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CHAPTER 24: 1-21

For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Matthew writes his gospel account to give us the view of Jesus as the King. He records Jesus' authority in calling the disciples: "Follow me" (Matthew 4:19), and he also records more than any of the others about Jesus' teaching concerning God's kingdom and heavenly rule.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Matthew 24: 1-21

Douay Rheims Version

Christ foretells the destruction of the temple, with the signs that shall come before it and before the last judgment. We must always watch.

1. And Jesus being come out of the temple, went away. And his disciples came to shew him the buildings of the temple.
2. And he answering, said to them: Do you see all these things? Amen I say to you, there shall not be left here a stone upon a stone that shall not be destroyed.
3. And when he was sitting on mount Olivet, the disciples came to him privately, saying: Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the consummation of the world?
4. And Jesus answering, said to them: Take heed that no man seduce you.

killed or took captive, exceeded the number who fell by any other divinely sent judgment, or destruction wrought by man. For, opening the sewers, and uncovering the sepulchres, they slew those whom they found there. In addition to these, there were found in those places 2000 who had fallen by their own hands, or by wounds received from one another.

3d. *And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, i.e., until the end of the world and of all nations.* For when the number of the Gentiles, according to God's decree, has been completed, all the people and the number of the Gentiles shall be finished together with the world. So Euthymius; or as Bede, until the plenitude of the Gentiles shall enter into the Church of Christ. For when this shall be accomplished, then "all Israel shall be saved," as the Apostle says (Rom. xi.), which shall be in the end of the world. For Christ has regard to the desolation of Jerusalem. This was foretold by Daniel (ix.), where it is said, "The desolation shall continue unto the consummation and the end," meaning that Jerusalem, after being razed to the ground and laid desolate by Titus, shall be no longer the capital city of the Jews, but shall belong to the Gentiles, and after that to the Christians, and after that to the Saracens and the Turks, as it is at present. And this state of things shall continue until the end of the world, when Antichrist, the king and Messiah of the Jews, shall fix the seat of his empire at Jerusalem, as is plain from Apoc. xi. 8. And then shall Enoch and Elias resist Antichrist, and convert many of the Jews to Christ. After Antichrist is slain, all the Jews shall be brought to Christ by the disciples of Enoch and Elias, and shall publicly worship Christ in Jerusalem, as may be easily gathered from Apoc. xx. 8.

Eusebius adds (*H. E.* 4. 6), that Adrian, who succeeded Trajan as emperor of Rome, made a severe edict that all Jews whatsoever should depart out of Judæa, so that it should not be lawful for any of them to see Judæa. He adds, "This was done, so that after the ruin of the Jewish nation, the inhabitants of the city being changed, the name of Jerusalem itself was changed to Elia, from the cognomen of the Emperor Ælius Adrianus." Behold, this is what Christ foretold—*Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles.*

From these words of Christ S. Cyril of Jerusalem rightly confuted the Jews, who, at the instigation of Julian the Apostate, set about rebuilding the Temple. He predicted that all their labour would be in vain, because Christ had declared out of Daniel that the desolation of Jerusalem and of the Temple would continue unto the end of the world. And he was a true seer. For fire coming down from Heaven consumed all the tools of the workmen. And a great earthquake tore up the foundation-stones and dispersed them, and destroyed the adjacent buildings. On the following night, impressions of the sign of the cross, shining like rays of the sun, appeared impressed upon the garments of the Jews, which by no efforts were they able to efface. (*So Socrates, H. E.* 3. 20.)

the persecution of Antichrist will be more horrible, forasmuch as it will be a general persecution of all Christians who in all nations believe in Christ.

Christ therefore compares the destruction of the one nation of the Jews with that of any other nation whatsoever, but not with the destruction of all nations, or of the whole world. That these things were so, is plain from the seven books which Josephus compiled (*de Bell. Jud.*). Thus he says expressly (6. 11), "To speak briefly, I am of opinion that no other city ever suffered such calamities, nor in any other nation of which there is memory among men was the wickedness of the seditious more ferocious."

S. Chrysostom assigns as the reason of this most dreadful destruction of the Jews, the awful nature of their crime, by which they crucified their own Messiah, Christ, the Son of God. Wherefore, from this destruction and unceasing desolation of the Jewish nation, you may prove to the Jews that Christ has come already, and that it is He whom they have slain. For God has never punished any other crime, either among the Jews or any other nation, so fearfully as He has punished this, their Christicide and Deicide. Whence rightly, *Auctor Imperfecti*, "Until Christ, although the Jews were sinners, yet they were accounted as sons, and as sons they were punished. But after the Lord was crucified they ceased to be sons, and were treated as enemies, and as such were rooted out, without any hope of salvation. For inasmuch as they had committed a crime, the like whereof had never been committed, nor yet would be committed again, so there came upon them such a sentence as never has been passed, nor ever will be passed upon any others." This is what S. Luke says, *Then shall be the days of vengeance*, i.e., for the death of Christ. *There shall be great affliction and wrath upon this people*. Josephus adds (*Bell. 7. 16*) that Titus recognized this vengeance of God, and attributed the capture of Jerusalem, not to his own power, but to Him. For entering into the captured city, when he saw the height and solidity of the bulwarks and towers, he exclaimed, "It is evident that God has helped us to fight. It was God Himself who cast down the Jews from those mountains. For what power of man, or what machines, would have been able to do so?" The same Josephus (*Bell. 6. 14*) adds, that when Titus went round and saw the ditches full of the corpses of the dead, he groaned aloud, and lifting up his hands to Heaven, called God to witness that it was not his work.

Luke adds, xxi. 24, 1st. *They shall fall by the edge of the sword*, i.e., they shall be slain by the swords of the Romans. Josephus asserts that, besides innumerable others slain in all parts of Judæa, there fell in the siege of Jerusalem alone 1,100,000 souls, who died by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.

2d. *And they shall be carried captive among all nations*. The same writer says that 97,000 Jews were taken captive at that time. And he adds that the multitude of the Jews who flocked together at that time to the Passover out of all the world, amounted to 2,700,000 Souls. Wherefore he adds, that the whole nation was as it were shut up in a prison by fate; and the city was besieged when it was crammed full of people. Therefore the number of those who fell including those whom the Romans

5. For many will come in my name saying, I am Christ. And they will seduce many.
6. And you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that ye be no troubled. For these things must come to pass: but the end is not yet.
7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And there shall be pestilences and famines and earthquakes in places.
8. Now all these are the beginnings of sorrows.
9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall put you to death: and you shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake.
10. And then shall many be scandalized and shall betray one another and shall hate one another.
11. And many false prophets shall rise and shall seduce many.
12. And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold.
13. But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.
14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations: and then shall the consummation come.
15. When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place: he that readeth let him understand.
16. Then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains:
17. And he that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take any thing out of his house:
18. And he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat.
19. And woe to them that are with child and that give suck in those days.
20. But pray that your flight be not in the winter or on the sabbath.
21. For there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be.
22. And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved: but for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened.
23. Then if any man shall say to you, Lo here is Christ, or there: do not believe him.
24. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect.
25. Behold I have told it to you, beforehand.
26. If therefore they shall say to you, Behold he is in the desert: go ye not out. Behold he is in the closets: believe it not.
27. For as lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth even into the west: so shall also the cawling of the Son of man be.
28. Where so ever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together.
29. And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of heaven shall be moved.

30. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty.

31. And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice: and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them.

32. And from the fig tree learn a parable: When the branch thereof is now tender and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh.

33. So you also, when you shall see all these things, know ye that it is nigh, even at the doors.

34. Amen I say to you that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.

35. Heaven and earth shall pass: but my words shall not pass.

36. But of that day and hour no one knoweth: no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone.

37. And as in the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38. For, as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noe entered into the ark:

39. And they knew not till the flood came and took them all away: so also shall the coming of the Son of man be.

40. Then two shall be in the field. One shall be taken and one shall be left.

41. Two women shall be grinding at the mill. One shall be taken and one shall be left.

42. Watch ye therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come.

43. But this know ye, that, if the goodman of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch and would not suffer his house to be broken open.

44. Wherefore be you also ready, because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come.

45. Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in season?

46. Blessed is that servant, whom when his lord shall come he shall find so doing.

47. Amen I say to you: he shall place him over all his goods.

48. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart: My lord is long a coming:

49. And shall begin to strike his fellow servants and shall eat and drink with drunkards:

50. The lord of that servant shall come in a day that he hopeth not and at an hour that he knoweth not:

51. And shall separate him and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Verse 1- *And Jesus went out, &c.*, according to His custom at eventide, to the Mount of Olives, to pass the night, and partake of food at Bethany, in the house of Martha and Mary, after He had been teaching all day without food in the Temple.

And His disciples, &c. The occasion was because Christ, at the end of the preceding chapter, had predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and consequently of the Temple. The disciples therefore, being amazed at this desolation of so great a city,

I answer. Christ is speaking of Jews, and Christians who still Judaized, who were wont to observe the Sabbath with such over-scrupulosity, that they preferred to die rather than flee or defend themselves against the attacks of their enemies upon the Sabbath (*see 1 Macc. ii. 34, &c.*). And the Jews and Judaizing Christians would observe the Law although it had been abrogated by Christ before the capture of Jerusalem. I may add that when the legal observances were abrogated by Christ at Pentecost, they were thenceforward *dead*, and were no longer binding; but they did not immediately become *deadly*, but it was permitted the Jews who were converted to Christ still to keep them for several years, out of reverence for Moses and the Law, until, being better instructed in evangelical liberty, they passed into perfect union with the Gentiles in the Church of Christ, as I have said in Gal. ii. So S. Chrysostom. Theophylact, Euthymius.

Christ here alludes to the capture of Jerusalem, which was to take place upon the Sabbath, as Dio Cassius asserts in his account of Nero. Indeed, one Gaspar Sanchez (*in Zach. 14, num. 27*) takes the words literally, as though Christ foretold that the Jews would take to flight upon the Sabbath, because Jerusalem was to be taken on that day. But Christ is here giving signs which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem, so that men might flee away and escape, as I have already said. But in the actual siege and destruction, Titus had so completely encompassed the city by a wall, that it was impossible to flee out of it, as Josephus testifies.

Verse 21- *Then shall be great tribulation, &c.* Some, with S. Augustine (*Epist. 80, ad Hesych.*), confine the words, *such as was not, nor ever shall be*, to the Jews (for Christ thus far has been speaking of them), meaning, that neither in the Egyptian, nor the Assyrian, nor the Babylonian, nor the Syrian distress under Antiochus Epiphanes, had they suffered such slaughter as they should suffer under Titus and the Romans; yea, that they never would suffer anything so terrible, because Titus would bring upon them the extremity of destruction and desolation which were to continue until the end of the world.

With greater latitude others think that this destruction of the Jews by Titus is to be considered as more terrible than the destruction and punishment which befell any other nation whatsoever. For the Jews were not from the beginning of the world, but took their rise from Abraham and Jacob. In this way the meaning would be, that neither the burning of Sodom, nor the drowning of Pharaoh, nor the destruction of the Canaanites by Joshua, nor the overthrow of Nineveh or Babylon, or of any other nation, however dreadful and terrible, which ever has been or shall be, was so dreadful as this destruction of Judæa, which was to take place under Titus. I have spoken of separate and individual nations, because the destruction of the whole world by the general Deluge in the time of Noah, and the general conflagration at the last day, with the common destruction of all, surpasses in horror the destruction of the single nation of the Jews. In like manner,

unto. For the fugitives constantly fell into the hands of the Roman soldiers, by whom they were despoiled and slaughtered, as Josephus relates at length in the history of the Jewish wars.

This most dreadful destruction of Jerusalem was an express type and prelude of the end of the world, just as were Noah's deluge, the burning of Sodom, and the drowning of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea.

Mystically: Pope Adrian I., in his Epistle to Charles, King of France, says, "He upon the house-top is he who, leaving carnal things, lives spiritually, as it were, in a free atmosphere. This man's furniture lies idle in the house, because with his mind rising above the body, by the force of his understanding being, as it were, placed upon the house-top, he enjoys through the perspicuity of his wisdom an unbroken view, as it were, of heaven."

Verse 18- *He that is in the field . . . clothes;* Gr. *ἱμάτιον*; *i.e.*, cloak or outer garment. For men who labour in the fields are wont to leave their upper garments at home, so as to be able to work more expeditiously. In like manner, when the destruction of Jerusalem is impending, flee away swiftly, and half naked, if you are so at the time, that you may escape the great and terrible slaughter. The expression is hyperbolic, and similar to the one in the previous verse. Both signify that they were to leave everything, even their clothes, and flee away as swiftly as possible, for so the greatness of the calamity is intimated. The prophets make use of a similar expression under similar circumstances. Thus Jeremiah, in the slaughter of the Egyptians by the Chaldeans (xlv. 5), "Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? And their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: *for fear was round about, saith the Lord.*"¹

Verse 19- *But woe to them that are with child,* &c. Because the burden of their children would hinder their flight, so that they would be taken and slain by the savage Roman soldiers, together with their little ones. So S. Chrysostom and others. Theophylact adds that there is a further allusion to the severity of the famine, by reason of which some women were constrained to devour their infants in the siege of Jerusalem. As Josephus testifies (*Bell.* 7. 8), Christ declares the fearfulness of the vengeance and destruction of Jerusalem, that even women with child and infants would not be spared, as is customary in the siege and capture of other cities.

Verse 20- *But pray ye,* &c. *In winter:* because flight is difficult, on account of the cold, snow, rain, and tempests. For this reason flight is then impossible to the sick and aged. Or, if attempted, it ends in death. *On the Sabbath:* because then it was not lawful for the Jews to walk more than about 700 paces, as I have shown in Acts i. 12. You will say that the Sabbath, as well as other ordinances of the Law, had been already abrogated by Christ when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus; and even if they had not been abrogated, it would have been allowed by the law of nature that persons should go many miles to save their lives.

show Him the wonderful fabric of the Temple, its beauty and magnificence, which seemed worthy of lasting for ever, in order that they might move Christ to pity, and to revoke the sentence of destruction. For this Temple was the wonder of the world, as Josephus says (*de Bello Jud.* vi. 6), "Its exterior had everything for the mind and the eye to admire. The roof was entirely covered with very heavy gold plates. At sunrise it was seen from afar with such a fiery splendour as to dazzle the eyes of beholders, as though they were gazing at the sun itself." See S. Hilary, "After Christ had threatened the destruction of Jerusalem, they show Him the magnificence of its construction, as if He could be moved by the desire of it." So, too, Origen, S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Jansen, and others. But none of this magnificence moved Christ to recall His sentence. In like manner God overthrew all the magnificence of Babylon, Nineveh, Antioch, and Rome, as well on account of the wickedness of their inhabitants, as that He might show that all such splendour is transitory, and of little worth, that so He might draw the minds of men to regard and desire the magnificence of Heaven, which is far greater, as well as eternal.

Truly and piously saith S. Augustine, "He will not be a great man who thinks it much that wood and stone should fall and mortals die." Such were the thoughts with which S. Austin was wont to comfort himself, when Hippo, the city of which he was bishop, was besieged by the Vandals, and which was taken by them and burnt after his death.

Verse 2- *But Jesus said, &c. One stone shall not be left upon another.* This is a hyperbole, meaning, there shall be utter and total destruction. The Romans did not spend so much time upon the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple as not to leave a stone upon a stone; but yet it was burnt by them, and destroyed in so effectual a manner, that it was razed to the ground, and a plough caused to pass over its site, as S. Jerome testifies on Zech. viii., and Josephus. And this is what Christ here indicates.

Listen to Josephus (*l. 7, Bell. c. 18*), "Titus bid them utterly destroy the city and the Temple. But there was left standing the three towers, Hippicus, Phaselus, and Mariamne, and that part of the wall of the city which defended it on the west. This was done for the sake of the garrison which he left. And the towers were allowed to stand, in order to be a witness to posterity how strongly fortified was the city which the valour of the Romans had captured. But the remainder of the fortifications they so completely levelled with the ground, that persons who approached would scarcely have believed that the city had ever been inhabited."

Verse 3- *And as He sat, &c. Disciples:* Mark speaks of four, *viz.*, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, who were on more intimate terms with Christ, and admitted to His secrets. Privately, apart not only from the multitude, but from the rest of the Apostles. The Syriac has, *between themselves and Him.* For it was a matter full of danger to prophesy, indeed even to speak

about the destruction of the Temple, on account of the Scribes and the Magistrates. It was on account of this that the Jews stoned S. Stephen. This is plain from Acts vi. 14.

Tell us: the Disciples here ask two things; the first, that Christ would tell them when Jerusalem was to be destroyed; the second, when the destruction of the world and the Day of Judgment would be, when He should come to judge all men. The Disciples thought that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed at the glorious Advent and reign of Christ at the end of the world, as if He were about to destroy them in punishment and vengeance for His death. For they supposed that these three things, namely, the destruction of the city, the end of the world, and the Day of Judgment would all take place at the same time. And as they knew from the words of Christ that the destruction of the city was nigh at hand, they thought that the end of the world and the Day of Judgment was also at hand. They seemed to come to this conclusion from the words of Christ (*Matt.* xxii. 7, 8, and xxiii. 5), where He seems to join all those events together, and speak of them unitedly.

Verse 4- *Let no man seduce you* (Vulgate), *i.e.*, from faith in Me and My Gospel.

Verse 5- *For many shall come*, &c. Such were, 1. that Theudas, of whom in Acts v. 36. 2. That Egyptian impostor, of whom Josephus (*l. 2, .Bell. cap. 12*) and Acts xxi. 38. 3. Simon Magus, of whom Acts viii. 10, who, as S. Jerome asserts, was wont to say, "I am the word of God: I am beautiful: I am the Paraclete: I am Almighty: I am all in all." For this Simon, as Irenæus testifies (*lib. 1, c. 20*), used to say that he had appeared in Judea as the Son, in Samaria as the Father, and had come down among the Gentiles as the Holy Ghost. Thus this proud Titan, as it were another Lucifer, was wont to say that he was not only Messiah, or Christ, but the whole Blessed Trinity. He it was who, by his magic spectres, so deluded Nero and the Romans, that a statue was erected to him at Rome, between two bridges, with this inscription, *To Simon, a great god.* 4. Such were Menander, Saturninus, the Gnostics, and the rest who sprang from the family of Simon. Lastly, such will be Antichrist, who will proclaim himself to the Jews to be Christ, according to the words of the Lord in John v. 43, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive," which every one understands of Antichrist, as S. Augustine says (*Serm. 45, de Verb. Dom.*).

Verse 6- *When ye shall hear of wars*, &c. *Rumours:* Gr. *ἀκοαίς*, reports; Arab. *news*, which are often more miserable than the battles themselves, and more thoroughly torment the mind with the fear of evils to come, even though they do not come. Here is another sign given by Christ, prior to the destruction of the city and the world, viz., tumults, wars, seditions, &c. Josephus shows that such took place before the destruction of Jerusalem (*lib. 2, de Bello, cap. xi*). As S. Chrysostom says, "He declares there shall be a twofold war, one by the seducers, the other by the enemies."

Take heed, &c That through fear of the enemy ye do not depart from My faith, or by despairing of fruit give up preaching the Gospel; but with generous minds struggling against fear and all opposition, go forward and proclaim faith in Me and My Gospel. He adds the reason why the Apostles must not be troubled, saying,

Jews and Christians alike, when they beheld these signs, to flee immediately to the mountains—not of Judæa, for they were occupied by Roman soldiers (*Jos. Bell. l. 3. c. 12, and l. 4. c. 2*), but those beyond Judæa, that they might thus escape the approaching overthrow of the city. In this way the Christians, mindful of this prediction of Christ, and warned by a Divine oracle (*Eus. H. E. l. 3. c. 15*), fled across the Jordan, to a city named Pella (*S. Epiph. Hæres. 29 and 30*), and even carried their property thither, as well as the episcopal Chair of S. James. Eusebius says that this Chair was preserved down to his own time (*H. E. 7. 15*). If this Chair had remained at Jerusalem, it must have been burnt with everything else. In these events we may see the singular providence of God over Christians, and His anger against the Jews. For, when the Roman army came, the Jews and Galilæans fled in crowds to Jerusalem, as to a place of refuge, thinking that there they would be safe. But God gathered them together there that they might be killed by the Romans.

Verse 17- *Let him which is on the house-top*—for the Jewish roofs were flat, so that they could walk and sleep upon them—*not come down*, but flee suddenly, so that he may save his life, and lose everything else. For so great and so sudden shall be this destruction of Judæa and Jerusalem by the Romans, that it were better for a man to flee away naked, than, by wishing to save his goods, to expose himself to danger. The sentence is hyperbolic, signifying how swiftly men ought to fly from the fearful impending calamity. Thus, "Let him that is on the house-top not come down gradually by means of ladders, but let him descend by one leap, or let himself down, very swiftly by a rope, that he may escape the coming destruction." For, hyperbole apart, the Jews had some little time given them to escape. In the first place, Cestius Gallus, who was sent by Nero, besieged Jerusalem, but he was routed by the Jews, and put to flight. Six months afterwards, Vespasian was sent by the same emperor, Nero. He subdued Galilee, and stormed all the other Jewish cities except Jerusalem. In this work he spent three years. When he was preparing for the siege of Jerusalem, tidings came to him of the death of Nero. Then Vespasian was proclaimed emperor by the army, and returned to Rome, to take charge of the State, committing the conclusion of the war to his son Titus, who, after half a year, besieged Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, and took it in six months, and burnt and destroyed it. This half-year, in which the Romans carried on the war less vigorously, was spent by the Jews in internecine strife. For, first, the Zealots seized the Temple, filling it with the murdered corpses of their fellow-citizens. To the Zealots succeeded Simon of Gerasa, the head of a new sedition. Being sent by the people into Jerusalem to restrain the Zealots, he turned his band in slaughter and rapine against the citizens. There was then sufficient space after the approach of the Roman armies for the Jews to save their goods and flee; but Christ advises immediate flight, as well to signify how dreadful the calamity would be, as well as because, when the Roman armies were once in Judæa, and spreading themselves over the land, there would be no safe place to flee

greatest number and chief countries and provinces of the world, not in every small and remote spot. Wherefore S. Jerome, Bede, and other Fathers teach that this will clearly and fully take place before the end of the world. "*The end*" must here be taken absolutely; and before the end of the world the Gospel will be preached throughout the whole world, so that Churches will be founded among all nations, and dioceses and bishops created. This it is allowed did not take place before the destruction of Jerusalem. And all this shall be done *for a witness, or testimony to all nations*. God will thereby make known unto all nations His loving Providence, in that He hath shut out no nation, however barbarous and impious, from faith in Christ, from grace and salvation, but hath loved all, and cared for all, and hath called them at suitable times, and therefore hath omitted nothing which is needful for the salvation of all nations. And likewise, in the day of judgment, He will condemn all nations, who have refused to believe in Him, and obey Him.

From this prophecy of Christ, S. Jerome, Suarez, and others teach that this will be a sure sign of the near approach of the end of the world, namely, the preaching of the Gospel throughout the whole world in such a manner, that the Church shall be founded everywhere, and shall have everywhere Christian members, clergy, temples, Priests. And although Maldonatus and Franc. Lucas deny this as to its full extent, as being in this place certainly declared by Christ, yet it is absolutely true, thus far, that the Church shall be founded in all nations, and will for some time before the end be established amongst them. But for how long a time is uncertain, and known only to God. Moreover, because we see that about 150 years ago, a new world, America, was discovered by the Spaniards, and that Christopher Columbus and Vespucci sailed to and opened out the West Indies, which constitute half the globe, and that the Gospel has been propagated in almost every portion of this new world, we may gather from hence that we are sensibly coming near to the end of the world. For of the rest of the globe, no part remains which has not, at some time or other, received the faith of Christ, except perhaps China. And even there Nicolas Trigaltius shows by certain proofs (*Lib. de Fide in China propagata*) there were formerly Christians and Christian Churches. The same thing is proved by the inscription upon a stone which has lately been discovered in China, which plainly testifies that the Gospel was preached there by Apostolic men.

Verse 15- *When therefore . . . the abomination of desolation, i.e., the abominable desolation; Syr. the unclean portent of destruction.* What this was I have explained at length on Dan. ix. 27. Some understand by it an idol placed in the Temple; others, Antichrist himself, who will desire to be worshipped in the Temple as God; others, more correctly, the Roman armies which besieged Jerusalem, and which, shortly afterwards, when it had been captured, fearfully wasted it, and made it desolate. The profanation of the Temple by the murders and other crimes which were perpetrated in it by the seditious and wicked Jews, who called themselves Zealots of the law and of liberty, may also be intended.

Thus far Christ has given His Apostles signs in common, which were to precede both the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. He now goes on to give special signs which were to precede the siege of Jerusalem by Titus. Wherefore Christ warns

For all those things must be. The Greek has *all*, which the Vulgate omits. *But the end is not yet*, the end of Jerusalem and the Temple, much less of the world, also of the battles and evils prior to the destruction of both. For the end of any one battle or trouble will be but the beginning of some greater one, as Josephus says happened at the siege of Jerusalem. *Be not troubled*, or lose confidence, but have greater courage, that ye may be prepared for the greater evils which shall follow, so as to sustain and overcome them. Do not hope for peace on earth, but by bearing troubles here, pass on to the eternal and happy rest of Heaven.

Verse 7- *For nations shall rise, &c.* For, as S. Jerome and Bede observe, and S. Augustine (*Epist. 80, ad Hesych.*), Christ answers His Apostles, who were asking in a confused manner about the destruction of the city and the world, mingling the two events together, after the same way that they asked. This He does as far as the 15th verse. And He did it with this object, that the Apostles and the faithful might always be in suspense, and so carefully prepare and fortify themselves for both events. From the 15th verse He treats expressly of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the signs which should precede it, up to the 29th verse. After that, up to the end of the chapter, He speaks of the signs which shall precede the end of the world. Now that He is speaking both of the destruction of the city and the world in this verse, and as far as the 15th, is manifest from the signs themselves, which were to precede both. Therefore S. Hilary and S. Gregory (*Hom. 1, in Evang.*), and Irenæus (*l. 5, c. 25*), understand them of the destruction of the world. For it shall be preceded by the most dreadful tumults, battles, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, false Christ's. Again S. Chrysostom, Euthymius, Theophylact, rightly understand them of the destruction of Jerusalem. This is plain from S. Luke xxi. 8, 12, "*But before all these things they shall lay their hands upon you, and persecute you, bringing you into the synagogues.*" Which happened to the Apostles before the destruction of Jerusalem, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles. Before that event, 1. "nation rose up against nation." After the Jews had captured and slaughtered the Roman garrison of Jerusalem, almost immediately the inhabitants of Ascalon, Ptolemais, Damascus, Alexandria, the Syrians, Romans, and all the neighbouring nations rose up against them. And this state of things continued until the most miserable destruction of Jerusalem. See Josephus, *Bell. Jud. passim*.

2. That Judæa was afflicted with famine before the destruction of the capital, is plain from Acts xi. 28.

3. Although Josephus says nothing about pestilences or earth quakes, yet it is certain from this prophecy of Christ that they must have happened. And both are usual concomitants of war and famine.

S. Luke adds, "*fearful sights and great signs shall there be from Heaven.*" That these shall precede the destruction of the world is plain from *Apoc.*

chaps. viii, and ix. It is equally certain that they preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. For, 1. a dreadful comet, in the shape of a sword, hung over Jerusalem a whole year before its destruction. 2. At the Passover, when the people were gathered together, three hours after midnight, a light as bright as noon-day shone for half an hour in the Temple. 3. A bullock that was about to be offered in sacrifice brought forth a lamb. 4. The eastern gate of the Temple, made of brass, and so heavy that it could be with difficulty closed by twenty men, opened of its own accord at the hour of midnight. 5. There was seen in the air the appearances of armies, chariots, and battles. 6. There was heard at Pentecost the voices of angels, saying in the Temple, "Let us depart hence." 7. An ignorant man of the lower orders, Jesus the son of Ananus, began suddenly to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the Temple, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, a voice against the whole people." And this he continued to cry night and day without ceasing, perambulating all the streets of the city. This he did for seven years, crying with a dreadful voice, like one astonished, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem," until at last, when the city was besieged by Titus, as he was crying upon the wall with a louder voice than usual, "Woe to Jerusalem, to the Temple, to the people, and to myself," he was struck by a stone hurled from one of the military engines of the besiegers, and killed. For all these things, see Josephus, *Bell.* 7. 12, and Eusebius, *H. E.* iii. 8.

Verse 8- *All these . . . of sorrows; Gr. ὠδίνων, parturition pangs, as S. Jerome renders in his comment. That is to say, the greatest possible pains, such as women suffer in childbirth, and from which many die. For like as it is in people about to die, disease and pain increase gradually until the time of death; so did wars, famine, pestilence increase until the final destruction of Jerusalem, as we know from Josephus. Thus also shall it be before the end of the world. Says S. Ambrose, "Because we are in the last times, diseases of the world shall go before." (in Luc. xxi. 9).*

Verse 9- *Then shall . . . to be afflicted . . . and shall hate you, &c. The Syriac puts hate first, because hate begets oppression. "They shall torment and afflict you with various torments. You will seem to be given up and dedicated to tribulation. All nations in all places shall persecute you as revilers of their gods, and as preachers of a new God, Christ crucified." This was fulfilled under Nero, who raised the first persecution, and slew the princes of the Apostles, S. Peter by the cross, S. Paul by the sword, and burnt alive in the circus many Christians, smearing them with grease and pitch, and setting them on fire, so that they acted the part of lamps to give light during the night. (Tac. Ann. i. 15.) Antichrist will do yet more horrible things before the end of the world.*

Verse 10- *Then . . . offended, i.e., suffer stumbling-blocks, and fall. The Syriac is, shall impinge upon scandals. That is, from fear of persecution and torments shall apostatize from the faith of Christ. That many did this we know from Eusebius and others.*

And shall deliver one another up (Vulg.); Syr. and English, shall betray one another. Apostates and other heathen, to curry favour with the emperors and

princes, shall betray their Christian friends and relations. This is now the case in England, Scotland, and Japan. Such are false brethren, of whom S. Paul complains, 2 Cor. xi. 26. "You see," says S. Chrysostom, "there shall be a triple war, one by enemies, a second by seducers, a third by false brethren."

Verse 11- *And many false prophets—false teachers, heresiarchs, such as Simon Magus, Menander, Arius, Luther, and Antichrist the head of them all. Shall seduce many (Vulg.), not by the strength of the seducers, but by the negligence of the seduced. Thus S. Paul foretold, Acts xx. 29, 30, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."*

Verse 12- *And because iniquity shall abound; Gr. πληθυνθήναι, i.e., be multiplied; Syr. on account of the multitude of iniquity, that is to say, infidelity, heresy, persecution, tyranny, and every kind of impurity, the love of many shall grow cold; Syr. shall languish; Arab. shall be diminished. It means, that they who aforesaid were warm with love to Christ and Christians, when they see so many persecutions and afflictions of Christians, will cease to be warm. Yea, they will grow cold. Their love will be turned into hatred and disgust. Christ foretells all these things that He may strengthen believers against all hardships and trials, and make them firm as an adamant rock.*

Verse 13- *But he that shall endure, viz., in the faith and love of Christ, unto the end: both of tribulation, and persecution, and of life, and who is of invincible patience, so as to yield to no terrors, or blandishments, or torments, shall be saved. The one only remedy and triumph over all these evils is a generous constancy and perseverance in faith and charity. For he who endures all these things is he who conquers and overcomes, as appears by the Apostles, S. Laurence, S. Vincent, S. Sebastian, and the rest of the martyrs. Therefore this saying should be adopted by a believer, "Yield not to calamities, but advance boldly against them."*

Verse 14- *And this Gospel, &c. This was fulfilled before the destruction of Jerusalem, for a witness unto all nations. For thereby God testified unto all nations His love towards the Jews, and their perfidy to Christ. And the calling of the Gentiles for that reason into their place, and this election of the Gentiles in place of the Jews, was just, as S. Chrysostom proves from Rom. i. 8, "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world;" and "Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world." And from Col. i. 6, "Which (Gospel) is come unto you, and beareth fruit in you, as it doth in all the world."*

But this must be understood hyperbolically, meaning, that before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the Gospel was promulgated in the