lk 4:18-19; cf. Isa 61:2).

In Isaiah 34 – 35, the judgment of the nations (again, especially Edom — see 34:5-6) is tied to Israel's restoration. God acts in vengeance "for the cause of Zion" (34:8; cf. 35:4).

Jesus likewise fulfills this prophecy — compare Isaiah 35:5-6 with Luke 7:22.

In these and other Isaianic passages, Israel's deliverance and restoration are tied to Yahweh's wrath upon the nation's oppressors. This is the case in Isaiah 47:3, where judgment on Babylon is in view.

In Isaiah 59:17-18 Yahweh puts on "garments of vengeance" as he repays "fury to His enemies, retribution to His foes, and recompense to the islands", even as he works salvation for those in the nation (the remnant) who turn from their sins (Isa 59:16, 20-21).

Vengeance in Jeremiah and other prophets

In Jeremiah, God's vengeance is principally directed against Babylon (50:15, 28; 51:6, 11, 24, 56).

After Jerusalem had fallen to the Babylonian army, Jeremiah prophesies about Babylon's own demise at the hands of the Medes (50:3; 51:11, 28).

With all this being tied to Israel's repentance and national restoration (50:3-5, 18-19).

Babylon had been God's "hammer" and "weapon of war" to destroy nations (50:23; 51:20).³

But Babylon went well beyond God's intent (cf. Isa 47:6; Zec 1:15).

So, God would in turn "repay Babylon ... for all the evil that they have done in Zion" (51:24) and take "vengeance for his temple" (50:28; 51:11).⁴

God would plead Zion's case, and take vengeance on her behalf against Babylon (51:36).

In Jeremiah 46:10, the day of the LORD and day of vengeance are equated, with Egypt on the receiving end.

In Ezekiel 25:12-17, God's vengeance is directed against Edom and the Philistines; both nations acted in malice towards and sought revenge against God's people during the Babylonian crisis of 587-586 BC.

In Nahum, God's vengeance is directed against Nineveh and the Assyrians (Nah 1:2).

² Isaiah's imagery of the winepress and stained garments is taken up in the judgments of Revelation (in 14:19-20; 19:13, 15).

³ Nebuchadnezzar is called God's "servant" in Jeremiah 25:9 and 27:6.

⁴ Note the description in Psalm 74:3-8 of the Babylonians' high-handed destruction of the temple. Similarly in Psalm 79, the (same?) psalmist recalls the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (79:1), and he pleads with God to avenge the outpoured blood of his servants (79:10).

God's vengeance on Israel and Judah

We noted above (on page 5) how vengeance in the Pentateuch is threatened against God's own people for their future inevitable unfaithfulness to him and to his covenant.

A covenant defines the terms of a relationship. Essentially it is an oath, with promises for obedience to its terms and threats of judgment for breaking those terms.

Marriage itself is a covenant relationship, and breaking the marriage vows constitutes unfaithfulness.

It is not surprising, then, that in the prophets God's relationship with his people is likened to a marriage, and disobedience to his law and flirting with foreign gods is considered spiritual adultery.

Their relationship ought to be characterized by mutual love and commitment (e.g., Dt 5:10; 6:5; 7:7-9; etc.).

God would be their God, and they his people (Lev 26:12; Jer 31:33; Eze 37:27).

But with Israel's repeated unfaithfulness, the "vengeance language" of Deuteronomy 32 is echoed throughout the prophets, and indeed, on into the New Testament as well.

Isaiah 1

In Isaiah's opening salvos (chaps. 1 – 5), judgment focuses not on foreign nations, but on the corrupt leaders and people of Israel.

Isaiah 1:10, 21, 23-28:

¹⁰ *Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah!*

²¹ *See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness resided within her, but now only murderers!*

²³ *Your rulers are rebels, friends of thieves. They all love bribes and chasing after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, and the plea of the widow never comes before them.*

²⁴ *Therefore the Lord GOD of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: "Ah, I will be relieved of My foes and avenge Myself on My enemies."*

²⁵ *I will turn My hand against you; I will thoroughly purge your dross; I will remove all your impurities.*

²⁶ *I will restore your judges as at first, and your counselors as at the beginning. After that you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City."*

²⁷ *Zion will be redeemed with justice, her repentant ones with righteousness.*

²⁸ *But rebels and sinners will together be shattered, and those who forsake the LORD will perish.*

The whole nation, Israel and Judah, are indicted here.

The nation, and Jerusalem in particular, is just like Sodom and Gomorrah (1:10)!

Jerusalem, once faithful, is now a harlot (1:21).

God's calls the corrupt judges and rulers his "enemies" (1:24).

But he will ultimately oust the wicked and replace them with good leaders, and Jerusalem will once again be called "the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City" (1:26).

A godly remnant will be redeemed (1:27; cf. 1:9; 4:2-3), but sinners will be destroyed (1:28).

Indeed, Zion restored and transformed will become a focus of worship and a source of great blessing for the nations (Isa 2:1-4).⁵

⁵ Jerusalem's judgment (or that of the nation), and her subsequent salvation through transformation, is a major OT prophetic theme. Here are a few examples: Isaiah 65 – 66; Joel 2:28 – 3:21; Amos 9; Micah 5:1-5a; Zephaniah 3; Zechariah 12 – 14.

Jeremiah 5

In Jeremiah 5, God indicts Jerusalem for her many sins.

Jeremiah 5:9:

"Should I not punish them for these things?" declares the LORD.

"Should I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?"

Verse 9 is repeated verbatim in Jeremiah 5:29 and 9:9.

The triad of sword, famine, and plague as punishment for covenant apostasy features often in Jeremiah:

Examples: Jeremiah 14:12; 15:2; 18:21; 21:7; 24:10; 29:17-18.

Ezekiel 16

Throughout this entire chapter the LORD indicts Jerusalem for her unfaithfulness.

He was her husband who had entered into covenant with her (16:8).

But she continually played the harlot (16:15), serving foreign gods.

He will bring wrath upon her (16:38).

Jerusalem is compared to Sodom (16:46-48).

The notion of spiritual adultery is prominent in the Old Testament:

Israel's unfaithfulness to the LORD and to his covenant is frequently likened to a wife who plays the harlot.

See Deuteronomy 31:16; Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1-14, 20; 13:27; Ezekiel 16 and 23; Hosea 1, 2, and 3; 1 Chronicles 5:25.

And note how Jesus called his contemporaries an adulterous generation in Matthew 12:39; 16:4; Mark 8:38.

2 Kings 9

Elisha commissions a young prophet from his community to anoint Jehu, an army officer, as king over Israel.

In that capacity Jehu will inflict God's vengeance on the house of Ahab — specifically, for the blood of God's prophets and servants that Jezebel has killed.

2 Kings 9:6-8:

⁶ *So Jehu got up and went into the house, where the young prophet poured the oil on his head and declared, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anoint you king over the LORD's people Israel.*

⁷ And you are to strike down the house of your master Ahab, so that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets and the blood of all the servants of the LORD shed by the hand of Jezebel.

⁸ The whole house of Ahab will perish, and I will cut off from Ahab all the males in Israel, both slave and free.'"

God judged that Ahab's line was irredeemable: not correction or discipline, but termination was in order:

The entire house of Ahab — every last male — was to be exterminated.

With Jezebel's murderous frenzy many of the Lord's prophets had been forced into hiding; so many had already been killed that Elijah thought he alone remained (1Kgs 18:4; 19:10, 14).

From the Lord's response here, we see that nothing incites him to anger more than the persecution and murder of his servants. Not even idolatry makes him so angry.

(Compare the above with Jesus' indictment of the religious leaders of his day in Matthew 23:34-36.)

Having considered various “vengeance” prophecies, we will now examine some Day-of-the-Lord prophecies and note how these were definitively fulfilled in the Jewish War with Rome (66-70 AD).

The Day of the LORD

As noted on page 3, OT Day of the LORD prophecies are often directed against foreign nations — Israel’s enemies. These are judged because of the harm they have done to God’s people.

Nevertheless, some Day-of-the-LORD prophecies are directed against the apostates of Israel (Isa 2:12; Am 5:18) or Judah (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; Zeph 1:7, 14; Mal 4:5).

Such judgment would generally involve foreign invasion.

When we come to the New Testament, the Day of the Lord seems to refer to this second type: judgment on God’s people, Israel.

The OT prophets employ so-called apocalyptic language to describe God’s overwhelming judgments.

Cosmic and de-creation imagery is used, none of which is to be taken literally:

No light from the sun, moon and stars is a metaphor for the extinguishing of a nation and the demise of its leaders, usually via foreign invasion. Other de-creation language includes the sky being rolled up like a scroll, earth and sky being depopulated, earthquakes, and so forth.

Also, the waters of the primordial “deep” returning to inundate the dry land (Eze 26:19).

Here are some instances of such language:

Isaiah 13:10 (depicting judgment on Babylon); Isaiah 34:4 (the nations); Jeremiah 4:23-26 (Judah and Jerusalem); Ezekiel 32:7-8 (Pharaoh and Egypt: “When I extinguish you, ...”); Joel 2:31; 3:15 (Israel and the nations).

Jesus employs similar language in relation to his return (Mt 24:29), as does John in Revelation 6:12-14; 8:12.

We will now examine how the Day of the LORD was fulfilled in the Jewish War of 66-70 AD.

Malachi 4:5 notes that God would send the prophet Elijah to Israel “before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the LORD.”

If Israel refuses to repent and turn to him, God will strike their land “with a curse” (Mal 4:6, BSB, KJV).

The single Hebrew word underlying this phrase (*ḥērem*, Strong’s H2764) refers to entities or persons that are wholly devoted to God, being set apart either for sacred use or for complete destruction as an act of divine judgment. Items declared *ḥērem* were considered banned or untouchable.⁶

Accordingly, the LORD is here threatening Israel with the same fate as Edom: total destruction (cf. Mal 1:3-4).

Malachi’s prophecy concerning Elijah was fulfilled in John the Baptist (Lk 1:17; Mt 11:14; 17:10-13).

John, like Elijah and echoing Malachi, brought a message of judgment for covenant apostasy (Mt 3:7-12):

- He warns Israel to flee from “the coming wrath” (3:7).
- The ax is already starting its work. Those not producing good fruit will be cut down and incinerated (3:10).
- Messiah will baptize (purify) Israel with the Holy Spirit and with fire (3:11; cf. Mal 3:2-3).
- Messiah will separate the wheat but burn up the chaff with “unquenchable fire” (3:12; cf. Mal 4:1).

⁶ Thus in the case of the town of Jericho in Joshua 6:17:

“And the city shall be *ḥērem* — it and all who are in it to Yahweh, ...” (Hebrew text).

Translation (BSB): “Now the city and everything in it must be devoted to the LORD for destruction.”

Examples of *ḥērem* set apart as holy (rather than for destruction) include persons and animals and land (Lev 27:21, 28; Num 18:14).

We can conclude that the work of judgment was a process:

Commencing with Jesus' ministry, it continued with the apostolic witness to Jesus and culminated in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Throughout those 39-or-so years the Jews were continually sifted and separated depending on their response to the gospel.

A good case can be made that the judgment of AD 70 was God's covenant wrath poured out upon his unfaithful people: judgment especially for murdering his Son and persecuting his followers.

In any case, Jerusalem's destruction and the nation's termination served as the definitive "day of the LORD" in fulfilment of OT prophecies such as Malachi 4:5.

Acts 2

Peter, in his Pentecost sermon, links Joel's prophecies to his own time and urges his fellow Jews to be saved from the coming Day of the Lord (Ac 2:16-21, 40; cf. Joel 2:28-32).

"Blood and fire and billows of smoke" (Ac 2:19) anticipates the nation's fiery end in the War of 66-70 AD.⁷

Peter goes on to exhort his hearers to be saved from "this crooked generation." (2:40, ESV)

The term "crooked generation" (other versions have "corrupt" or "perverse" generation) directly derives from the Song of Moses — see Deuteronomy 32:5, 20.⁸ There, Moses is both recounting Israel's past ingratitude and anticipating her future apostasy, along with the inevitable outpouring of God's covenant wrath.

(Jesus described his contemporaries in similar terms — see Matthew 12:39; 16:4; 17:17; Mark 8:38.)

Note that in Joel, God's judgment of the nations is tied to the restoration of Judah/Jerusalem (3:1-2, 17-21).

The basis of judgment is their mistreatment of his people (3:2-3, 19).

Judgment proceeds from God himself enthroned in Zion/Jerusalem (3:16-17).

Hebrews 10:25

The author of Hebrews also refers to the Day of the Lord:

Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have made a habit, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The reference here is to the imminent judgment of Israel: "The Lord will judge his people" (Heb 10:30).⁹

Jewish believers could already, in the early 60s AD, see signs of their nation's impending war with Rome.

Jerusalem, the temple, its priesthood, sacrifices and ceremonies were all about to be swept away, and the New Covenant was about to be fully established (Heb 8:13).

It was therefore futile for these Jews to abandon Christianity for the comfort and safety of institutional Judaism.

Note the references in the book of Hebrews to fire and judgment (Heb 6:8; 10:27, 30, 39; 12:29).

Note further the fact that Jesus himself was the One returning to judge "in just a little while" (Heb 10:37).¹⁰

⁷ The Roman army's scorched earth policy led to the burning of crops and entire villages. At the War's conclusion the temple, and the whole of Jerusalem, were consumed by flames.

⁸ The Septuagint for Deuteronomy 32:5 reads: *genea skolia kai diestrammenē* — "a generation crooked and distorted/perverted". From the adjective *skolios* (Strong's G4646) and the verb *diastrephō* (Strong's G1294). Paul employs this phrase in Philippians 2:15. Acts 2:40 reads: *tēs geneas tēs skolias tautēs* — "this crooked generation."

The verb used in Deuteronomy 32:20 (LXX) is *ekstrephō* (Strong's G1612), also meaning to pervert or distort.

⁹ Hebrews 10:30 twice references the Song of Moses (Dt 32:35-36), which, as already noted (on page 3), foretells Israel's future apostasy and the consequent outpouring of covenant wrath upon the nation. But note that while Hebrews 10:30 understands Moses to be speaking about judgment, Moses himself (in Deuteronomy 32:36) seems to intend that God will vindicate and show compassion to his chastised and humbled people — quite the opposite sense!

¹⁰ Many Bible versions render the underlying Greek phrase as "a very little while": the ASV, AMP, CSB, Darby, DLNT, DRA, GNV, HCSB, LSB, NASB, NMB, NRSV, RGT, WEB. The LEB has "a very, very little while", while the BSB has "In just a little while".

2 Peter 3:7-13

Peter in this passage refers to “the Day of the Lord” (3:10) and “the day of God” (3:12).

And indeed, Judgment Day in the New Testament is often called “the day of Christ” (or similar), because Jesus is the Judge. See 1 Corinthians 1:8; 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16.

It is most unlikely that the apostle is here describing the fiery end of planet earth.

He’s far more concerned with matters closer at hand: the end of all things was imminent (1Pet 4:7).

His readers were undergoing a “fiery trial” (1Pet 4:12) which was but the prelude to THE judgment (1Pet 4:17).¹¹

And not just the living, but the dead, too, were about to be judged (1Pet 4:5).

Peter’s readers were anticipating a whole new world order; they could even hasten its arrival (2Pet 3:12-13).

Clearly, Peter has something in mind that was to happen in his day.

Add to that the meaning of the term “elements” (Greek: *stoicheia*) that he employs in 2 Peter 3:10, 12.

These are not the chemical elements that constitute the universe, but the *elementary* or basic principles — the ABCs — of Judaism.¹²

And the anticipated new heaven and earth is not some new physical order, but the kingdom of God that was about to be fully established. That is, the messianic kingdom characterized by ever-increasing “righteousness” (2Pet 3:13; cf. Mk 9:1).¹³

Moreover, Jesus’ glory was about to be revealed (1Pet 1:7, 4:13; 5:1).

For the Great Tribulation, with its culmination in the dramatic fall of Jerusalem, was the signal proof that Jesus was enthroned in heaven judging those who had crucified him.

Matthew 24:30 (KJV):

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

Matthew 26:64 and Revelation 1:7 also support this interpretation.¹⁴

¹¹ 1 Peter 4:17 (Greek text): τὸ κρίμα (*to krima*) = THE Judgment.

The following translations include the definite article: CJB, Darby, DLNT, GW, JUB, LEB, NABRE, NCB, NEB, NOG, YLT.

¹² In Hebrews 5:12, the term *stoicheia* denotes the basic (= elementary) doctrines of the Christian faith.

In Galatians 4:3, 9, *stoicheia* refers to aspects of the Mosaic Law that the Judaizers sought to impose.

A good case can be made that the *stoicheia* of Colossians 2:8, 20 were also aspects of the Mosaic Law.

Peter’s *stoicheia* likely also denote the fundamentals of Judaism — that religion’s focus on outward things such as Jerusalem, the temple service, priesthood, and Mosaic rituals. Wasn’t it precisely these that were irrevocably terminated just a few years later when Jerusalem and the temple were burnt and destroyed?

¹³ Recall, too, that the world destroyed in the Flood (2Pet 3:6) was the world of wicked men, not the physical globe:

He brought “the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2Pet 2:5, KJV).

¹⁴ John Gill similarly applies Matthew 24:30 to Jesus’ 70 AD coming in judgment upon the Jews:

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see ... it may be observed, that the other evangelists make no mention of the sign, [but] only speak of the Son of Man, Mark 13:26, and he shall appear, not in person, but in the power of his wrath and vengeance, on the Jewish nation which will be a full sign and proof of his being come: for the sense is, that when the above calamities shall be upon the civil state of that people, and there will be such changes in their ecclesiastical state it will be as clear a point, that Christ [has indeed] come in the flesh, and that he [has now] also come in his vengeance on that nation, for their rejection and crucifixion of him, as if they had seen him appear in person in the heavens. They had been always seeking a sign, ... and now they will have a sign with a witness; And then shall the tribes of the earth, or land, mourn; that is, the land of Judea; ... and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. The Arabic version reads it, “ye shall see”, as is expressed by Christ in Matthew 26:64. Where the high priest, chief priests, scribes, and elders, and the whole Sanhedrin of the Jews are spoken to: and as the same persons, namely the Jews, are meant here as there; so the same coming of the Son of Man is intended; not his coming at the last day ...” From Gill’s *Exposition of the Whole Bible*, comments for Matthew 24:30.

Via the Bible Hub website: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/matthew/24.htm>.

Vengeance fulfilled in the first-century

Having shown that the Day of the Lord in the above passages refers to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, we shall now examine how that judgment also fulfilled the various Day-of-Vengeance prophecies.

Matthew 23:34-39

³⁴ *“Because of this, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and others you will flog in your synagogues and persecute in town after town.*

³⁵ *And so upon you will come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*

³⁶ *Truly I tell you, all these things will come upon this generation.*

³⁷ *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling!*

³⁸ *Look, your house is left to you desolate.*

³⁹ *For I tell you that you will not see Me again until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’”*

Jesus is here condemning the Jewish religious leaders for their hypocrisy and for their history of persecution. Before long, these leaders would persecute and kill his own followers as well (23:34).

Jesus sums up the whole history of Old Testament persecution: the A to Z of martyrs, from Abel to Zechariah (2:35). The guilt of all previous generations would be laid at the feet of the present generation (23:35-36).

Judgment was coming: their “house” (i.e., Jerusalem and the temple) would be destroyed (23:38).

And they will recognize Jesus’ hand in this judgment:

“Blessed is he ...” is a cry of messianic recognition, for they will “see” and perceive him coming against them in wrath (Mt 23:39; cf. 24:30; 26:64). This a cry of despair, not one of repentance.

(In support, see Appendix 1.)

It is important to recognize that Jesus’ Olivet Discourse is directly related to his indictment of the religious leaders. Jesus had just threatened judgment on them, and on Jerusalem and the temple.

So, when he informs the disciples that not one of the temple’s magnificent stones will be left in place (Mt 24:2), they naturally ask, “When?”

Their question shows they understood that the temple’s destruction would transpire when Jesus himself came again at the end of the age (Mt 24:3). Its demise would constitute part of his judgment on the old order.

For their Lord would come as both King and Judge. He would inaugurate the new messianic age and kingdom.

Had he not previously told the disciples that he would come in their generation to do precisely that?

Matthew 16:27-28:

²⁷ *“For the Son of Man will come in His Father’s glory with His angels, and then He will repay each one according to what he has done.*

²⁸ *Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”*

Or as Mark reports it, the kingdom of God would come “with power” within their lifetimes (Mk 9:1).

1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

¹⁴ *For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Judea that are in Christ Jesus. You suffered from your own countrymen the very things they suffered from the Jews,*

¹⁵ *who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and drove us out as well.*

They are displeasing to God and hostile to all men, ¹⁶ hindering us from telling the Gentiles how they may be saved. As a result, they continue to heap up their sins to full capacity; the utmost wrath has come upon them.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

⁵ *All this is clear evidence of God’s righteous judgment. And so you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.*

⁶ *After all, it is only right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and to grant relief to you who are oppressed and to us as well. This will take place when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels ⁸ in blazing fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

⁹ *They will suffer the penalty of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His might, ¹⁰ on the day He comes to be glorified in His saints and regarded with wonder by all who have believed, including you who have believed our testimony.*

The Thessalonian believers (ca. 51-52 AD) were suffering at the hands of their fellow countrymen, but almost certainly this was at the instigation of the city’s local (and sizeable) Jewish population. See Acts 17:5-8, 13. Paul indicts the Jews as the leading opponents of his missionary endeavors, with the result that their guilt is always increasing and God’s wrath is about to descend upon them (1Thes 2:16).

When Jesus comes again, the tables will be turned: the persecutors will be judged and the persecuted will obtain relief (2Thes 1:6-7). In “blazing fire” he will inflict “vengeance” on those who have refused to believe (2Thes 1:8). They will suffer “eternal destruction” — presumably via death. And they will be excluded from Jesus’ presence (2Thes 1:9). This latter aspect perhaps refers to Israel’s final, national divorce from God’s covenant in AD 70, which by no means precludes individual Jews from become believers.

It seems likely, following Nero’s death in June 68, that Christians were given a reprieve from persecution. The Jews no longer bothered them; they had more weighty matters to worry about. It may even be that Rome left them alone for 25 or so years, until the latter years of Domitian.

Hebrews 10

Earlier, on page 8, we considered this chapter's references to the fast-approaching Day of Judgment (in 10:25) and to Jesus' return (in 10:37).

The Hebrews author in this section refers to the persecution these Jewish believers had experienced at the hands of their fellow Jews: imprisonment and confiscation of property (Hebrews 10:32-34; 13:3, ESV):

³² *But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.*

³⁴ *For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.*

^{13:3} *Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, ...¹⁵*

Verses 26-31 are an appeal and warning to these persecuted believers not to abandon their Christian profession. Jesus has died, so disowning him means no sacrifice for sins remains.

Judgment awaits all who do that — raging fire that will consume God's enemies (10:27).

The author follows with a couple of citations from the Song of Moses:

*For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,"
and again, "The Lord will judge His people."*

(Hebrews 10:30, citing from Deuteronomy 32:35-36.)

Recall that Moses, in this Song, anticipates Israel's future apostasy and the outpouring of covenant vengeance.

Hebrews 10:29 shows us that this is precisely what abandonment of Christianity entails as well:

How much more severely do you think one deserves to be punished who has trampled on the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

Abandoning their Christian profession and reverting to Judaism would indeed amount to covenant apostasy — in this case, from the New Covenant that had been ratified with the blood of Christ (Lk 22:20).

Which is a far more serious offence than apostasy from the Old, Mosaic Covenant.

¹⁵ Some insight into how "normal" first-century persecution operated can also be garnered from James in his epistle addressed to Jewish believers (Jas 1:1). James refers to economic exploitation, hauling before the courts, and murder (Jas 2:6-7; 5:1-6).

The book of Revelation

The intent in this section is to show how the book of Revelation ties all these threads together — all that has been discussed so far.

Persecution of God's people is a major theme of Revelation.

The brutal persecution under Nero was about to begin, and Revelation was circulated to the seven churches of Asia to prepare believers for their forthcoming struggles.

First, some introductory comments about Revelation:

1. There is good reason to regard Revelation as John's version of the Olivet Discourse.

As such, it deals with the same themes as the synoptic accounts: Jesus' parousia, and the troublesome time that would transpire immediately beforehand.

Jesus' cloud coming in Revelation 1:7 (and in 14:14) is to be equated with that of Matthew 24:30.

Every eye would see him (Rev 1:7; Mt 24:30).

Jesus was coming on the clouds to judge his enemies, including "those who pierced him" (1:7).

By this is meant the first-century Jews, who, more than the Romans, were responsible for Jesus' death.

Tribulation is an important theme of Revelation; in 7:14 we read about "the great tribulation".

For Christians the Tribulation entailed their persecution, initially at the hands of the Jews, then from AD 64 under Nero.¹⁶ See Revelation 1:9; 2:9-10; 7:14; Matthew 24:9.¹⁷

For the Jews, the Tribulation entailed their War with Rome (66-70 AD) — particularly its culmination in the five-month siege of Jerusalem (April-September, 70 AD). See Matthew 24:21, 29.¹⁷

Indeed, Revelation foretells an "hour of testing" that was about to come upon the entire Roman world (3:10), although the underlying Greek word here is different.¹⁸

2. Vengeance is a major theme of Revelation:

Revelation 6:10 (ESV):

⁹ *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.*

¹⁰ *They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

¹¹ *Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.*

Then, following the outpouring of various judgments and plagues and so forth, we read the following:

Revelation 19:1-2 (my translation):

¹ *After this, I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven, shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God!"*

² *For true and just are his judgments. He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged the blood of his servants shed by her hand."*

¹⁶ Prior to Nero's inquisition, opposition and organized persecution came primarily from the "synagogue of Satan" — the Jews of Asia and other regions of the Empire (Rev 2:9; 3:9).

¹⁷ The Greek word in each of these verses is *thlipsis* (Strong's G2347), which is variously rendered as "tribulation", "affliction", "distress", or "persecution".

¹⁸ The Greek word in Revelation 3:10 is *peirasmos* (Strong's G3986), most often translated as "temptation".

3. Judgment in Revelation is focused on the Great Harlot — owing to her long history of persecution.

Revelation 17:6; 18:20, 24 (my translation):

^{17:6} *And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of those who bore witness to Jesus. And when I saw her, I was greatly astounded.*

^{18:20} *“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has pronounced judgment for you against her!”*

²⁴ *“For in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all those who have been slain on the earth.”*

4. In this last verse we hear clear echoes of Matthew 23:35.¹⁹ And indeed, the Harlot represents Jerusalem. Jesus had just warned the Jewish religious leaders that judgment would befall their city on account of their long history of persecution. Moreover, through continued persecution of his own emissaries they would fill up the measure of their forefathers’ sins (Mt 23:32, 34-36).

This is precisely what Revelation is showing: Jerusalem has continued to persecute God’s people and judgment has finally come upon her.

Recall how the earlier martyrs John saw in Revelation 6:9-11 were “told to rest a little while longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers” had been killed as well.²⁰

Those John saw were the OT martyrs (Mt 23:35), likely also including those killed in the first persecution of the Jewish mother-church following Stephen’s martyrdom.²¹

Their fellow martyrs, whom they were told to wait for, were those about to perish under Nero.

Following the Harlot’s judgment, John hears loud rejoicing in heaven because the blood of the martyrs has finally been avenged (19:1-3; cf. 16:5-7). All of the martyrs, including some of the apostles (18:20).

Revelation therefore shows the fulfillment of Jesus’ threats in Matthew 23:32-36; it depicts the “days of vengeance” that he foretold in Luke 21:22.

A reasonable question here is: How can the Jews be held accountable for the martyrs killed under Nero?

Answer:

Nero and the Jews cooperated in this persecution: the Jews encouraged and incited him to do so.

Nero’s second wife, Poppaea Sabina (30-65 AD), was very pro-Jewish, and at times she interceded with him on their behalf.

Once Nero had proscribed Christianity, the Jews throughout the Empire — in Asia, Rome, Alexandria, and Judea — would have been the first to haul their Christian brothers before the courts.

Note that John describes the Harlot as sitting on or riding the Beast (Rev 17:3). The Beast represents Nero and his inquisition, and she is driving and inciting him.

But with the outbreak of the Jewish War in late 66 AD, these two become enemies (17:16).

Note that John saw and wrote and circulated Revelation prior to the outbreak of Nero’s persecution in November 64 AD. Revelation is a prophecy of events soon to transpire (1:3; 22:6-7, 10, 18-19); it foretells the defeat of the Beast (= Nero and his inquisition) and of the Harlot (the Jews and their city and nation).

¹⁹ In Revelation 18:24 we also hear echoes of 2 Kings 9:7 — God’s indictment of Jezebel

²⁰ John sees the “souls” of these martyrs because they are in the intermediate abode of Hades-Paradise. They are awaiting their vindication and release and final embodiment, along with entry into their heavenly reward (Rev 20:11-15). In the meantime, they are told to “rest” a little while longer (Rev 6:11).

²¹ This earlier persecution (ca. 32-35 AD), which ended with the conversion of Saul/Paul, is depicted in Revelation 12:6, 13-16. The woman’s fleeing into the desert refers to the saints’ flight from Jerusalem into remote parts of Judea and Samaria and beyond (Ac 8:1; 11:19).

5. That the Harlot is Jerusalem, not Rome, should be obvious:
 - Revelation contrasts two women, who represent two cities.
One city, called “New Jerusalem”, is Christ’s faithful bride or wife (21:2, 9-10) — the true people of God, the Church (cf. Eph 5:25ff.), She serves as a light and ministers healing to the nations (21:24; 22:2).
The other city, by analogy, is Old Jerusalem, and she is a harlot, thoroughly unfaithful.
 - The Harlot is also called “Babylon” (17:1, 5) and “the great city” (17:18).
Babylon and the great city are one and the same (18:10, 21).
And indeed, throughout Revelation the great city is one and the same:
In Revelation 11:8 she is called “Sodom and Egypt”.
And John helpfully identifies her as the place where their Lord was crucified (11:8). No ambiguity here!
The point being this: Jerusalem has become the sworn enemy of God and his people.
 - John is here following the OT pattern of prophecy:
Through this contrast between two women, John is showing Jerusalem’s transformation, in the same way that many of the OT prophets do. We earlier examined Isaiah 1, where Jerusalem is likened to Sodom and called a harlot (Isa 1:10, 21). Then the city is judged, purged of evildoers (Isa 1:24-25, 28).
The city, redeemed and transformed (Isa 1:26-27), becomes a worship-center for the nations, which in turn leads to international peace (Isa 2:1-4).
6. The use of “harlot” as an image for the Judean city of Jerusalem suggests she is unfaithful to God — to her husband and covenant partner.
And this is correct: Jerusalem is the city that murdered his Son and persecuted his people.
Disobedience and disloyalty incur covenant wrath.
We noted earlier that the notion of spiritual adultery is prominent in the Old Testament:
Israel’s unfaithfulness to the LORD is frequently likened to a wife who plays the harlot.²²
And recall how Jesus called his contemporaries an adulterous generation (Mt 12:39; 16:4; Mk 8:38).
7. We have, in Revelation, the triad of punishments for covenant apostasy: sword, famine, and plague.
See Revelation 6:8 (cf. Lev 26:25-26; Jer 14:12; Eze 6:11-12).
Likewise, we have seven-fold judgments for covenant apostasy:
Seven Seals (6:1 – 8:1); Seven Trumpets (8:2 – 11:19); Seven Bowls (chaps. 15 – 16).
Cf. Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 28.
The point being this: Jerusalem had acted unfaithfully to God and to his covenant.
8. Some of the judgments are reminiscent of Egyptian plagues:
Boils (16:1-2; cf. Ex 9:8-12); Waters turning to blood (16:3-6; cf. Ex 7:14-25);
Darkness (16:10-11; cf. Ex 10:21-29); Hail (16:21; cf. Ex 9:13-35).²³
Some of the descriptions of judgment on the Harlot (chap. 18) echo Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning God’s judgment of Babylon (Jeremiah 50 – 51). Just as God had enacted vengeance on Babylon on account of her wickedness and oppression (Jer 50:15, 28), so was he now about to do with the Great Harlot.
The point being this:
Judgments similar to those leveled against Egypt and Babylon are now to be poured out on first-century Israel. For that nation, by murdering God’s Son and persecuting his people, had become his enemy.

²² See Deuteronomy 31:16; Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1-14, 20; 13:27; Ezekiel 16 and 23; Hosea 1, 2, and 3; 1 Chronicles 5:25.

²³ The hailstones weighing a talent (34 kilograms = 75 pounds) falling from heaven in Revelation 16:21 likely refers to the large rocks hurled by the Roman catapults during the siege of Jerusalem.

9. Rocks and mountains.

Josephus reports that in the last days of Jerusalem's siege, some people hid in the limestone tunnels and caves under the city, hoping they would be safe there and intending to surface again once the Roman army had left.

Revelation 6:15-17 (ESV):

¹⁵ *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,
¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

People in the city probably had some awareness of the fact that they were under divine judgment.

The source of verse 16's imagery is Hosea 10:8, and (perhaps) Isaiah 2:10.

What is interesting is that Jesus, *en route* to be crucified, also cites this very passage from Hosea as he addresses the women of Jerusalem:

Luke 23:28-30:

²⁸ *But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.
²⁹ Look, the days are coming when people will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore, and breasts that never nursed!'
³⁰ At that time 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"
³¹ For if men do these things while the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"*

Jesus here is anticipating the Roman siege of Jerusalem some 40 years hence.

Just as he had done in Luke 19:41-44; 21:20.

But the main point is that Revelation 6:15-17 was fulfilled during the Roman army's siege of Jerusalem in AD 70.

10. The fiery end of Jerusalem (17:16; 18:8-9, 18).

This ties in with John the Baptist's message (Mt 3:10-12), with Jesus' parables (Mt 13:40-42, 49-50; 22:7), and with what Peter and Paul and the author of Hebrews had foretold (Ac 2:19; 2Pet 3:7, 10-12; 2Thes 1:7; Heb 6:8; 10:27, 30, 39; 12:29).²⁴

(See on this website my article: *2 Peter 3 — a Preterist Interpretation*, and David Roberts' painting of the fall of Jerusalem under the title *Jerusalem in 70 AD*.)

Note that fire was the punishment prescribed in the Mosaic Law for a priest's daughter who acted as a harlot (Lev 21:9).

11. What Revelation depicts is God's divorce of Israel and his taking to himself a new bride.

Jerusalem is being transformed: the wicked in Israel are being judged, while those righteous in Christ will constitute the new Israel (Gal 6:16; Rom 2:28-29).

Believers are citizens of this heavenly city, even this side of eternity (Gal 4:26-27; Php 3:20; Heb 12:22-23).

For the city is now on earth as well as in heaven (Rev 21:2, 10).

²⁴ Not just Jerusalem, for the Roman army's scorched earth policy ensured that throughout Judea whole towns and villages were burnt. Not that this exhausts the references to fire, for an eternal (posthumous) fire — "the second death" — also awaited God's enemies (Mt 10:28; 25:46; Mk 9:43-48; Rev 20:15; 21:8).