

## THE “GENTILE TIMES” OF LUKE 21:24

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*They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. — Luke 21:24, NIV.*

### A. THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT OF LUKE 21:24

IN TRYING TO understand the phrase “times of the Gentiles,” or “appointed times of the nations” (*NW*) at Luke 21:24, it is important to consider the context of this prophecy. Does the context really indicate that “Jerusalem” in this text is not just a reference to the city of Jerusalem but stands for “the kingdom of the dynasty of Davidic rulers,” so that the “trampling on” Jerusalem primarily relates, not to the literal city of Jerusalem but to God’s kingdom, as functioning through David’s house”? [\(1\)](#)

The immediate context of Luke 21:24 gives no support to this view. The terms used in the context, such as “Jerusalem” and “gentiles” (or “nations”), are clearly meant to be understood *literally*. For example, when it is predicted at verse 20 that “Jerusalem” will be “surrounded by encamped armies,” were these armies in some way to surround, not just the literal city of Jerusalem, but “the kingdom of the dynasty of Davidic rulers”? As Jesus Christ was the last and eternal ruler of the dynasty of King David, who (as shown in the previous chapter) began his universal rule from “heavenly Jerusalem” at his resurrection and exaltation, how could the beleaguering of the earthly city of Jerusalem constitute any threat against “the kingdom of the dynasty of King David”?

Further, as the siege of “Jerusalem” would forewarn the disciples that “the desolating of her has drawn near,” telling them to “withdraw” from Jerusalem and not “enter into her” (verse 21), would this siege in reality signify that the desolating of “the kingdom of the dynasty of King David” had drawn near, telling the disciples to withdraw from “God’s kingdom, as functioning through David’s house”? Obviously, a consistent application of the Watch Tower Society’s understanding of the term “Jerusalem” in this passage leads to absurd consequences.

The “Jerusalem” of Luke 21:20-21 evidently means the *literal* city of Jerusalem. As predicted, this city was “surrounded by encamped armies,” namely, by the Roman armies under the Syrian legate Cestius Gallus in 66 C.E. And when verse 24 goes on to foretell that “Jerusalem” would be “trampled on by the nations,” this could scarcely be any other than the Jerusalem that would be surrounded by encamped armies, namely, the *literal* city of Jerusalem. It could not have been the “the kingdom of the dynasty of Davidic rulers” that was besieged and finally desolated by the Roman armies under Titus in 70 C.E.

The Watch Tower Society agrees that “the term ‘nations’ or ‘Gentiles’ was used by the Bible writers to refer specifically to the non-Jewish nations.” (2) Therefore, when it is stated in Luke 21:24 that the Jews would “fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the *nations (éthnê)*” (NW), and that Jerusalem would be “trampled on by the *nations (éthnê)*” (NW), these “nations” could not mean other than *literal* non-Jewish nations.

The context of Luke 21:24, then, clearly demands a *literal* Jerusalem surrounded by *literal* armies (verse 20) in a *literal* Judea (verse 21), trampled on and desolated by *literal* non-Jewish nations (verse 24). The claim that Jerusalem in this passage stands for “God’s kingdom, as functioning through David’s house” finds no support whatever in the immediate context.

## B. THE EXPLANATORY FEATURES OF LUKE 21:20-24

The phrase “times of the Gentiles” occurs in the lengthy prophecy of Jesus known as the *Olivet discourse*. This discourse is recorded by all the three Synoptics (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21). However, some formulations used by Luke in the prophecy of the desolation of Jerusalem at 21:20-24 are peculiar to his version of the speech. One of them is the statement in verse 20 that “Jerusalem” would be “surrounded by encamped armies.” Another is the phrase “times of the Gentiles” in verse 24.

The historical setting of the discourse was Jesus’ public teaching in or close to the temple precinct during the last days of his earthly ministry. One of these days “certain ones were speaking concerning the temple (*hierón*), how it was adorned with fine stones and dedicated things.” (Luke 21:5, NW) On hearing this, Jesus stated:

As for these things that you are beholding, the days will come in which not a stone upon a stone will be left here and not be thrown down. — Luke 21:6, NW.

According to this statement the impressive temple structure with its central sanctuary was to be utterly ruined. In reaction to this shocking prediction, some of Jesus’ disciples later, when they had retreated to the Mount of Olives (compare Mark 13:3), approached him privately, asking:

Teacher, when will these things actually be, and what will be the sign when these things are destined to occur? — Luke 21:7, NW.

In Luke’s version of the speech, the two questions of the disciples both pertained to the *desolation of the temple*. They wanted to know (1) *when* this destruction would take place, and (2) what kind of *sign* they were to look for to know that this event was close at hand.

Jesus first, in Luke 21:8-19, foretold a number of events that would *precede* the final destruction, things that “must occur first” (verse 9) and which might be mistaken for signs of the nearness of the foretold destruction.

Then, in verse 20, Jesus directly pointed to the sign that would tell the disciples that the catastrophe was near. According to Luke’s version of the discourse, Jesus now extended the area of the coming destruction to include, not only the temple, but the whole city of Jerusalem:

When you see *Jerusalem being surrounded by armies*, you will know that *its desolation is near*. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city. — Luke 21:20, *NIV*.

Instead of “Jerusalem being surrounded by armies,” however, the parallel accounts of Matthew and Mark both speak of “the abomination of desolation (*bdélygma tês érêmôseôs*) standing where it should not be” or “in the holy place”:

But when you see the *abomination of desolation standing where it should not be* (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. — Mark 13:14, *NASB*.

Therefore when you see the *abomination of desolation* which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, *standing in the holy place* (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. — Matthew 24:15-16, *NASB*.

As stated by Jesus at Matthew 24:15, this “abomination of desolation” had “been spoken of through Daniel the prophet.” Obviously because of the obscurity of this phrase Jesus added, “let the reader [of Daniel] understand.” Luke, however, who primarily wrote for a non-Jewish public, gives an explanation of the phrase. This is evidently the reason why he leaves out the words, “let the reader understand.” His explanation was plain enough. *But from where did he get it?*

Many modern New Testament scholars claim that Luke wrote his gospel several years *after* the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E., and that his reformulation of Jesus’ prediction reflects his attempts at conforming it to the historical reality. (3)

However, a number of well-known scholars, who have thoroughly examined the special vocabulary used by Luke, find this theory problematic. A much simpler explanation is that Luke, in addition to the material found in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, also used other sources available to him. (4) It should be recalled that Luke introduces his gospel by explaining that he had “traced all things from the start with accuracy, to write them in logical order.” (Luke 1:3, *NIV*) As none of the Synoptic writers were present themselves during Jesus’ discourse, they all, directly or indirectly, were dependent on accounts given by the disciples who had been present as listeners (Mark. 13:3). The explanatory language of Luke, then, could very well reach back to Jesus himself via one or more of the disciples present and thus reflect Jesus’ own words, although preserved only by Luke. (5)

Another circumstance that to a great extent explains the vocabulary used by Luke is the relation of the Olivet discourse to the Old Testament, and especially to the prophecies of Daniel. Jesus in his prophecy not only quoted directly from Daniel when he spoke of the “abomination of desolation” (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), “the great tribulation” (Dan. 12:1), and the “Son of Man” coming “with the clouds of heaven” (Dan. 7:13-14), but his discourse also contains a number of allusions to other passages in Daniel. (6)

Further, as the Gospels are written in Greek, the citations from and allusions to the book of Daniel and other parts of the Old Testament are often based on the Greek *Septuagint* (LXX) version of the Old Testament. This is also true of some of the phrases and terms peculiar to Luke at Luke 21:20-24.

The dependence of Luke on the *Septuagint* in this section was examined back in 1947 by Professor Charles H. Dodd. In a careful study of the two passages in Luke that deal with the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 19:42-44 and 21:20-24), he states:

The fact is that the whole significant vocabulary of both Lucan passages belongs to the Septuagint, and is for the most part characteristic of the prophetic books. ...

It appears, then, that not only are the two Lucan oracles composed *entirely* from the language of the Old Testament, but the conception of the coming disaster which the author has in mind is a generalized picture of the fall of Jerusalem as imaginatively presented by the prophets. So far as any historical event has coloured the picture, it is not Titus's capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, but Nebuchadrezzar's capture in 586 B.C. There is no single trait of the forecast which cannot be documented directly out of the Old Testament. (7)

Although some of the parallels from the LXX given by Dodd may as well have been translated directly from the Hebrew text, the fact remains that the vocabulary of Luke 21:20-24 mainly is based on the Old Testament, and in particular on the book of Daniel. Thus, when the "abomination of desolation ... standing in the holy place" is replaced by the expression "Jerusalem being surrounded by armies," it may be demonstrated that Luke is not freely rephrasing it after his own mind. As will immediately be shown, his explanation, whether it reaches back to Jesus himself or not, seems clearly to be based on the same passage in Daniel from which Jesus quoted, namely, Daniel 9:26-27.

### C. THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AT DANIEL 9:26-27

In speaking of the "abomination of desolation," Jesus, as we saw, referred his listeners to the prophecy of Daniel and added, "Let the reader understand." Therefore, when the disciples later on pondered over Jesus prediction, a natural thing for them to do would be to take a closer look at the relevant passage in Daniel to see what the context indicated as to the meaning of the phrase.

There are three passages in the Greek LXX version of the book of Daniel containing the phrase *bdélygma tês érêmôseôs* ("abomination of desolation"), namely, Daniel 9:27; 11:31 and 12:11. Daniel 8:13 is also referred to sometimes, but instead of the "abomination of desolation" that text speaks of the "sin (Greek, *hamartía*; the Hebrew text has *pesha'*, "transgression") of desolation." However, that text seems to be a clear parallel of Daniel 11:31 and 12:11, both of which do use the phrase *bdélygma tês érêmôseôs*. Most expositors today (except for most Adventist scholars) agree that Daniel 8:13; 11:31, and 12:11 all refer to the desecration of the Jewish temple by the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who in the autumn of 167 B.C.E. put an end to the Jewish temple rituals and later, on December 6 that year, had an illicit altar (called "the abomination of desolation" in the book of 1 Maccabees) built upon the altar of burnt offering. (8)

Because some expressions similar to those found in Daniel 8:13 and 11:31 also occur in Daniel 9:26-27, many modern scholars believe that this passage, too, deals with the time and acts of Antiochus IV. But this application creates problems. For example, verse 26 of Daniel 9 predicts that "the people of the prince who is to come *will destroy the city and the sanctuary.*" This did not happen at the time of Antiochus IV. (9) *But it closely corresponds to Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple.* His disciples, therefore, undoubtedly recognized that this was the passage Jesus first of all had in mind. In fact, after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 C.E., Jews and Christians alike saw in that event the fulfilment of the destruction predicted at Daniel 9:26-27. (10)

Thus, when Jesus referred to the “abomination of desolation, spoken of through Daniel the prophet,” he was clearly referring to the prediction at Daniel 9:26-27. (11) Albert Barnes, in his careful examination of Daniel 9:27, concludes:

There can be no reasonable doubt that the Saviour refers to this passage in Daniel (see Notes on Matt. xxiv. 15) or that events occurred in the attack on Jerusalem and the temple that would fully correspond with the language used here. (12)

It seems reasonable to conclude that the interpretation of the “abomination of desolation” as armies that would surround and desolate Jerusalem is based upon Daniel 9:26-27. As noted above, this text not only speaks of the “abomination of desolations” (LXX), but also predicts that “the people” (“troups,” *NRSV*) of a coming prince will “destroy the city and the temple.” This destruction of Jerusalem by foreign armies, of course, had to be preceded by their appearance outside the city walls. Luke’s version of Jesus’ prophecy in the light of Daniel 9:26-27, therefore, is quite logical:

*When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. — Luke 21:20, NIV.*

#### **D. THE “TRAMPLING DOWN” OF JERUSALEM**

The statement that “Jerusalem will be trampled on [*ASV*: ‘trampled down’] by the nations” (Luke 21:24, *NW*) is another phrase unique to Luke. Like his other distinctive formulations in this section, this one, too, is taken from the Old Testament. The picture of Jerusalem or the sanctuary being trodden down by foreigners is found at Isaiah 63:18, Lamentations 1:15, Daniel 8:13, and Zechariah 12:3 (LXX). What did this “trampling” on Jerusalem and/or the sanctuary imply?

##### ***D-1: The Greek verb *patéō*, “trample”***

The word “trample” translates the Greek verb *patéō*. As explained by Dr. Günther Ebel in Colin Brown’s *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, this verb denotes “a stepping movement of the feet.” When used *intransitively*, he says, the verb may simply mean “to go” or “to walk.” But when used *transitively* (as is the case at Luke 21:24), it means “to tread or tread on something, to set foot on or in, to trample under foot, to trample down; frequently also figuratively to treat contemptuously, to maltreat, to plunder.” (13)

The word *patéō* is found five times in the New Testament. In Revelation 14:20 and 19:15 it is used figuratively of treading “the winepress” of the wrath of God. The other three occurrences are at Luke 10:19; 21:24, and Revelation 11:2, “in each case with overtones of judgement and power, for invading armies or the Gentiles trampling over Jerusalem or the temple, or the Seventy trampling upon serpents and scorpions.” (14)

At Luke 21:24 the trampling on Jerusalem by gentiles is often understood as referring to the period of *gentile domination or control* of the city, reckoned from its capture and desolation by the Romans in 70 C.E. Although this understanding of the text is possible, some expositors, who take *patéō* in this sense, hold that the period of “trampling” was in effect already at the time Jesus uttered this prophecy, arguing that the gentile control of Jerusalem began at the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Judah. After the Neo-

Babylonian period Jerusalem continued to be “trampled on” by Persians, Greeks and Romans. The independent Maccabean rule (142 to 63 B.C.E.) is ignored in this reasoning.

It should be noticed, however, that Luke 21:24 uses the *future* tense: “Jerusalem *will be* (*éstai*) trampled on by the nations.” This seems clearly to indicate that the predicted “trampling” was something that would take place in the future. It had not started yet. (15) Further, if this “trampling” was something that would take place in the future, it can hardly be understood as referring merely to the gentiles’ *control* of Jerusalem, as such control (by the Roman empire) existed also at the time the prophecy was uttered.

Evidently in an attempt to get round this difficulty, the Watch Tower Society, on quoting Luke 21:24 in the November 1, 1986 issue of *The Watchtower*, inserted within square brackets the words “continue to” into the text: “*Jerusalem will [continue to] be trampled on by the nations.*” (Page 6) This parenthetical addition subtly adds a meaning to the sentence that cannot be derived from its grammatical structure.

The meaning of the transitive use of *patéô*, of course, also depends on the context in which it is used. In the LXX version of the Old Testament it may sometimes be used simply of treading “a path” (Job 28:7-8), in a “court” (Isaiah 1:12), or on “the earth” (Isaiah 42:5). More often, however, it is used in a negative sense. It may be used figuratively of mistreatment, or treating disparagingly. At Amos 2:7; 4:1, and 5:12, for example, it is used of the “treading down” of or oppressing the poor and the just in Israel. Time and again we find *patéô* (and *katapatéô*, “trample down”) used transitively of treading down and destroying enemies, their lands and cities, as an expression of God’s judgements. (Isaiah 5:5; 10:5-6; 25:10; 26:6; Micah 7:10) Repeatedly such destructions are likened to the “treading” (*patéô*) of a winepress, in which the enemies are crushed like grapes. — Isaiah 63:3, 6; Lamentations 1:15; Joel 3:13.

Luke 21:20-24 deals with the execution of God’s judgement upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. As stated in verse 22, “these are *days for meeting out justice*, that all things written may be fulfilled” (*NW*). (16) Verse 23 goes on to speak of “great distress in the land, and *wrath upon this people*” (*ASV*). (17) The ways in which this divine “wrath” would be vented on the people is then explained in verse 24: (1) They would fall by the sword, (2) they would be led captive into all the nations, and (3) Jerusalem would be trampled down by the nations, until the times of the nations were fulfilled. (18)

The “trampling” in our text, then, is closely connected with the execution of the divine judgement upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation in the years 67-70 C.E. Evidently for this reason *Thayer’s Lexicon* states that *patéô* at Luke 21:24 (and Revelation 11:2) means “to desecrate the holy city by devastation and outrage.” (19)

### ***D-2: The “trampling down” of Jerusalem on earlier occasions***

Very interestingly, *patéô* is also used in the Old Testament (LXX) in connection with the desecration and/or destruction of Jerusalem and its temple *on earlier occasions*, namely, by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.E. and by the Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167-164 B.C.E.

Some years after the Babylonian conquest of Judah in 587 B.C.E. Jeremiah, in the book of Lamentations, bewailed the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of the country. At Lamentations 1:15 (LXX) he likened this destruction to the treading of a wine-press:

The Lord has cut off all my strong men from the midst of me: he has summoned against me a time for crushing my choice men: *The Lord has trodden* [*epâtêse*, the past tense of *patéô*] *a wine-press for the virgin daughter* [= Jerusalem] *of Judah*: for these things I weep.

It is to be noticed that *patéô* here is used figuratively of the crushing of Jerusalem and its defenders as in a “wine-press”. Although Jerusalem was still desolate at the time this was written, the text does not say that the “trampling” was still going on. It was a past event, limited to the period of the siege, capture, and destruction of the city in the period 589-587 B.C. The “trampling” was over, only its tragic results remained. Clearly, the Lord’s “treading” of Jerusalem and its defenders as in a wine-press, through the Babylonian armies, refers to the destruction of the city and the killing of its defenders, not to the subsequent Babylonian control of the area.

Similarly, at Daniel 8:13 the “trampling down” (LXX has *katapatéô*, “trample down”) of the “holy (place)” in the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes was limited to a brief period of time, “two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings,” according to verse 14. This strange way of stating the time period is explained by its relation to the “daily offering” mentioned in the preceding verses (11-13). As this ritual was performed twice a day, in the evening and in the morning (Numbers 28:3-8), the statement that it was stopped for 2,300 “evenings and mornings” evidently has these offering occasions in view. Commentators, therefore, often interpret the statement as referring to 2,300 offering occasions, covering 1,150 days.

This would roughly correspond to the period from 167 B.C.E., when—probably late in the autumn that year—Antiochus’ forces desecrated the temple in Jerusalem and removed the daily offering (compare Daniel 11:31), until the Jews, after having gained control of Jerusalem, purified the temple and resumed the offering ceremonies there late in 164 B.C.E. Although Jerusalem and Judah had been under the control of Syria since the year 200 B.C.E., Daniel 8:13 limits the “trampling” of the “holy (place)” to this brief period (167-164) of desecration. 1 Maccabees, too, refers to this period as the time of trampling on the sanctuary by gentiles:

The temple was trampled, as foreigners were in the Akra, lodging place of the gentiles. ... Your sanctuary has been trampled and profaned, and your priests are in mourning and affliction. — 1 Maccabees 3:45, 51.

This trampling of the temple by gentiles had involved much plundering, destruction, and killing (1 Macc. 1:29-64), requiring repairs of the damaged temple buildings and the building of a new altar of burnt offerings (1 Macc. 4:36-60). After the purification of the temple, the Jews “fortified Mount Zion, surrounding it with a high wall and strong towers *to prevent the gentiles* [*ta éthnê*] *from ever coming and trampling* [*katapatêsôsin*] *it as they had done before.*” — 1 Macc. 4:60.

At none of the two occasions discussed above did the trampling extend over a long period of time. On both occasions it was confined to a brief period of desecration, plundering and destruction. This use of the word *patéô* in situations similar to that in Luke 21:24 certainly should have some bearing upon the meaning of the word in that text, too. [\(20\)](#)

### ***D-3: The “trampling” on “the holy city” at Revelation 11:2***

A few words should also be said about the trampling on the holy city at Revelation 11:2b, as there are obvious affinities in language and thought between this passage and the saying in Luke 21:24b. The first two verses of Revelation 11 read:

(1) I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, ‘Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. (2) But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to *the Gentiles*. *They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.*’ — Revelation 11:1-2, *NIV*.

Like Luke 21:24, this text predicts that the “Gentiles ... will trample on the holy city [Jerusalem],” the only difference being that the period of trampling is here specified as “42 months,” that is, three and a half years, while at Luke 21:24 the period of trampling is vaguely referred to as the “times of Gentiles.”

Do the two texts, then, speak of the same event? Many well-known commentators on the book of Revelation have drawn this conclusion. Dr. R. H. Charles, for example, states that the period of 42 months “is referred to as the *kairoi éthnôn* in Luke xxi.24.” (21) Some commentators are even more specific. Dr. John M. Court says:

In 11.2 the trampling of the holy city is said to last forty-two months; as S. Giet pointed out, this is approximately the period of the Flavian war, from the spring of A.D. 67 to 29 August 70, during which time Jerusalem was ‘profaned’, but in the sanctuary the sacrifices continued uninterrupted, until at the end the sanctuary was destroyed by fire. (22)

Similarly Professor Moses Stuart, the “Father of Biblical Science in America,” after a careful examination of the “42 months,” concludes:

After all the investigation which I have been able to make I feel compelled to believe that the writer refers to a literal and definite period, although not so exact that a single day, or even a few days, of variation from it would interfere with the object he has in view. It is certain that the invasion of the Romans lasted just about the length of the period named, until Jerusalem was taken. And although the city was not besieged so long, yet the metropolis in this case, as in innumerable others in both Testaments, appears to stand for the country of Judea. (23)

This tying together of the two passages, however, presupposes that “the holy city” of Revelation 11:2 is the *actual* city of Jerusalem, and that the prophecy was given *prior to* the destruction of the city in 70 C.E. This evokes a number of questions on which there are wide disagreement among scholars, such as *the date* of Revelation, the *approach* to the book, the meaning of the “measuring” in verse one, the identity of the “two witnesses” in verses 3-6, and the meaning of their experiences in verses 7-13. (24) It would take us too far to go into an examination of all these problems here. A few comments on the “42 months” of trampling on the city will have to suffice.

Are these “42 months” to be taken more or less literally, as suggested by the scholars quoted above, or do they symbolize a long period of time, as is held by other interpreters?

Expositors of the so-called “historicist school” apply the “year-day principle” to the “42 months,” changing them into a period of 1,260 (or 1,290) years. As was shown earlier in chapter one of this work, this approach has given rise to an astounding series of expiring dates for the “Gentile times” throughout the centuries. As the validity of the



“year-day principle” has been discussed earlier, this approach requires no further comments here.

A number of commentators spiritualize the number altogether, arguing that the “42 months” symbolize the entire Christian era. (25)

However, there are reasons to believe that the “42 months” do refer to a brief period of time. Periods of the same length are mentioned several times in Revelation, namely, in 11:3 (the “two witnesses” prophesying for “1,260 days”), in 12:6, 14 (the “woman in heaven” finding a refuge in the wilderness for “1,260 days,” or for “a time and times and half a time”), and in 13:5 (the “wild beast” from the sea being given authority for “42 months”). Although these periods need not refer exactly to one and the same period everywhere in Revelation, they are all of the same length, namely, *three and a half years*. The period is generally traced back to the book of Daniel. The period of “a time, times, and half a time” is mentioned at Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. Further, the seventieth “week” at Daniel 9:27 is divided “in the middle” into two equal parts, which also marks off periods of three and a half years.

It is well known that in the Bible as well as in other ancient Near Eastern literature the number “seven” is commonly used as a symbol of “fulness, totality.” A period of “seven” was regarded as a “completed period,” whether it was seven days, seven years, or other periods of seven or multiples of that number. (26) As the period of “three and a half years” is a *divided* “seven,” it seems to refer to a *curtailed* or *abbreviated* period rather than to a long era. Many Biblical scholars equate the period with the “shortened” days of the “great tribulation” at Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20. (27)

On examining the Biblical contexts in which this period of three and a half-years occurs, it is found that it always refers to a period of severe crisis, either a period of oppression, persecution, and suffering, or a period of judgement and disaster. This, too, tells against the idea that the period extends over a long period covering hundreds or thousands of years. Rather, it seems to refer to a relatively brief, critical period of time.

Revelation 11:1ff. clearly presents a scene of impending judgement, accentuated by the “two witnesses” prophesying “in sackcloth,” a symbol of their sombre message. The Gentiles’ trampling on the “holy city” “for 42 months” is a tangible expression of this judgement. Whether the “measuring” is a symbol of the destruction of the literal temple or of the preservation of the “spiritual temple” matters little in this regard, because the scene is still one of judgement and destruction. In view of this, the idea that the “42 months” of trampling on the city refer to a long era of Gentile domination seems difficult to uphold. As in other passages dealing with the trampling down of Jerusalem and the temple, here, too, the trampling seems best to be understood as a brief period of desecration, devastation, killing, and destruction.

## **E. THE TRAMPLING “GENTILES”**

On the assumption that the “trampling down” of Jerusalem by gentiles refers to the long period of gentile domination or control of the city, many commentators understand the plural “gentiles” or “nations” as referring to the *successive* series of nations that would occupy and control Jerusalem after its destruction in 70 C.E.

It is certainly true that Jerusalem, after the destruction of the city in the year 70 C.E., has been controlled by a successive number of non-Jewish nations: Rome (up to 614

C.E.), Persia (up to 628 C.E.), the Byzantine Empire (up to 638 C.E.), the Saracen Empire (up to 1073 C.E.), the Seljuks (up to 1099), the Christian Crusader Kingdom (up to 1291 C.E., interrupted by brief periods of Egyptian control), Egypt (up to 1517 C.E.), Turkey (up to 1917 C.E.), Great Britain (up to 1948 C.E.), and Jordan (up to 1967, when Israel gained control of the old walled city of Jerusalem). (28)

Could this long period of gentile domination be regarded as “the times of the Gentiles”? Many expositors do so, or at least they regard it as a part of these “Gentile times”. (29)

Even on the assumption that this application is correct, it does not necessarily follow that the “times of the Gentiles” ended in 1967. Although the Jews have been in control of Jerusalem since that year, the most central part of the city, the old temple site, is still in the hands of the Arabs. The old temple site is still occupied by the Muslim “Dome of the Rock” edifice. Therefore, if the “trampling down” of Jerusalem is to be understood in the above-mentioned sense, the central and most important part of the city is still being “trampled down” by “gentiles.”

### ***E-1: The “gentiles” in the Roman armies***

However, the plural “gentiles” used at Luke 21:24 need not be understood as referring to a *successive* series of nations. The word “gentiles” (or “nations,” *NW*) may actually be a reference to the composite military forces under Vespasian and Titus. The vast Roman empire consisted of many different ethnical groups of peoples, whose native countries had been conquered by Rome and incorporated into the empire. Most of them had been turned into Roman provinces.

Very interestingly, at the time of the beginning of the Jewish rebellion in 66 C.E. there were still a number of kingdoms *in the eastern empire* that *had not* been turned into provinces under Roman governors. They had been allowed to exist as *kingdoms* governed by local kings, although as vassals to Rome. The total number of such vassal kingdoms varied somewhat during the decades preceding the Roman war against the Jews, but at the outbreak of the war there were about ten of them. Palestine was, in fact, surrounded by a number of such kingdoms—the Nabataean Kingdom, Chalkis, Arqa (the Lebanon), and Homs. Most of the others lay in the eastern parts of Asia Minor. (30)

The armies headed by Titus at his final march against Jerusalem not only consisted of Roman legions, but also of “contingents from the allied kings and a considerable body of auxiliaries from Syria.” (Josephus’ *War* V, 39-46) The majority of the vassal kingdoms in the east, in fact, participated on the side of Rome in the war against the Jews. Titus’ forces consisted of four Roman legions of 6,000 men each, or 24,000 in all, but the contingents provided by the neighbouring vassal kingdoms and the auxiliaries from Syria more than doubled that number to far above 60,000. (31)

Thus, when Luke 21:24 speaks of “gentiles” *in the plural*, this is a most appropriate designation of the composite coalition of armies under Vespasian that invaded Palestine in the Spring of 67 C.E. to crush the Jewish rebellion, and also of the armies under Titus that finally besieged, captured and utterly destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in 70 C.E. The prophetic description of this destruction as a “trampling down” of the city by “gentiles” or “nations,” then, proved to be a very precise description of what actually transpired.

This understanding of the plural “gentiles” is, in fact, confirmed by the Bible itself.

### ***E-2: The “gentiles” at Daniel 9:26-27***

As argued earlier, Jesus, in his prediction of the desolation of the city of Jerusalem and the temple, first of all had in mind Daniel 9:26-27. This passage, as we saw, not only speaks of “the abomination of desolation” referred to by Jesus, but also foretells that “*the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary*” (verse 26).

As Luke in his version of Jesus’ prediction was found to be phrasing it in terms and expressions found in the Old Testament and in doing this often depends on the Greek LXX version, it is of the greatest interest to observe that the LXX version of Daniel 9:26 says that “a kingdom *of gentiles* (or, ‘of nations,’ *ethnôn*) will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” (32)

Thus the LXX version of Daniel 9:26 and Luke 21:24 both use the plural “gentiles” in referring to the armies that would destroy Jerusalem and its temple. It seems clear that Luke’s choice of the plural noun “gentiles” is taken directly from the LXX version of Daniel 9:26. According to the wording of this version, Jerusalem would be destroyed by a “kingdom” consisting of many “gentiles” or “nations.” The “gentiles” of the text, of course, refer to *the armies* that would destroy Jerusalem and its temple. This, therefore, seems to be what the “gentiles” of Luke 21:24 mean also. Speaking of the same event, the coming destruction of Jerusalem, the two texts seem clearly to be saying the same thing:

A kingdom of *gentiles* will destroy the city. — Daniel 9:26 (LXX).

Jerusalem will be trampled down by *gentiles*. — Luke 21:24.

If this conclusion is correct, the statement at Luke 21:24 cannot mean that Jerusalem and its temple would be “trampled down” by a *successive* series of nations. If the “gentiles” or “nations” are understood as the Roman armies under Titus, they were all present at the desolation of Jerusalem. All of them took part in the “trampling down” of Jerusalem and its temple *simultaneously, there and then*. (33)

## **F. THE “TIMES” OF THE GENTILES**

Of the three Synoptics, only Luke uses the expression *kairoi ethnôn*, “times of gentiles.” Most translations render the phrase in the *definite* form, “*the times of the gentiles*,” as if a definite and well-known period is referred to. In the original text of Luke 21:24, however, the phrase occurs in the *indefinite* form, “until *times of Gentiles* are fulfilled.” The phrase, therefore, is vague and imprecise and does not seem to be a reference to a period that the readers (or listeners) already were supposed to know about. (34) This vagueness has allowed for a number of different interpretations of the phrase. All of them may be assigned to one of three groups:

### ***(a) The “times of Gentiles” as the “fullness of Gentiles” at Romans 11:25***

Some expositors refer to Paul’s statement at Romans 11:25 that “a partial hardening has happened to Israel until *the fullness of Gentiles* has come in” (*NASB*), arguing that the “times of Gentiles” are related to this “fullness of Gentiles” and refer to the period of the preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles.

It is true that both texts have the two words “until” and “Gentiles” in common. But aside from this, there is very little resemblance between the two statements. The contexts are different, and the subjects treated are different. As Dr. Milton Terry remarks:

The ‘times of the Gentiles’ (*kairoi ethnôn*) are assumed to be the times and opportunities of grace afforded to the Gentiles under the Gospel. But to understand the words in this sense would be, as Van Oosterzee observes, to interpolate a thought entirely foreign to the context. ... These *kairoi* are manifestly times of judgement upon Jerusalem, not times of salvation to the Gentiles. (35)

In the statement, “Jerusalem will be trampled down by *Gentiles*, until the times of *Gentiles* are fulfilled,” there is no indication that the “gentiles” in the second clause are any others but the “gentiles” just mentioned in the first clause. Further, their “trampling” was to continue “*until* the times of Gentiles are fulfilled,” implying that the gentiles’ “trampling” and the gentiles’ “times” would cease at the same time. The “times of Gentiles,” therefore, would logically refer to the times allotted to these gentiles to “trample on” Jerusalem.

**(b) The “times of Gentiles” as the period of gentile control of Jerusalem**

Probably the most common view is that the “times of Gentiles” refer to the long period of gentile domination of Jerusalem, dating either from 70 C.E. or from an earlier point of time. The various attempts by prophetic expositors to calculate the length of this period by the aid of the so called “year-day principle” have already been discussed earlier in this work and need not be treated again here.

As was argued above, the “trampling down” of Jerusalem “by gentiles” seems best to be understood as referring to the period of the beleaguering, capture, desecration, plundering and destruction of the city and its temple by the Roman armies. If so, the “times of the Gentiles” cannot refer to the long period of gentile control of the city. They must have ended when the “gentiles”—the Roman armies—had completed their “trampling down”—their destruction—of the city. To make this explicit, we may substitute the word “gentiles” in the two clauses for “the Roman armies”:

Jerusalem will be trampled down by *the Roman armies*,  
until the times of *the Roman armies* are fulfilled.

Obviously, the “times of the Roman armies” cannot refer to a period covering thousands of years. Within the context of Luke 21:20-24, these “times” may be understood as the time it took for the Roman armies to conquer and destroy Jerusalem, a period of about half a year. Or, if these “times of the Roman armies” are seen as a reference to the total period required for crushing the Jewish rebellion and recapture Jerusalem, from the beginning of the war until the final destruction of Jerusalem, that is, from the arrival of Vespasian’s armies in Galilee in the spring of 67 until the autumn of 70 C.E., the “times of the Gentiles” lasted for about three and a half years.

As this view is not as common as the other two and may sound unfamiliar to some of the readers, a somewhat fuller presentation may be appropriate here.

***(c) The “times of Gentiles” as the period of  
the capture and destruction of Jerusalem***

As just stated, this view implies that the “times of Gentiles” is a relatively brief period that ended with the complete desolation of Jerusalem in the autumn of 70 C.E.

At first glance, the plural noun “times,” *kairoí*, may seem to tell against this view. How can a brief period of time be spoken of as a number of “times”?

Some commentators have pointed out that the use of the plural “times” simply may result from the plural “gentiles” or “nations.” This explanation is fully possible. But only on the assumption that the “gentiles” refer to the successive series of nations that have controlled Jerusalem, can it be argued that the *times* of the gentiles or nations must refer to the successive periods or times during which Jerusalem has been under the sway of these nations.

As was discussed earlier, however, the plural “gentiles” seems clearly to be a reference to the *army of gentiles* (composed of forces from various peoples and nations) that would capture and destroy Jerusalem. The *times* of these gentiles, therefore, would simply be their times of trampling down the city.

It should also be observed that the plural “times” are used elsewhere in the Bible of a brief period of time. One example of this is Nebuchadnezzar’s “seven times” at Daniel, chapter 4, which, as we saw, may refer to a period of just seven months. (36) Another example is the “time and times and half a time,” that is, three and a half “times,” at Revelation 12:14, which according to verse 6 correspond to 1,260 days (3 1/2 years). The phrase is usually held to be taken from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, where the expression most probably refer to a brief period of suffering and distress. These examples clearly show that the plural form “times” at Luke 21:24 is no indication of a long period of time.

The Greek word for “times” at Luke 21:24, *kairoí*, is rendered “appointed times” in the Watch Tower Society’s *New World Translation*. (37) This rendering is in no way improbable or farfetched. Greek dictionaries emphasize that in New Testament Greek, the word *kairós* often denotes *time as quality*, in contrast to the word *chrónos*, which usually denotes *time as quantity*. Thus while the word *chrónos* is used of time in the chronological sense, of the stream of time, a period of time, etc., independent of the events occurring in it, *kairós* is stated to be used of *time as characterized by its contents*. Accordingly, *kairós* is said to be used of “the fateful or decisive point of time,” “the opportune time,” “the right, proper, favorable time,” or “the fixed, appointed, or promised time.” (38)

However, there is reason to use some caution in applying this sense of *kairós* to the “times” of the Gentiles, as the stated difference between *kairós* and *chrónos* was vastly overstated by some earlier scholars. In a thorough study published in 1962 a leading Semitist, Professor James Barr, demonstrates that, although *kairós* was used in the earlier, classical Greek in the sense of “exact, right, critical, or opportune time,” in later Greek it began to be used also of “time” or “period” in the general, chronological sense. Thus, although the original contrast between the two terms often may be demonstrated in the LXX and the New Testament, the terms may also be shown to overlap and *are often used synonymously to denote a period or periods of time*. (39)

The “times of Gentiles” at Luke 21:24 is clearly a reference to a period of time. This indicates that *kairós* may here be used in the same sense as *chrónos*. Too much, therefore, should not be put into the word. James Barr states that, when used “in those theologically

important cases which speak of the ‘time’ or ‘times’ which God has appointed or promised, the two words [*chrónos* and *kairós*] are most probably of the same meaning.” Of the many examples of this, he also lists Luke 21:24. (40)

Actually, Luke’s choice of the plural *kairoí* may have a very simple explanation. As was shown earlier, the plural noun “gentiles” in his text is to all appearances taken from the LXX version of Daniel 9:26-27, the text that above all provided the Scriptural background of the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that the plural *kairoí*, too, is found in the very same passage. The way the word *kairós* is used in this passage may, in fact, explain its use at Luke 21:24, too.

In his discussion of the Septuagint (LXX) background of the language used by Luke at 21:20-24, Professor Charles H. Dodd notes that, although the precise phrase *kairoí ethnôn*, “times of Gentiles,” does not occur in LXX, “the idea is present.” (41) He then quotes the LXX version of Daniel 9:26-27 to show that both words occur there in a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, just as at Luke 21:24.

The use of the word *éthné*, “gentiles” or “nations,” at Daniel 9:26-27 (LXX) has already been discussed earlier. The word *kairós*, “time,” occurs more than once in the same text, both in the singular and the plural forms. These occurrences are included in the following quotations from the passage:

(26) A kingdom of gentiles [or, “nations,” *ethnôn*]  
will destroy the city and the holy (place) ...  
and until the completion of time [*kairou*] war will be fought. ...

(27) and upon completion of times [or, “of time periods,” *kairôn*] ...  
and until the completion of time [*kairou*] of war ...  
and on the temple will be an abomination of desolations  
until the completion of time [*kairou*]  
and completion will be given on the desolation.

It is clear from these statements that both the plural and singular forms of *kairós* are here used in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary. The prophecy deals with events at and after the end of the “seventy weeks” mentioned in the preceding verses. Verses 26 and 27 speak of the “completion” of a specific period of “time” or “times,” evidently a determined period of time, and of a “war” that would be fought until the completion of this period.

It is to be noticed that the word “war” in verse 26 is *in the singular*. The text does not say, “until the completion of time wars will be fought,” as if a long period characterized by wars were in view. The “war” spoken of is that fought by the “kingdom of gentiles” that is to “destroy the city and the sanctuary.” This war would be fought “until the completion of time,” that is, until the time determined for the destruction is completed. The “time” or “times” mentioned, therefore, cannot refer to a long period extending over centuries.

It is of little use to go into a detailed exposition of the LXX version of Daniel 9:26-27, as there are some textual problems in it. As some clauses are repeated twice, it is considerably longer than the Hebrew text, and some sentences are differently organized.

The Hebrew text of the passage, like the LXX version, emphasizes the desolating character and purpose of the war. Dr. Albert Barnes points out that the Hebrew text of

verse 26b literally says, “until the end of the war desolations are decreed.” (42) In his careful examination of the text, he gives the following comments on the character of the war:

The things which would, therefore, be anticipated from this passage would be, (a) that there would be war. This is implied also in the assurance that the people of a foreign prince would come and take the city. (b) That this war would be of a *desolating* character, or that it would in a remarkable manner extend and spread ruin over the land. All wars are thus characterized; but it would seem that this would do it in a remarkable manner. (c) That these desolations would extend *through* the war, or to its close. There would be no intermission; no cessation. It is hardly necessary to say that this was, in fact, precisely the character of the war which the Romans waged with the Jews after the death of the Saviour, and which ended in the destruction of the city and the temple; the overthrow of the whole Hebrew polity; and the removal of great numbers of the people to a distant and perpetual captivity. No war, perhaps, has been in its progress more marked by desolation; in none has the purpose of destruction been more perseveringly manifested to its very close. (43)

As the desolation of Jerusalem and the sanctuary had been “decreed” or “decided” (NW), the destruction could not be left half-completed. Evidently with this prophecy in mind, Jesus stated that “not a stone upon a stone will be left here and not be thrown down.” (Luke 21:6, NW) The “kingdom of gentiles” was not to destroy only parts of the city and the sanctuary. As the prophecy of Daniel shows, a specific “time” or “times” had been allotted them for completing the destruction. This “time,” or these “times,” therefore, seems to be the “times of Gentiles” referred to at Luke 21:24. This is also the conclusion of a number of scholars. One of them, Dr. Milton Terry, concludes:

These ‘times of the Gentiles’ are obviously the period allotted to the Gentiles to tread down Jerusalem, and those times are fulfilled as soon as the nations shall have accomplished their work of treading down the holy city. (44)

### ***Summary and conclusion***

In this chapter it was first demonstrated that the immediate context of Luke 21:24 strongly demands that the period called “times of Gentiles” applies to the *literal* city of Jerusalem, not to “God’s kingdom, as functioning through David’s house.”

It was further shown that the explanatory language peculiar to Luke at 21:20-24 is composed of terms and phrases taken from the Old Testament, and frequently, then, from the *Septuagint* version. It is quite possible that these Old Testament expressions were used by Jesus himself, although they were preserved only by Luke.

The primary background of Jesus’ prediction, as he himself clearly indicated in his discourse, is the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and its sanctuary at Daniel 9:26-27. It is no coincidence, therefore, that some of the vocabulary used by Luke reflects the language of this passage. This relationship is not only limited to Luke’s specific statement—not found in the other Synoptics—that Jerusalem would be surrounded and desolated by armies (which is directly stated at Daniel 9:26), but the passage also includes specific terms used by Luke, such as “gentiles (*éthnê*)” and “times (*kairoî*).” The Lucan expression “times of Gentiles” seems clearly to be based on Daniel’s prophecy.

The subsequent analysis of the Greek word for “trample,” *patéō*, revealed that this verb, when used transitively and especially in connection with the trampling down of enemies, their countries and cities, usually refers, not just to a period of domination and control, but to a period of desecration, plundering, killing, and destruction. An examination of passages dealing with the “trampling down” of Jerusalem and/or its temple on earlier occasions provided strong support for this conclusion.

Next, the plural word “gentiles” or “nations” (*éthnē*) used at Luke 21:24 was discussed. It was shown that the plural form of the verb need not be understood as a reference to the *successive* series of nations that have held sway over Jerusalem. The plural “gentiles” could very well refer to the composite armies of Vespasian and Titus in 67-70 C.E. This use of the word in our text was shown to be confirmed by the Bible itself, as the prophecy at Daniel 9:26 (LXX) uses the very same word in its plural form of the armies that were to destroy Jerusalem and its temple.

Finally, the various interpretations of the “times” of the gentiles were examined. It was shown that the word *kairós*, “time,” even in its plural form, may very well refer to a brief period. As this word is used at Luke 21:24, not of the “times” of *gentiles or nations in general*, but of the “times” of *the gentiles that would destroy Jerusalem*, the period can hardly be extended over centuries or millennia. It seems most logical to conclude that these “times” are used of the period allotted to the Roman armies to crush the Jewish rebellion and desolate Jerusalem.

This understanding was also found to be supported by the LXX version of Daniel 9:26-27, which uses the very same word, *kairós*, both in its singular and plural forms, of the period that would end with the completion of the gentiles’ desolation of Jerusalem.

*The conclusion of this examination, therefore, is that the “times of Gentiles” at Luke 21:24 refer to the period allotted to the gentile armies of Vespasian and Titus to execute God’s judgement upon Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, until they had accomplished the work of utterly desolating Jerusalem and its temple.*

## Footnotes:

1 *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1 (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 1988), pp. 132-133. [RETURN](#)

2 *Ibid.*, p. 132. The plural noun *éthnē* means “gentiles, peoples, nations, foreigners.” The singular form of the noun, *éthnos*, “multitude, nation, foreigner,” is also used in the New Testament of the Jews as a people or nation. See, for example, Luke 7:5 and Acts 10:22. [RETURN](#)

3 A typical statement is that of Heinz D. Rossol: “Whereas Mark/Matthew speak only symbolically about the desolating sacrilege in light of the ‘prophecy,’ Luke can refer to the siege of Jerusalem in literal terms, since the prophecy has been fulfilled.” — H. D. Rossol, “‘The Desolating Sacrilege’ and the Synoptic Problem,” in Martin C. Albl *et al* (eds.), *Directions in New Testament Methods* (Marquette University Press, 1993), p. 17. [RETURN](#)

4 See Lars Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted* (= *Coniectanea Biblica, New Testament Series 1*, Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1966), pp. 226-235. For a survey of the discussions of “proto-Lucan” sources, see



Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone on Another. Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 244-256. [RETURN](#)

5 For a discussion along these lines, see David Wenham, *The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), pp. 185-188. Cf. also the comments and references by I. Howard Marshall in his *Commentary on Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1978), p. 771. [RETURN](#)

6 For a detailed examination of the relation between the Olivet Discourse and the book of Daniel, see Lars Hartman, *op.cit.* (note 4 above), pp. 145-177. [RETURN](#)

7 Charles H. Dodd, "The Fall of Jerusalem and the 'Abomination of Desolation'," *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. XXXVII (London, 1947), pp. 50, 52. See also Professor Bo Reicke in *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 137, 175. [RETURN](#)

8 See the book of 1 Maccabees (written in the 2nd century B.C.E.), chapter 1, verses 29-64. Dan. 8:11, which evidently refers to these events, says that "His sanctuary place was cast down." The statement does not necessarily refer to the sanctuary building itself, which was not torn down by Antiochus Epiphanes. The text speaks of the "place (Hebr. *makon*) of the sanctuary." Dr. John J. Collins points out that *makon* is used of the base of the altar at Ezra 3:3 and suggests that here, too, the reference may be to the altar, which was desecrated by Antiochus. — J. J. Collins, *Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 334. [RETURN](#)

9 It is true that Antiochus IV, in 169 B.C.E., plundered the sanctuary in Jerusalem, taking away all its furnishings and valuable articles, and even had all the gold peeled off from the front of the building. (1 Macc. 1:20-24) Further, 1 Maccabees goes on to tell that two years later, in 167 B.C.E., Antiochus sent forces to Jerusalem who "plundered the city, set fire to it, and destroyed its buildings and the walls around it." (1 Macc. 1:31) But this destruction evidently refers only to partial damages done to buildings and the walls, as neither the sanctuary nor the city were actually destroyed. See the comments on these events by Professor Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (= *The Anchor Bible*, Vol. 41; New York: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 213-20. A detailed critical examination of the attempts to apply Dan. 9:26-27 to the times and acts of Antiochus IV may be found in Dr. E. B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet* (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, 1978; reprint of the 1885 edition), pp. 184-229. [RETURN](#)

10 For a discussion of the Pharisaic understanding of this prophecy after 70 C.E., see Robert T. Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the date of Messiah's Coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot and Early Christian Computation," *Revue de Qumran*, Vol. 10, No. 40, Dec. 1981, pp. 531-36. Cf. also A. Strobel in *New Testament Studies*, Vol. X (1963-1964), p. 442; also Lloyd Gaston, *op. cit.* (note 4 above), pp. 458-468. [RETURN](#)

11 Cf. the comments in chapter 5 above, note 22. [RETURN](#)

12 Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament, Explanatory and Practical: Daniel*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977; reprint of the 1853 edition), p. 188. [RETURN](#)

13 Colin Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3 (Exeter, U.K.: The Paternoster Press, Ltd., 1978), p. 943. — A transitive verb is a verb that takes an accusative object. A sentence with a transitive verb may be changed into passive form. For example, the clause "the boy kicked the ball" may be changed to "the ball *was kicked by* the boy." At Luke 21:24 the passive form of *patéô* is used. (Compare the active form used in the similar statement at Revelation 11:2.) A verb used intransitively cannot take an accusative object. [RETURN](#)

14 *Ibid.*, p. 944. Cf. the comments by Dr. H. Seeseman in G. Kittel & G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT), Vol. V (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1967), pp. 940, 943. [RETURN](#)

15 All clauses in Luke 21:24 are in the *future tense*, indicating that this prophecy refers to something that entirely belonged to the future: “There *will be* (*éstai*) great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They *will fall* (*pesoûntai*) by the sword and *will be taken as prisoners* (*aichmalôtisthêsontai*) to all the nations. Jerusalem *will be* (*éstai*) trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles *are fulfilled* (*plêrôthôsin*).” (NIV)

Although the last verb, *plêrôô*, here is used in the *aorist passive subjunctive* tense, *plêrôthôsin*, the subjunctive mode in Greek was always closely related to the future tense. The text of Westcott and Hort, on which the *New World Translation* is based, even seems to emphasize the future tense by adding *kai êsontai*, “and will be,” after *plêrôthôsin*, in agreement with the Vatican manuscript 1209. However, the addition *kai êsontai* is not supported by most other early manuscript witnesses and is left out in modern critical editions of the Greek text. [RETURN](#)

16 “*days for meeting out justice* (*hêmérai êkdikêseôs*)”: As pointed out by Professor C. H. Dodd, the same phrase is used of the doom of Israel in Hosea 9:7 (LXX) and of the doom of Judah in Jeremiah 46:10 (LXX = 26:10). — C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.* (note 7 above), p. 51.

“*all things written*”: The statement most probably pertains to the things written in the Old Testament about the judgement of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. Daniel 9:26-27 is certainly in view, but also other texts in Daniel and elsewhere, such as Daniel 12:1 and 1 Kings 9:6-9. [RETURN](#)

17 The “*great distress*” (*anánkê megálê*) corresponds to the “*great tribulation*” (*thlipsis megálê*) at Matthew 24:21, which quotes Daniel 12:1. The phrase “*wrath upon this people*” has parallels in the Old Testament: Psalm 78:21 (LXX = 77:21) speaks of God’s “wrath ... upon Israel,” and 2 Chron. 24:18 speaks of God’s “wrath upon Judah and Jerusalem.” [RETURN](#)

18 How completely these predictions were fulfilled is documented in detail by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, who was an eye-witness of these events. He describes the Roman crushing of the Jewish rebellion as a three and a half-year long nation-wide blood-bath, culminating with the total destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. From the very beginning of the war great numbers of Jews were killed in the sieges and battles, or taken captive and sold as slaves. In September, 67 C.E., for example, 36,400 Jews were taken captive in Tiberias at the Sea of Galilee, 6,000 of which were sent to Corinth to dig on the canal recently started there by Nero, while the remaining 30,400 were sold as slaves to other parts of the empire. (Josephus, *The Jewish War* III, 539-542) According to Josephus, “the total number of prisoners taken throughout the entire war amounted to ninety-seven thousand.” Those who perished during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem alone he estimates to “one million one hundred thousand.” — Josephus’ *The Jewish War*, Book VI, 420. Quoted from the translation of H. St. J. Thackeray in Vol. 210 of the *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1928). Modern scholars usually regard the latter number as grossly exaggerated. [RETURN](#)

19 Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 494:3961. Similarly, Dr. H. Seesemann, commenting on the use of *patêô* at Luke 21:24 and Rev. 11:2, says that it “has here the sense of ‘destroying,’ ‘plundering,’ though one might go further and render ‘to plunder and desecrate,’ since plundering the holy city (including the temple) is necessarily equivalent to its desecration.” — H. Seeseman in TDNT, Vol. V (see note 14 above), p. 943. [RETURN](#)

20 Dr. Luke Timothy Johnson’s translation of Luke 21:24 reflects his awareness of this connection: “And Jerusalem will be *ground under the heel of the Gentiles* until the times of the Gentiles are completed.” In his comments on this verse, he points out that “The verb *patêô* is used for treading grapes in Joel 3:13 and in Amos 2:7 for ‘trampling the head of the poor into the dust,’ and in Zech 10:5 for ‘trampling the foe into the mud of the streets.’ Likewise, Lam 1:15 has ‘the Lord has trodden us as in a winepress, the virgin daughter of Judah’ (that is, Jerusalem).” — L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (= Volume 3 in the *Sacra Pagina Series*). (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), pp. 320, 324. [RETURN](#)

21 R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, Vol. I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920; 1985 impression), p. 280. Dr. Robert H. Mounce similarly states that the 42 months “became a conventional symbol for a limited period of time during which evil would be allowed free rein. In Luke 21:24 it is called ‘the times of the Gentiles.’” — R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans

Publishing Company, 1977), p. 221. See also I. T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979. Reprint of the 1919 edition), p. 599. [RETURN](#)

22 John M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1979), p. 87. [RETURN](#)

23 Moses Stuart in *A Commentary on the Apocalypse*, as quoted by J. Stuart Russell, *The Parousia. A Critical Inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983. Reprint of the 1887 edition.), p. 430. Cf. also the comments of Milton Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, Zondervan, 1974. Reprint of the 1883 edition), pp. 473-474. [RETURN](#)

24 As to the date of Revelation, Dr. Daniel A. deSilva notes: "The date of Revelation, and hence of the nature of the situation that occasioned it, is considerably more widely disputed. Scholars divide fairly even between placing the work in the 'Year of the Four Kings,' AD 68/69, and near the end of Domitian's reign, AD 94 or 95." — D. A. deSilva, "The social setting of the Revelation to John: conflicts within, fears without," *The Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. 54 (1992), pp. 273-74. For recent defences of the early date, see John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1976; 5th impression 1984), pp. 221-253, and the extensive study by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., *Before Jerusalem Fell. Dating the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

The picture of "measuring" is used in the Bible either as a symbol of *building* (Ez. 40:2-3; Zech. 1:6; Rev. 21:15-17) or as a symbol of *destruction* (Amos 7:7-9; 2 Kings 21:13; Isa. 34:11; Lam. 2:7-8). The majority of commentators, however, feel it is used here in Revelation 11:1 as a symbol of *preservation*, because the things measured (the sanctuary etc.) seem to be set in contrast to the trampling on the rest of the city by the gentiles. In this view, the sanctuary with its rituals symbolizes a kernel of faithful believers in an apostate system doomed to destruction. Many also see in the "measuring" a parallel with the "sealing" at Revelation 7:1-8.

Scholars who regard the visions of Rev. 11:1-13 as wholly symbolic understand the "city" as a symbol either of Rome, Judaism, or of apostate Christendom. Scholars who question these identifications of the "city" point to verse 8, where it is identified as the city "where also their Lord was crucified." The question asked is, How can it be said that the Lord was crucified in Rome or in Christendom? [RETURN](#)

25 An convenient verse-by-verse presentation of the four major approaches to the book of Revelation is found in Dr. Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views. A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, Inc., 1997.) [RETURN](#)

26 See K. H. Rengstorff's discussion of the word *hepta*, "seven," in Kittel/Friedrich, TDNT, Vol. 2 (see note 14 above), p. 628. [RETURN](#)

27 Dr. E. J. Young, for example, states: "This period, a time, times and half a time, apparently stands for a period of testing and judgment which for the sake of God's people, the elect, will be shortened (cf. Matt. 24:22)." — E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel. A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1949), p. 162. See also M. A. Beck, "Zeit, Zeiten, und eine halbe Zeit," in *Studia Biblica et Semitica*. Festschrift dedicated to Theodoro Christiano Vriezen (Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen N.V., 1966), p. 24. As this "shortened" period of three and a half years was about the actual length of the "great tribulation" upon the Jewish nation ("upon the land," Luke 21:23), some scholars conclude that the "42 months" at Rev. 11:2, expressed as three and a half "times" (*kairoi*) in Daniel, correspond to the "times (*kairoi*) of Gentiles" at Luke 21:24. Cf. Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988. Reprint of the 1898 ed.), pp. 237-238. [RETURN](#)

28 A detailed history of the long period of foreign control of Jerusalem is included in Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem. One City, Three Faiths* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1996). [RETURN](#)

29 An excellent critical overview of the applications of Luke 21:24 and other Biblical prophecies given by various expositors to Israel's conquest of Jerusalem in 1967 and the subsequent events is found in Dwight Wilson, *Armageddon Now!* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991; reprint of the 1977

edition), pp. 188-214. An update since 1977 is included in the Foreword of the 1991 edition, pp. xxv-xlii. [RETURN](#)

30 Eliezer Paltiel, *Vassals and Rebels in the Roman Empire. Julio-Claudian Policies in Judaea and the Kingdoms of the East* (= Collection Latomus, Volume 212) (Bruxelles: Latomus, Revue d'Étude Latines, 1991), pp. 158, 194-200, 321-30. [RETURN](#)

31 The forces of Vespasian at the beginning of the war in the Spring of 67 consisted of three Roman legions and 23 cohorts plus the auxiliary contingents contributed by the vassal kings. Adding up the figures, Josephus states that “the total strength of the forces, cavalry and infantry, *including the contingents of the kings*, totalled sixty thousand, other than the servants who followed in vast numbers and may properly be regarded as combatants, because they shared their military training; they always took part in their masters’ maneuvers in peace and in war and they shared their dangers, yielding to none but them in skill and prowess.” — Gaalya Cornfeld (General Editor), Benjamin Mazar, and Paul L. Maier, *Josephus. The Jewish War* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), Book III, 64-69. Emphasis added. Cf. the translators’ notes on pp. 214, 218.

The forces under the command of Titus in 70 C.E. numbered at least as many men as those under Vespasian three years earlier. Josephus does not give the total figure, but based on his information in *War* V, 39-46, Cornfeld *et al* estimate the total number to have been “about 60,000 legionaries and auxiliaries, plus the numerous train of followers and freed slaves, an adequate force required for the capture of a large fortified city like Jerusalem.” — G. Cornfeld *et al*, *op. cit.*, p. 321; cf. also Josephus’ *War* VII, 17-19. [RETURN](#)

32 According to the standard editions of the Septuagint (A. Rahlfs 1935, J. Ziegler 1954). One manuscript, Papyrus 967, discovered in Egypt in 1931, has “a *king (basileús)* of gentiles” instead of “a *kingdom (basileía)* of gentiles.” As this is the earliest extant manuscript of the LXX version of Daniel (dated to the 2nd, or early 3rd century C.E.), it may well preserve the original reading. It is also closer to the Hebrew text, which speaks of a “prince,” not of his kingdom. — See Angelo Geissen (ed.), *Der Septuaginta-Text des Buches Daniel* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag GmbH, 1968), pp. 38, 39, 42, 214-217. [RETURN](#)

33 As noted above (section D-2), 1 Maccabees 4:60, too, uses the plural *éthnê*, “gentiles” or “nations,” in referring to the armies of Antiochus Epiphanes. A similar use of the plural “nations” or “gentiles” is found at Zechariah 12:3 and 14:2, which prophesy of future attacks on Jerusalem by “all the nations” (LXX: *pánta tà éthnê*). In both chapters the plural “nations” or “gentiles” evidently refers to an army of gentiles that would attack Jerusalem. These prophecies have been variously interpreted, but it is interesting to notice that a number of scholars have found their fulfilment in the two most devastating attacks on Jerusalem after the Babylonian desolation in 587 B.C.E., namely, that of the armies of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167-164 B.C.E. and that of the Roman armies in the war of 67-70 C.E. — See, for example, the thorough treatment of Zechariah 12 in Dr. C. H. H. Wright, *Zechariah and His Prophecies, Considered in Relation to Modern Criticism* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1879; reprinted by Klock & Klock in 1980), pp. 355-406. [RETURN](#)

34 Compare, for example, the definite form of “the abomination of desolation” at Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, which was a concept that the Jewish listeners undoubtedly recognized from the book of Daniel. [RETURN](#)

35 Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (see note 23 above), p. 445. This is also stressed by C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.* (note 7 above), p. 52. [RETURN](#)

36 See chapter 6 above, section B-4. As pointed out there, the Theodotion version of Daniel uses *kairoí* for “times” in chapter 4. [RETURN](#)

37 The British & Foreign Bible Society’s *The Translator’s New Testament* (1973) similarly renders the phrase as, “the appointed times of the Gentiles.” [RETURN](#)

38 See, for example, the discussions in TDNT (see note 14 above), Vol. III (1965), p. 455; C. Brown, Vol. III (see note 13 above), pp. 833ff., and in Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 395. See also the discussion of

*kairós* in the Watch Tower Society's Bible dictionary *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1 (1988), p. 132. [RETURN](#)

39 James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962), pp. 20-46. See also the informative article on *kairós* by C. H. Pinnock in G. W. Bromiley (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ISBE), Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), pp. 852-853. [RETURN](#)

40 *Ibid.*, p. 42. If the use of *kairós* at Luke 21:24 means something more than just a period of time, the emphasis would most probably be on time as an opportunity. The "times of Gentiles" would then mean their times of triumph over Jerusalem, the opportunity allotted them to trample down and destroy the city. The length of this period could very well have been divinely "determined" or "appointed" in advance. [RETURN](#)

41 C. H. Dodd, *op. cit.* (note 7 above), p. 52. [RETURN](#)

42 Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, Vol. II (note 12 above), p. 180. [RETURN](#)

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181. [RETURN](#)

44 Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalypics* (see note 27 above), p. 367. [RETURN](#)