

## Tale of Two Cities

### I. We Have a Choice

#### A. Nineveh, the Assyrians

Jonah 1:1–3 (NIV84®)

<sup>1</sup> The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup> **“Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”** <sup>3</sup> But Jonah ran away from the Lord . . .

Jonah 3:1–10 (NIV84®)

<sup>1</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> **“Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”** <sup>3</sup> Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. <sup>4</sup> On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: **“Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.”** <sup>5</sup> **The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.** <sup>6</sup> When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. <sup>7</sup> Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: **“By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. <sup>8</sup> But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. <sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”**

<sup>10</sup> **When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.**

#### B. Jerusalem, the “City of the Great King”

Luke 19:41–44 (NIV84®)

<sup>41</sup> As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it <sup>42</sup> and said, **“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. <sup>44</sup> They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”**

Luke 13:34–35 (NIV84®)

**“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! <sup>35</sup> Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”**

#### **Interdict, Definition: A ban that prohibits participation**

Matthew 21:43–46 (NIV84®)



<sup>43</sup> “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup> He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.”

<sup>45</sup> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. <sup>46</sup> They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

### **A Series of Gentile Empires (Ruled with Brutality)**

John 18:37–40 (NIV84®)

<sup>37</sup> “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. . . . With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him. <sup>39</sup> But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” <sup>40</sup> They shouted back, “No, not him! **Give us Barabbas!**” Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

Acts 3:13–15 (NIV84®)

<sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. <sup>14</sup> **You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.** <sup>15</sup> You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

### **The Final Chapter**

Ezekiel 37:11–14 (NIV84®)

<sup>11</sup> Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’” <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: **O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.** <sup>13</sup> Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. <sup>14</sup> I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’”

Luke 21:24 (NIV84®)

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.

## **II. What Will We Choose**

### **A. Beyond “My Salvation”**

Acts 26:28–29 (NKJV®)

<sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, “**You almost persuade me to become a Christian.**” <sup>29</sup> And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.”



Acts 2:36–41 (NIV84®)

<sup>36</sup> “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” <sup>37</sup> When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, **“Brothers, what shall we do?”** <sup>38</sup> Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” <sup>40</sup> With many other words **he warned them; and he pleaded with them,** “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” <sup>41</sup> **Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

Acts 5:40–42 (NIV84®)

They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup> The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. <sup>42</sup> **Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.**

## B. Springtime “Planting Season” — 10 Weeks of Intent

- ❖ **Easter: April 17**
- ❖ **Spring Festival: April 9 – May 8**
- ❖ **“Let’s Talk” . . . TRUTH BE TOLD — A Faith Conversation**

Colossians 4:5–6 (NIV84®)

<sup>5</sup> Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. <sup>6</sup> Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father,

We humble ourselves in repentance; we need Your help. Open our hearts to receive spiritual wisdom and understanding that we might know Your will. We ask this that we may live a life worthy of the Lord and please You in every way—bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power that we might have patience to complete our assignment, and ultimately to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of Light. Amen. (Adapted from Col 1:9-13)