

A Lessons from the destruction of Jerusalem:

❖ **The rejection of the love of God.**

- Jesus wept as he approached Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). He knew that they would suffer the well-deserved consequences of their stubborn rejection of God's loving calls (Matt. 23:37).
- He cried because the tragedy could have been avoided. Because God loves us so much that he does not want anyone to die, but for everyone to have eternal life (Jn . 5:39-40; Ezek. 18:31-32).
- History tells us that the Jews rebelled in the year 66 against Roman abuses. The various Jewish factions fought among themselves, while the Romans laid siege to the city. In the year 70 everything ended. Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. One million Jews perished.
- But history does not tell us how Satan incited the Jews to rebellion, and the Romans to revenge. The destruction of Jerusalem was the direct work of the devil. By turning away from the source of life, Israel was at the mercy of an enemy that only seeks destruction and death.

❖ **God's care for his people.**

- In his love, God gave an opportunity to everyone who wanted to escape destruction. He gave a sign: Jerusalem surrounded by armies (Luke 21:20).
- Gaius Cestius Gallus fulfilled that sign in the year 66. The siege was lifted, and the Zealot leader Eleazar ben Simon pursued the Romans and defeated them.
- Everyone who believed in Jesus' words took advantage of that moment when Jerusalem was left unguarded to flee.
- A few months later, Nero sent Vespasian to quell the rebellion. From the year 67 to 70, the siege was permanent.
- God can and wants to protect his children, even in the most difficult times (Ps. 46:1; Is . 41:10). However, many have lost their lives because of their faithfulness to God (Heb. 11:35-38).
- Why are some protected and others, apparently, abandoned by God?

B Lessons from the first Christians:

❖ **Fidelity in the pursuit.**

- The beginnings were truly hopeful: conversions numbered in the thousands (Acts 2:41; 4:4); the believers preached with power (Acts 4:31; 5:42).
- But the enemy was restless. First threats (Acts 4:17-18); then, punishments (Acts 5:40); finally, death (Acts 7:59).
- Because of the persecution raised by Saul, the disciples were scattered (Acts 8:1). But, far from the light going out, thanks to the faithfulness of the believers, it shone with much more brilliance throughout the entire known world (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21; Rom. 15:19; Col. 1:23).
- Jesus had given his Church a commission and the power to carry it forward (Acts 1:8). No power, physical or spiritual, can stop the advance of the gospel (Mt. 16:18; Rom. 8:31).

❖ **Help the needy.**

- What effect did the gospel have on the early Christians (Acts 2:42-47)?
- As ambassadors of Christ, they imitated Jesus. By caring for the needs of those around them, they gained the favor of the entire town.
- As then, the Church must be characterized by the love of Christians for each other, and by concern for their community.

❖ **Love, our sign of identity.**

- Each of the parties involved in the cosmic conflict has its own characteristics: Satan hates and destroys; God loves and restores.
- Followers of one party or another act according to these patterns. If we follow God, we will show it through the love shown to others (1Jn. 4:20-21).
- Christians of the 2nd and 3rd centuries put selfless love into practice. During two major pandemics (in the years 160 and 265), they dedicated themselves to caring for those affected, without taking into account their own safety.
- They gave themselves out of love, and they benefited millions of people. But they did not draw their attention to themselves, but to the one for whom they were willing to give their lives, their Savior: Jesus.