

THE PROPHECY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE. AN EXTREMELY POPULAR SERMON WHICH LUTHER PREACHED SOON AFTER THE PEASANT'S REVOLT OF 1525 HAD BEEN RUTHLESSLY CRUSHED. IN IT LUTHER WARNS THE GERMAN NATION OF COMING DISASTER, UNLESS THEY RECOGNIZE THE TIME OF THEIR VISITATION THROUGH THE GOSPEL.

1. [THE WOEFUL HISTORY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM YOU CAN READ IN BOOKS, FROM WHICH THOSE WHO WISH WILL EASILY UNDERSTAND THIS GOSPEL.]

Sermon for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity; Luke 19:41-48

A Sermon by Martin Luther; taken from his Church Postil.

[Ed. This sermon appeared first in the year 1525 and was issued in pamphlet form in nearly a dozen separate editions. From this we conclude that it awakened a great interest among the people, as it certainly ought to have done. It bore the title: "A sermon on destruction of Jerusalem. In like manner will Germany also be destroyed, if she will not recognize the time of her visitation. What the temple of God is. Martin Luther. Wittenberg, 1525."]

PART I. THE PROPHECY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

1. This Gospel presents that which took place on Palm Sunday, when Christ rode into Jerusalem. On this occasion, he preached two or three days in the temple, which was more than he ever did before at one time. The sum and substance of this Gospel is, that Christ grieves and laments over the afflictions of those who despise God's Word.

2. Now you have often heard what the Word of God is, what it brings us, and what kind of scholars it has. Of all this nothing is said here. Only the punishment and distress which shall come upon the Jews because they would not recognize the time of their visitation, are here described. And let us well consider this, because the time of their visitation also deeply concerns us. If they are punished who do not know the time of their visitation, what will be done to those who maliciously persecute, blaspheme and disgrace the Gospel and the Word of God? However, here he only speaks of those who do not know it.

3. There are two methods of preaching against the despisers of God's Word. The first is by threats, as Christ threatens them in Mat. 11:21-24: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum (which was his own city, where he performed most of his mighty works), shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto hell; for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." With these threatening words he would frighten them to their senses, and not to cast to the winds the Word which God sends them.

4. The other method the Lord gives here when he weeps, and shows his sympathy for the poor blinded people, and rebukes and threatens them, not as the hardened and stubbornly blind; but when he melts in love and compassion over his enemies, and with great heart-rending pity and cries, he tells them what shall befall them, which he would gladly prevent, but all is in vain. In the passage just quoted, Mat. 11:21-24, where he rebukes them, he does not treat them in love, but in the severity of faith. However here, it is all sincere love and mercy. This is worthy of our consideration.

5. First, as he approached the city they went before and followed him with songs of great joy, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and spread their garments in the way and cut branches from the trees and strewed them in the way; the whole scene was most glorious. But in the midst of all this joy he begins to weep. He permits all the world to be joyful, while he himself was bowed with grief, when he beheld the city and said: "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things that belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

6. As though he would say: Oh, if you only knew what belongs to your peace, that you might not be destroyed, but be preserved with both temporal and eternal peace, you would yet this day consider, and redeem the time! And now it is high time for You to know what is for your highest welfare. But you are blind, and will neglect the opportunity, until there shall be neither help nor counsel. As though to say: Here you stand, firmly built, and within you are strong and mighty men, who, secure and happy, think there is no danger! Yet, about forty years more, and you shall be utterly destroyed The Lord plainly says this in these words: "For the days shall come upon thee, when thy enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side and shall dash thee to the ground and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation."

7. But the Jews were stubborn, and depended on God's promises, which they thought meant nothing else than that they should continue forever. They were secure, and vainly thought: God will not do such things to us. We own the temple; here God himself dwells; besides we have mighty men, money and treasures enough to defy all our enemies! For even the Romans, and the emperor after he had conquered the city, confessed that the city was so well and firmly built, that it would have been impossible to take it, had God not especially willed it. Therefore they trusted in their own glory, and built their confidence on a false delusion, which finally deceived them.

8. The Lord, however, saw deeper into the future than they when he said: O, Jerusalem! if thou hadst known what I know, thou wouldst seek thy peace. Peace in the Scriptures means, when all things go well with us. You now think you have pleasant days, but if you knew how your enemies will encamp round about you, compass you about and hedge you in on every side, crush you to the ground and demolish all your beautiful buildings, and leave not one stone upon another; you would eagerly accept the Word, which brings to you solid peace and every blessing.

9. God caused his threats to be executed even thus, that the city was besieged at the time of the Easter festival, when the Jews were assembled within the walls of Jerusalem from every land, and as the historian Josephus writes, there were together at that time about three million people. This was an enormous multitude. Only one hundred thousand people would have been enough to crowd the city. But all this great multitude God in his wrath intended to bake, melt and weld together into one mass of ruin. Yet, the Apostles and Christians were all out of the city, they had withdrawn into the land of Herod, Samaria, Galilee, and were scattered among the heathen. Thus God separated and saved the good grain and poured the chaff into one place. There was such an immense multitude of Jews present., that they were sufficient to devour a whole kingdom, to say nothing of only one city. They also fell into such distress and famine, that they devoured everything and had nothing left, until they were at last compelled to eat their leather bow-strings, shoe latches and shoe leather; and finally mothers moved by their distress butchered their own children, which the soldiers snatched from them, for they smelt the odor of the boiling meat through the squares of the city. They used dove's dung for salt, which commanded a high price. In short, there was distress and bloodshed enough to melt a rock to tears; so that no one could have believed that God's wrath could be so horrible and that he would so unmercifully martyr a people. The buildings and the streets were piled full of the dead, who perished from starvation, and yet the Jews were so raging that they defied God and refused to yield, until the emperor was compelled to use force and capture the city, when they could no longer maintain their ground.

10. And as some Jews were such rogues as to swallow their money so that it could not be taken from them, the soldiers thought that they all had swallowed their money; therefore they cut them open by the thousands, hunting for it. The slaughter and destruction were so great, that even the heathen were moved to compassion, and the emperor was forced to give orders no longer to destroy them, but to take them prisoners and sell them as slaves. The Jews then became so cheap, that thirty were sold for a penny; and thus they were scattered throughout the whole world, and were everywhere despised as the vilest people on earth, and thus they are everywhere regarded at the present day, everywhere dispersed, without a city or a country of their own, and they can never meet again as they vainly believe to establish their priesthood and kingdom. Thus God avenged the death of Christ and all his prophets, and paid them back because they knew not the day of their visitation.

APPLICATION TO GERMANY.

11. Here let us learn a lesson, for this concerns us, not us alone who are here present, but the whole country of Germany. It is not a mere jest, nor should we think that it will go different with us. The Jews would not believe until they experienced it and became conscious of it. God has now also visited us, and has opened the precious treasures of his holy Gospel unto us, by which we can learn God's will, and see how we were held by the power of the devil. Yet no one will earnestly believe it, yea, we much more despise it and make light of it. No city, no officer of the government is thankful for the Gospel; and what is still worse the great majority persecute and blaspheme it. God has great patience; he waits to see how we will deal with his Gospel; but when we once let the opportunity slip, he will take his Word from us, and then the wrath which consumed the Jews will also consume us. For it is one and the selfsame Word, the very same God, and the identical Christ, the Jews themselves had; therefore the punishment in body and soul will also most certainly be the same.

[We, of course, regard it as mockery, and care nothing for it. This is only an evidence of our own blindness. We ought to perceive that God is hardening us; for there is not a single city that is concerned about it; no officer of the law shows any zeal in its favor. It is most deplorable.]

And I fear the time will yet come when Germany will lay in a heap of ruins. The evil winds have already begun to blow destruction in our peasant war. We have already lost many people. Nearly one hundred thousand men, only between Easter and Pentecost! It is an awful work of God, and I fear it will not stop at this. It is only a foretaste of a threat to frighten us, that we may prepare ourselves for the coming ordeal. So far it is but a fox's tail, but God will soon come with a terrible scourge, and lash us to pieces.

12. But we will act just like the Jews, and care nothing for it, until all help and counsel are lost forever. Now we might check it, for now it is high time for us to know what is best for us, and accept the Gospel in peace, while grace is brought, and peace is offered unto us. But we permit one day after another, one year after another to pass, and do even less than formerly. No one prays now, no one is in earnest. When the time is past, prayers will be of no avail. We do not lay it to heart, and think we are safe, and do not see the awful calamity which has already begun, and are not aware that God so dreadfully punishes us with false prophets and sects, which he sends us everywhere, and who preach so securely as though they had swallowed the Holy Spirit whole. Those whom we had thought were the very best among us, go to work and lead the people astray, until they scarcely know what to do or leave undone.

13. But this is only a beginning, although it is frightful and terrible enough. For there is no greater distress and calamity than when God sends us sects and false spirits, because they are so impudent and daringly bold, that they are really to be pitied. On the other hand the Word of God is such a great treasure, that no one can sufficiently comprehend its worth. For God himself considers his treasure immensely great, and when he visits us with his grace, he earnestly desires that we should gladly and freely accept it, and does not compel us as he is able to do, but it is his will that we should gladly obey it from choice and love. For he does not wait until we come to him, but he comes first to us. He comes into the world, becomes man, serves us, dies

for us, rises again from the dead, sends us his Holy Spirit, gives us his Word, and opens heaven so wide that all men can enter; besides he gives us rich promises and assurances that he will care for us in time and in eternity, here and there, and pours out into our bosoms all the fulness of his grace. Therefore the acceptable time of grace is now at hand. Yet, we neglect it, and cast it to the winds, so that he will not and cannot give it to us.

14. For when we fall and sin in other ways, he can better spare us and be lenient, he of course will spare us and forgive; but when we despise his Word, it calls for punishment, and he will also punish us, even if he delays a hundred years. But he will not wait that long. And the clearer the Word is preached the greater the punishment will be. I fear it will be the destruction of all Germany. Would to God I were a false prophet in this matter. Yet it will most certainly take place. God cannot permit this shameful disregard of his Word to go unpunished, nor will he wait long, for the Gospel is so abundantly proclaimed that it has never been as plainly and clearly taught since the days of the Apostles, as it is at present. God be praised! Hence it applies to Germany, as I fear it will be destroyed, unless we act differently.

15. We, who have heard the Gospel for a long time, ought earnestly to pray God that he continue to grant us peace. The princes and officers want to settle everything with the sword, and too impudently interfere with God's office, until God himself shall smite them down. So it is high time faithfully to beseech God to permit his Gospel to be further spread through Germany, to those who have not yet heard it. For if the punishment came suddenly upon us, all will be lost, and many souls will be taken before the Gospel comes to them. Therefore I wish that we would not so terribly despise the Gospel, the costly treasure, not only for our own sakes, but also for the sake of those who have not yet heard it. It has become a little quiet, God grant that it may so continue, and that both the princes and the citizens may become more sane; for if it should begin afresh, I fear it would have no end.

16. But we act just like the Jews, who cared more for the belly than for God. They were more concerned how to fill their stomachs than how to be saved. For this reason they have lost both, and have been served just right. Because they would not accept eternal life and peace, God took their bodily life, so that they have lost both body and soul. They also immediately put forth the excuse, just as our own people do today. We would of course gladly accept the Gospel, if it would not place our bodies and property in jeopardy, and if thereby we would not hazard the loss of our wives and children. For the Jews said, if we believe in him, the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation, John 11:48. As nothing will happen sooner than what the wicked fear, as Solomon says, Prov. 10:24: "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him." This prevented the Jews to believe God, and they did not consider the great and rich promises God bestowed upon them. So we also pass them by, and are not aware of the all powerful and comfortable promises Christ gives when he says, Mat. 19:29: Ye shall receive a hundredfold here, and there ye shall inherit eternal life. Let wife and child go, I will care for them, and restore them again to you. Only courageously trust in me. [Do you not think that I can build you another house? Do you regard me as being a hard man? Yet I will give you heaven; will you not risk it on my Word?] If you are robbed of your treasures, blessed are ye, heaven and earth are mine, I will reward you a hundredfold.

17. We pass over these and many like passages, and besides despise them, and depend only on what we have in our banks, and how we may keep our purses filled, and do not consider that God has also given us what we have, and will still give us more; nor do we consider that when we lose God, the stomach will also be lost. Therefore we are served just right in losing both the creator and the creature besides.

18. But believers in God risk all in him and transfer all things into his care, for him to do according to his pleasure, and think thus: God has given you your home and wife, you have not produced them Yourself; now because they are God's, I will entrust them all to his care, he will keep them from all harm. I must otherwise leave all at any rate, therefore I will bravely trust him with them, and for his sake give up all I have. If God wants me here, he will give me other treasures, for he has promised to give enough for this life and for the

life to come. If he does not want me here, I owe him a death, which will bring me into eternal life; when he calls me, I will go trusting in his Word.

19. Whoever is not thus disposed, denies God, and must at the same time lose both, the present and the eternal life. The belly with its foul odors is our God, and prevents us from clinging to God's Word. First, I will be certain how I shall feed, and where my supplies are. The Gospel says: Trust in God; and your stomach shall most certainly be provided for, and have enough [without believing or trusting in it]. But if I have only five dollars they give me so much courage to think I have anyhow enough food for ten days, that I trust in such limited provisions, and do not trust God who fed me hitherto, that he will care for me tomorrow.

20. Is it not a shameful vexation or calamity that I trust in a penny that I will have something to eat tomorrow? How contemptible this carcass! Shall a penny have more weight in my heart and give me more courage than God himself, who holds heaven and earth in his power, who gives us the air we breathe and the water we, drink, who makes our corn to grow and gives us all things? it is so scandalous that it cannot be uttered, that God should not amount to as much with us as a hundred guilders. Why not think that God, who has created me, will surely feed me, if he wants me to live? If he does not want this, very well, I shall be satisfied.

21. Yes, says the stomach, I find no God in my chest! You silly donkey, who assures you that you will live tomorrow? You are not certain whether you will have a belly tomorrow, and you want to know where to find the bread and the food! Yes, you have a fine assurance! When our hearts are thus prompted, we see what a government of hell there would be on earth; yes, it would be the devil himself. Is it not a thing most abominable, that God who feeds so many mouths, should be held in such low esteem by me, that I will not trust him to feed me? Yea, that a guilder, thirty-eight cents, should be valued more highly than God, who pours out his treasures everywhere in rich profusion. For the world is full of God and his works. He is everywhere present with his gifts, and yet we will not trust in him, nor accept his visitation. Shame on thee, thou cursed world! What kind of a child is that, who cannot trust in God for a single day, but trusts in a guilder?

22. Now, I think, we see what the world is, how on account of the belly the world despises God, and yet must lose the belly together with body and soul. Oh, what godless people we are, and yet we are to spit upon or despise the world. If one would consider that he is such a godless wretch, that he cannot trust in God, he would not wish to live. Only choke away; for as captives we stick too deeply in the old Adam. The world is hell in prospect, yea, the real kingdom of Satan, a court yard in hell, except that the body is still here, otherwise it is true hell.

23. For this reason Christ admonishes us with tears to know our salvation and accept his visitation, that the calamity may not follow, which will surely come upon those who do not accept it, who are secure, until swift and sudden destruction comes upon them. May God give us grace, that we may know ourselves! The Gospel further reads: "And he entered into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold, saying unto them: It is written, And my house shall be a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of robbers."

PART II. THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.

24. This is the second part of our Gospel, where the Lord takes hold of matters in earnest with his powerful hand, when he goes into the temple and casts out those who bought and sold there. For the first part was nothing but an admonition and incentive unto faith. Here the Lord now tells us what the temple of God is, and quotes passages from the Scriptures, and especially from the prophet Isaiah, 56:7, where God says: "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." You, however, have made it a house of merchandise. This is a strong passage which the prophet utters: "for all peoples, for all Gentiles," is against the Jews, who trusted in the temple of God at Jerusalem, and thought that this material house in Jerusalem would stand forever, and that it was impossible for God to demolish this temple or destroy this city. The Word of God does not lie. For this reason they also murdered Stephen, because he spoke against that holy

place and said, Acts 6:14: "Jesus shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us." And they said: have not the prophets praised this house, and Christ himself says here, that it is a house of prayer, and you Apostles say, he will destroy it.

25. But we must rightly understand this expression, that the city of Jerusalem, the temple and the people, should remain until the time of Christ. With this agree all the prophets, who have given all things into the hands of Christ; as he would then dispose of it, so it should be and remain. Hence the passage in Isaiah goes no further than unto the times of Christ, as also all the prophets say, that after that there shall come a kingdom extending over the whole world, as in Malachi 1:10-11 we read: "For from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah of hosts." Here the prophet speaks of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, who shall build himself a house of prayer as extensive as the whole world.

26. It is true that God himself has established the temple at Jerusalem, not because it consisted of beautiful stones and costly buildings, or because it was consecrated by bishops, as at present men employ such foolery and juggling tricks; but God himself had consecrated and sanctified it with his Word, when he said: This house is my house! for his Word was preached in it. Now, wherever God's Word is preached, there is God's own true house, there God most certainly dwells with his grace. Wherever his Gospel is, there is a house of prayer, there men shall and may truly pray, and God will also hear their prayer, as Christ in John 16:23-24 says: "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full." Here again, where the Word is not found, there the devil has full sway.

27. That we have imitated the Jews and built so many churches, would be well enough, if we had done it in order that the Word of God might be preached there; for where the Word goes there God is present, and looks down from heaven and pours out his grace. Therefore he says to the Jews here: I will not that you should make out of my house a den of robbers. For there were money changers in it who sold sheep and oxen, that strangers might buy them for their offerings in divine service. Why then does he call it a den of robbers? Surely, he gives it a scandalous name. He does it however because they no longer appreciate the house as the house of God, but as a market house; that is, the priests did not inquire how the Word of God was preached in it, although they sang, they babbled and read the prophets and Moses; but God cares nothing for such a murmuring of Psalms; that belongs to children.

28. They did just as our priests and monks do now, who have also made dens of robbers of our churches and cloisters, and have preached poison, and held masses only that the people might give them money and presents for holding them that they might thus fill their stomachs. They made the church a market house, in which they carried on their idle talk, corrupted and destroyed the sheep of God's pastures by their scandalous false doctrine, that it may well be called a robber's den for the soul. This title we should write on all churches in which the Gospel is not preached, for there they mock God, destroy souls, banish the pure Word and establish dens of murder; for he who listens to their words must die. Oh, how shamefully we have been deceived! Now, however, we should praise God, that this Word again brings us life, drives out the murderers, and teaches us how to pray aright; for an honest heart must pray, not with the mouth, but with the heart.

THE CONCLUSION.

29. Thus we have heard the second part of our Gospel, how Christ drove out the merchants that pandered to base appetites, and made room for his Word. It would be a good thing, in this same way to cleanse our cloisters, and turn them into schools or preaching places; if this is not done they will be and continue to be nothing but dens of robbers; for if Christ calls his own house a den of robbers, how much more will our

churches and temples, not consecrated by God, be called dens of robbers?

30. I have often requested you to pray God to turn his wrath and restrain the devil now in the world. For you have undoubtedly heard of the great calamity, how many have been slain in the insurrection. We fear they have all been lost, for God requires obedience, and has himself pronounced the sentence, Mat. 26:52: "For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." The devil has taken possession of the world, who knows when our turn will come. Therefore let us pray that God's kingdom may come and Christians may be multiplied, that he send wise and intelligent ministers to care for the people and listen to their wants. He who knows the gift of God prays for others who have not yet heard the Word, it is high time to do so. [Pray the Lord's Prayer.]

31. Well, wherever this calamity begins and prevails, that the people maliciously despise the day God visits us with his Word and grace, for the sake of the belly and a little temporal benefit and advantage; there must follow as a consequence of such treatment the final punishment and wrath of God, who will utterly destroy them, remove the foundation of their trust, and overthrow the country and the people, so that both temporal and eternal interests go down together. For how shall he otherwise treat us, because of our scandalous ingratitude for his great love and mercy which he publicly declared unto us by his gracious visitation? How shall or can he do more for us, while we with wantonness and defiance spurn his help, and ever struggle and strive after wrath and destruction? For if those are not free of punishment who transgress the law and sin against the ten commandments; how much less will he permit those to go unpunished, who blaspheme and despise the Gospel of his grace, Seeing the law by far does not bring as many good things as the Gospel?

32. If we will not wish to enjoy this happy day which he gives us unto grace and our salvation, he can also instead permit us to see and experience nothing but the dark and terrible night of all affliction and misfortune. And since we will not hear this precious Word and the proclamation of peace, we will be forced to hear the devil's cry of murder ring in our ears from every direction. Now is the time for us to know the day, and well employ the rich and golden year, while the annual fair is before our very doors, and acknowledge that he has severely punished us. If we neglect it and allow it to pass, we can never hope for a better day or expect any peace; for the Lord, who is the Lord of peace, will be with us no longer.

33. But if Christ be no longer with us, our hope will vanish; and wherever this beloved guest is rejected, and his Christians no longer tolerated, government, peace and everything shall perish, for he too desires to eat with us, to rule and to provide bountifully. However, he desires also to be known as such a Lord, in order that we may be thankful to him, and also permit this guest and his Christians to eat with us, and give him his due tribute; if not, we will then be forced to give it to another, who will so thank and reward us for it, that we shall not be able to retain a bite of bread or a penny in peace. But the world will not believe this, just as the Jews also would not believe it, until they experienced it, and faith came to their assistance. For God has ordained, that this Christ shall be Lord and King upon the earth, under whose feet he has put all things, and whoever would have peace and good days, must be kind and obedient to him, or he will be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel. Ps. 2:9.

THE SECOND PART OF THIS GOSPEL.

"And he entered into the temple, and began to cast out those that sold, saying unto them: It is written, And my house shall be a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers."

34. Here he shows the aim of his great activity, and what concerns him most of all, which was also the cause of his weeping. It is indeed a terrible history, that he who so recently wept out of great sympathy and compassion, so soon can change and come forth in great anger, (for our beloved Lord burns with great devotion and zeal), and goes into the temple as in a storm, and strikes with his uplifted arm as the Lord of the temple, of course with an excellent and warm spirit by which he is moved, beholding the chief cause of distress and the destruction, of which he spoke and over which he wept; namely, that the chief government,

which should be God's own and be called his temple, is all perverted and desolate, God's Word and true worship entirely suppressed and corrupted, even by those who would be leaders and teachers of the people, on account of their disgraceful greed and their own glory. He would say by this: Yes, it is this, that will completely bring on the calamity, and make an end of everything among this people.

35. Therefore, as merciful and compassionate as he showed himself to be to the poor multitude of people who are so wretchedly misled to their destruction; so great was the anger he showed against those who are the cause of this destruction. Otherwise he did not often resort to physical force and cause an uproar, as he does here, so that it is a strange act for an excellent and kind man, so full of love. But the cause of it is the great and powerful zeal and fervency of Spirit, which sees whence all affliction and sorrow come, namely, because the true worship of God is abolished and the name of God is so blasphemed that it is used merely for a show.

36. For the temple and the whole priesthood were ordained for the purpose of enforcing God's Word, to praise his grace and mercy, etc.; and to testify to this and thank him for his Word by an external worship of offerings. However, they did not teach praise and thanksgiving to God, but instead they perverted it into the doctrine of monks and works, so that with such offerings one merited the grace of God, and if they only offered a great deal, God would give them heaven and every good thing on earth. And hence they built their hopes for everything, which they ought to look for out of pure grace and mercy of God, on their own works and merits. And besides they were misled so far in the devil's name, that their avarice set up there in the temple tables for bankers and counters for traders in doves and all kinds of cattle used for offerings, so that those coming from distant lands and cities could find enough there to purchase, or if they had no money, they might barter for or borrow it, so that there might by all means be as many and as great offerings as possible. Thus under the name of divine worship the true worship of God was overthrown and rooted out; and they substituted for God's grace and goodness their own merits, and for his free gift their own works, which he was obliged to accept from us and thank us for them, and allow himself to be treated as an idol, compelled to do what pleases us, be angry or laugh, just as we wish it; and besides satiate their outrageous greed, by such idolatrous doings, and without any sense of shame carry on a public annual fair.

37. Just as our Pope's crowd, priests and monks, also did, who taught nothing but to trust in human works, and on this doctrine constructed everything in their church government, so that the people are compelled to purchase these things from them, who thus established a daily public fair over the whole world. And nothing was omitted that could be made to serve their greed, and for money they sold God, Christ, the Sacrament of the mass, absolution, and forgiveness of sins, the loosing and binding key. And to this must be added their own invented human nonsense, which they pretend is divine worship, such as the brotherhood of monks, and their own superfluous merits; yea, even to put upon the dead a monk's hood and cords; likewise the bishop's and priest's nasty oil, all kinds of bones of the dead which they call holy, letters of indulgence to eat butter, married women, children of priests and the like. All this had to bring and yield them money daily.

38. And especially the great rat king at Rome with his Judas purse, which is the great money gulch that in the name of Christ and the church has appropriated to itself all the possessions of the world. For he has reserved unto himself the power to forbid whatever he pleased and again to allow it for money, even to take and give kingdoms, whenever and as often as he pleased, and taxed lords and kings as it suited him.

This is a much more infamous and barefaced perversion of the temple of God into a house of merchandise, than was perpetrated by the Jews at Jerusalem. For it belonged to Antichrist, as is prophesied of him, to levy and collect for himself the treasures of the world; and St. Peter speaking of such a hoard in 2 Pet. 2:3 says: "And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not."

39. Therefore Christ is justly angry at such desecration of his temple by these bloated misers, who do not

only despise and forsake the true worship of God, but also pervert it and trample it under their feet. And thus they truly make out of the temple which God ordained for the purpose of teaching the people the Word of God and guiding them to heaven, nothing but a den of robbers, where nothing but the destruction and the murder of immortal souls take place, because they silence God's Word, through which alone souls can be saved, and instead they are fed on the devil's lies, etc.

This is truly the chief sin and principal cause, why the Jews with their temple and all they had, deserved to go to destruction and ruin. For, as they destroyed the kingdom of God itself, he will no longer build up their kingdom for them. Wherefore he says: Because you go to work, and instead of my kingdom you build the kingdom of Satan, so will I also work against you, and will destroy everything utterly, that I have built for you. This is an example he began to do on that very day when he rushed among them in the temple, as his last public act before his death, which after his departure the Romans would effectually complete; namely, they with all they had would be totally swept away, as he cleanses his temple of them, that they may no more possess either their worship, temple nor priesthood, country or people.

40. He has, God be praised, even commenced to overthrow our idols and spectres, and Popery's abominable merchandise of perfidy, and to purify his churches through the Gospel, also as a prelude, that it may be seen that he will also make an end of them, as before our eyes they have already begun to fall, and they must daily fall more and more, and they will be much more horribly dashed to the earth and everlastingly destroyed, than the Jews were destroyed and exterminated, because theirs is still a much more shameful abomination. This shall first properly begin when the Gospel has departed on account of their disgraceful, horrible blasphemy; but it will finally come to an end on the last day and be completely and forever destroyed.

41. Let Germany, which, praise to God, now has the Gospel, beware, that she may not meet the same fate, as it already so strongly everywhere indicates she will. For we dare not think that the contempt and unthankfulness, which are gaining control among us as great as among the Jews, will remain unpunished. After that he will let the godless world complain and cry: If the Gospel had not come, such things would not have come upon us; just like the Jews at Jerusalem blamed all their calamities to the preaching of the Gospel, and they themselves at the risk of their own necks prophesied that if Christ with his Gospel should continue, the Romans would come and take away their place and nation. And afterward also, even the Romans blamed their destruction to this new God and new doctrine. Just as it is said at present, since the Gospel has appeared things have never been right.

42. And thus it will also go with the world; as its people despise and persecute God's Word, and become so hardened and blinded, they will blame no one as the cause and merit of their destruction but the precious Gospel itself; which nevertheless alone preserves, thank God, what is still preserved; otherwise all things would long since lay in one common heap of ruins. And yet it must bear the blame for everything that the devil and his clans transact. Because people continue to blaspheme and will not recognize what our sins deserve and the grace and mercy which we have in the Gospel, God must thus repay such blasphemers, so that they become their own prophets, and for a double wickedness receive a double reward.

This premonition has already gone forth, except that it is yet withheld on account of the faithful few; just as he beforehand admonished the Jews by this example when he cast those that sold and bought out of the temple, and afterwards went into the temple himself and finally taught until the day of his death, and yet for a time withheld as long as he could, and afterwards by his Apostles until they would no longer tolerate them; so now we, who cleave to Christ, restrain punishment as long as we live; but when these too shall lay down their heads, then the world will realize what it once had.

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