

LAMENTING OVER JERUSALEM

Jesus' Last Words To Israel

Matthew 23:37-39

Since His promise to **Abraham**, God has chosen the **Jews** to be His *special people*. To this day, He continues to have a deep concern for their *struggles*...and a heavy burden for their *salvation* in Christ...their **Messiah**.

As Christians, if we truly love God, we must love His *chosen people* also. It's as true today as it was when God spoke to **Abraham**...

"I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

~Genesis 12:3

Throughout history, the **Jews** have been *heavily oppressed*...including attempts to *completely eradicate* them, as in the *Nazi holocaust*. Even though they have been scattered to every part of the world...they have survived and they continue to be *a distinct people*. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has studied Scripture. God has *pledged* to *preserve* His *chosen people* and will one day call them permanently back to Himself.

In the meantime...they cry out to a God who never answers...and they wonder why.

In the close of this, His last public message, Jesus gave the sobering answer to this question. Yet, He ends His message with *intense compassion* and with the *assurance* of Israel's ultimate *conversion*.

I. THE DESIRE: (vs. 37) *Intense compassion for Jerusalem.*

As Jesus approached **Jerusalem** the day before...**Luke** recorded...

"...He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes."

~Luke 19:41-42

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling (vs. 37)...

Jerusalem, Jerusalem...it means *city of peace*...and was often called the *holy city*. But over many centuries it had become the city

of *violence* and of *unholiness*. In the book of **Revelation** it is called *"...the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified"* (**Revelation 11:8**)... **Sodom** representing *moral perversion* and **Egypt** representing *pagan religion*. The *city of God* had become the *city of Satan*!

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her...Using **Jerusalem** as representative of all **Israel**, the Lord reminded the people of their *rebellion against Him*...and *against God* throughout history. Also, notice the *double* use of **Jerusalem**...always used to put *major emphasis* on what is about to be said.

"Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city..."

~Matthew 23:34

"The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third."

~Matthew 21:35

Kills and stones...both are **active participle verbs** indicating that they were still continuing to **kill** and **stone the prophets and wise men and scribes** (i.e. **Jesus**, **Stephen**, **the disciples**, etc.).

- There were more martyred Christians in the **20th century** than *all previous centuries combined*.
- Today, between **7,000 & 8,000** Christians die a martyred death for their faith *every year*.
- More than **one million** of the **1.5 million** Christians in **Iraq** have fled the country since the fall of **Saddam Hussein**...due to the increasing persecution.

How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings...There was a beautiful *intimacy* and *tenderness* in Jesus' words. But unfortunately, the nation of **Israel**, unlike **chicks** that naturally run to their mother **hen** in times of danger...*willfully refused* to turn to the Him.

"He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him."

~John 1:11

And you were unwilling...This emphasizes that they were culpable and responsible to make a choice and their choice to **unwillingly accept** Jesus as Messiah brought God's *wrath* and *judgment*.

The result was that their **house** was **left...desolate!** Beginning with the destruction of the **Temple...70 AD**.

II. **THE DESPAIR:** (vs. 38)

Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! (vs. 38)...

Because **Jews** are *God's chosen people* they are objects of Satan's *fiercest hatred*. Therefore when God *removed His protective hand* from **Israel**...it exposed her to the worst *wrath* and *anger* and *destruction* that Satan could bring upon a people.

Only a few days earlier Jesus had referred to the **Temple** as *His Father's house* (**Matthew 21:13**). Now He called it **your house**... because it had been so *profaned* and *desecrated*.

With God's *glory* and *protective hand* having been removed from **Israel**...the *house of God* is now *the Church*.

"...I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."

~I Timothy 3:15

In the *end times*, the *persecution* of the **Jews** will escalate into a *holocaust* like no other they have ever experienced. The suffering that will occur during this time is a period called *the time of Jacob's distress* (**Jeremiah 30:7**) in the **Old Testament**...and a time known in the **New Testament** as *the Great Tribulation*.

"For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will."

~Matthew 24:21

III. **THE DECLARATION:** (vs. 39)

But Jesus isn't through with the nation of **Israel** and the city of **Jerusalem**. Though He would soon depart...at a future time He will be seen again and *will be accepted...not rejected*.

"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn."

~Zechariah 12:10

For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me (vs. 39a)...For the *unbelieving* Jews listening to Him that day...and for all the other *unbelieving* Jews for generations to come, *these words were final*. Because *they had rejected God...God rejected them*. *He would no longer be their God...and they would no longer be His people...until...*

If it were not for Jesus' qualifying word **until**...that would have been their *final moment in history*...and the *theology of the Bible*, both in the **Old** and **New Testaments**, would be *radically altered*.

Jesus didn't say *"unless"* making **Israel's restoration conditional** and *only a possibility*...but **until**...making it *a certainty!*

Until you say, **"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"** (vs. 39b)...Only a few days earlier these very words from **Psalms 118:26** had been *shouted at Jesus by the multitudes* as He came into **Jerusalem** seated on the *donkey* (**Matthew 21:9**). They were words that all **Jews** associated *with the acclamation of the Messiah*...noting when He would come to *establish His kingdom on earth*.

One day with these *same words*, **Israel** will hail her **Messiah** in *faith*...and the Lord's hand of *blessing* and *protection* will once again be on her. In that day, **Israel** will be forever *redeemed, restored, and blessed*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **God is faithful to His word...He fulfills His covenants.**
- **Jesus is coming again...are you ready?**
- **No national heritage or religion will get you into heaven.**