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R. C. SPROUL



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## Chapter One

# The Destruction of the Temple

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a serious potato famine struck the nation of Ireland. Facing starvation, multitudes of people fled to other countries to seek sustenance. Some boarded ships and sailed for the New World, with many finally landing in New York City. Among those immigrants was my great-grandfather, who came to the United States from Donegal in the northern province of Ulster. Since he wanted his children and grandchildren to remember their heritage, he told tales of former days in



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Ireland and encouraged all of the family to learn the songs of the Irish people. My mother sang Irish lullabies to us and permitted my sister and me to stay home from school each year on Saint Patrick's Day, when the Pittsburgh radio stations played Irish songs all day.

However, to this day, I think of myself more as an American than an Irishman. Although I've been to Europe many times, I've yet to go back to Ireland. On the other hand, my son has been more zealous about our ancestry, making sure that all eight of his children have Irish names. And as a tribute to his ancestry, he wore a kilt to his ordination service.

At my house, we left many of the markers of our ethnic identity behind, but for a Jew in antiquity, this would certainly not have been the case. The Jews are one of the most remarkable groups of people who have ever populated the face of the earth. In the first century AD alone, their nation was conquered, their temple destroyed, and their capital, Jerusalem, was burned to the ground, killing an estimated 1.1 million Jews. After this, most Jews were dispersed to the four corners of the world. They went to what are the modern-day nations of Russia, Poland, Hungary, Germany, and Holland, and to many other places. Even though Jews have been without a homeland for most

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of the past two millennia, they have never lost their ethnic and national identity.

This remarkable phenomenon is predicted in detail in the Olivet Discourse.

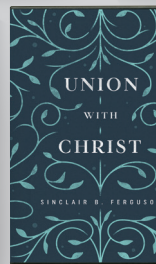
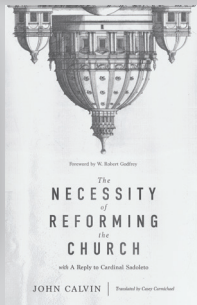
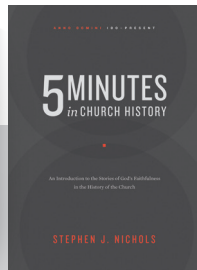
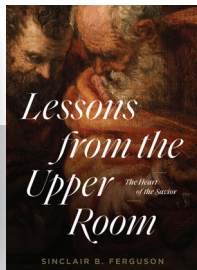
One of the most important and controversial chapters in all of the New Testament, the discourse, which is found in Matthew 24, is one of the most dramatic prophecies given by our Lord.

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” . . .

“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at

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around the world connect the deep truths  
of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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