

Lament over Jerusalem

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[0 : 00] Let us now turn to the passage that we read. Gospel according to Luke chapter 13, reading at verse 34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not.

Behold, your house is forsaken, and I tell you, you will not see me until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

For those who know your Bible, you will know that this is not the only time that this lament over Jerusalem is recorded.

You find it recorded in Matthew's Gospel towards the end of Jesus' public ministry, prior to his crucifixion.

The words are almost word for word as recorded in this chapter of Luke's Gospel, with very slight variation, which does not, in my view, alter the sense of what is being stated.

[1 : 33] In this chapter, behold, your house is forsaken. In Matthew's Gospel, see, your house is left to you desolate.

And in Matthew's Gospel, I tell you, you will not see me again. The again is not in Luke's Gospel until you say, and so on.

You may also be aware that Luke records for us a further instance of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem in chapter 19.

When he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace.

But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you because you did not know the time of your visitation.

[2 : 58] So you have these instances in the Gospels where Jesus is lamenting over the spiritual state of the citizens of Jerusalem.

And the citizens of Jerusalem, representative of the nation of Israel and by extension, representative of the citizens of the world.

And whatever else we may deduce from these passages and other passages in the Gospel, we can safely say that the Jesus to whom we are introduced in the Gospel narratives is a very passionate person.

A passionate person who experiences with full intensity every holy emotion of the human spirit.

And just to quote a couple of examples in Luke 10, for example, we are told of the return of the 72 who were sent out on their first mission trip.

[4 : 17] They returned joyful. And as you read down in that passage, you discover how Jesus rejoiced in the full exaltation of his Father's joy.

In that same hour, he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. Another example is when salesmen filled the temple with merchandise and Jesus was hungry.

He began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, it is written, my house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.

He wept at the grave of the one whom he loved. That was the message that was sent to him. He whom you love is sick.

And although there are other reasons for weeping at that grave because of the effect of death and the life of man, yet he wept at the grave of Lazarus.

[5 : 26] He offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews informs us speaking particularly of Gethsemane.

He had compassion. How often do you find this description? He had compassion. Or he was moved with compassion.

And the emotional movement was aroused, you know, Lord, by the sight of individual distress and also by the spectacle of man's universal misery.

B.B. Warfield. Perhaps some of you are familiar with the writings of B.B. Warfield. He makes the observation that Jesus' prime characteristic was love.

And love is the foundation of compassion. In John's Gospel, chapter 14, the end of the chapter, he sets before us the motive of his entire saving work and particularly of his offering of himself up.

[6 : 41] The time of his offering is at hand. And Jesus explains to his disciples, I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming.

He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

Frequently we hear that the motive of Jesus' earthly life and death is his love for sinful man. But in John's Gospel, it is presented as loving obedience to God the Father.

He had come to do the will of the Father. And because he loved the Father, his will he will do right to the very end.

He declares his purpose to be under the impulse of love, obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.

[7 : 50] It would be an accurate assessment, I believe, to state that no one has ever had a more dynamic, emotional life than the Lord Jesus Christ as one who went through life with partiality, intensity.

And our text today, I believe, gives us a window into the soul of the Savior in this tragic lament for the city of Jerusalem.

I have already alluded to the two other references to his lamenting over Jerusalem nearer to the close of his ministry.

But Luke records this one for us earlier in his Gospel while Jesus still on his journey to Jerusalem. although some commentators place this lamentation of Jesus, place it at the very close of his ministry, although Luke has placed it here.

That is a subject of debate that we won't enter into at the moment. Well, just a few thoughts. First of all, the context of the lament.

[9 : 13] Secondly, the content of the lament. Thirdly, the consequence of disregarding the lament.

And fourthly, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The content of the lament. It's helpful to remind ourselves the context in which it is placed.

Jesus has been speaking about the narrow door that gives entrance to eternal life. This teaching arose from what I can only term as a useless question.

We don't know who asked it. But somebody asked the question, Lord, will those who are saved be few?

Someone was trying to tempt Jesus into a number game. Jesus refuses to be drawn by this question and to offer speculation about numbers rather than be concerned about others.

[10 : 29] the implication of his response is that the priority is to focus on self in this matter.

In other words, what is my personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ? That's what ought to occupy our minds.

Not how many will be saved or how few will be saved, but what is our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ? That's where the emphasis is placed, not on the numbers.

The important thing for me and for you is to make sure that we have eternal life, that you and I have walked through the narrow door. And I believe that's one reason why he states that the door is narrow.

Now, we may make the assumption and many do, that there are innumerable doors to eternal life. And the emphasis of the gospel is there are not countless innumerable doors that lead to eternal life.

[11 : 40] There is only one. Jesus is the door. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved.

And we'll go in and out and find posture. And in that sense, the door is narrow. There is just the one. And as a consequence of this teaching, he is approached by a group of Pharisees and they give the impression that they have his well-being at heart.

That very hour, some Pharisees came and said to him, get away from here for Herod wants to kill you. It's difficult to be sure if this warning was well meant.

Coming from a supportive group among the Pharisees. You know, people sometimes say the opposite of what they mean.

I'll give you a very simple example. from very early in my ministry, in a place just like this community, where there would be three visiting ministers assisting at communion time.

[12:58] And people would come up to you and ask where you were going to be preaching on the Friday evening or the Sunday evening. In my naivety, I thought it was very flattering to be asked this and would tell until I realized that they were using a process of elimination to find out where the minister they really wished to hear was preaching.

So, if I am a little skeptical of this group and they're on the face of its concern for the well-being of Jesus, it's because they belong to a group of people of whom Luke speaks at the end of chapter 11. The scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard, that is Jesus, and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him to catch him in everything he might say.

In other words, they were a group of people who were trying to trip him up. Now, I cannot definitely rule, note, that their concern was not genuine.

But given how unflattering scripture it is about this group of people, you do have to ask, was their concern really genuine?

[14:23] They certainly seem to have access to Herod. How do we know? Well, from the response that Jesus gives. Go and tell that fox.

Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow not, now, today and tomorrow, these are not to be understood as literal, physical, 24-hour days.

But rather to be interpreted in this way, the time of present opportunity, a time that is short. on the third day, I finish my course.

And it's very obvious from his reply that however tempting the warning might be and the suggestion for Jesus to flee from Herod, that his resolve is to persist in the work that is entrusted to him.

and there's a lesson here for all of us if we believe in the work of the Lord. Not to be intimidated in any shape or form from continuing to persist in the work, however difficult, however lacking in encouragement it might be at times, however much opposition you encounter, however, however much trial may be involved, you are called on to persist in the work to which you are called.

[15:58] And Jesus also indicates the nature of his work to deliver from the forces of evil and the effect of sin. Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and the third day I finish my course.

He came to save, to deliver and salvation implies restoration. You know, it's relatively easy to start something, to be full of enthusiasm and then when you hit the wall to give up.

So you find that the emphasis on scripture is on finishing. It's not just on beginning. The one who endures to the end will be saved.

Not the one who begins, but the one who endures to the end will be saved. The love of many, he says, on another occasion will grow cold, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

And so you see, Jesus is not afraid of Herod's murderous threats because his hour has not yet come. He had come for a purpose and the purpose of his coming involved death.

[17:17] I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem. Luke has already informed us in this gospel.

He set his face to go to Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah, in speaking of the suffering servant of Jehovah, says, often, therefore I set my face like a flint.

It's a picture of absolute determination. Nothing, but nothing could interfere with or deflect Jesus from the purpose for which he came into the world.

As he reminded the two on the road to Emmaus, after their resurrection, was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

You see, he is setting before them the necessity of his death, of his sufferings and death and resurrection. So, with resolute determination, he persists, he perseveres on the course that has been set before him.

[18 : 36] And as he views the city of Jerusalem, so his compassion is stirred and we have this lament that is characterized by depths of compassion.

That's the context of the lament. No, the content of the compassionate lament. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those, how often, so on.

Jesus now pours out his grief over Israel's spiritual hard-heartedness. He speaks to Jerusalem, but that doesn't mean he's excluding the rest of Israel.

But speaking of Jerusalem as representative, as I said already in my introduction, of that nation, speaking of Jerusalem as the symbol of the spirit and attitude that prevailed at that time.

And he repeats the name, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. That seems to me to indicate the very intensity of his emotion.

[19 : 54] You remember back in Luke chapter 10, in a time in which Martha had chosen the mundane things of this world over fellowship with her Lord.

And Jesus turns to Martha with great passion and says, Martha, Martha. You will remember it again. The time when he warned Peter of what was to take place.

When he would be tempted by Satan to reject the essence of the gospel sacrifice. And remember how he turned to Peter and he said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat.

Again, the emphasis. You remember David in the Old Testament when his heart was breaking over the news of the death of his son. Oh, my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, would I have died instead of you, oh, Absalom, my son, my son.

Well, when you see the name repeated, it's as it were an example of pathos and intensity and emotion. And so as the Lord Jesus looks upon Jerusalem, he says, oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

[21 : 09] And this note of pathos in the voice of Jesus is brought about by Israel's rejection in general of Christ as her Redeemer.

and his grief is an indication and proof of his incomparable love.

He's speaking about those who are rebelling against God. He's speaking about those who will ultimately fill the streets of Jerusalem with the cry, crucify him, crucify him.

and yet he would bring them to himself. His deep compassion shines through in this lament.

And in demonstrating his compassion, he is also reminding us of the past history of this city, Jerusalem. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it.

[22 : 28] You remember how Zechariah, for example, was stoned at the very temple. The second book of Chronicles, the spirit of God clothed Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, the priest, and he stood above the people and said, thus says God, why do you break the commandments of the Lord so that you cannot prepare?

Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you. But they conspired against him and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord.

In the book of Nehemiah, you find these words as the people confessed the sins of their fathers.

Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and they cast your law behind their back and killed your prophets who had warned them in order to turn back to you.

Think of the abuse that Jeremiah suffered in the days before Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonian forces.

The past history of the nation alluded to in the New Testament, in the parable of the tenants.

Remember what happened? The tenants took his servants, beat one, killed another, stoned another.

[23 : 54] Again, he sent other servants more than the first and they did the same to them. Finally, he sent a son to them saying, they will respect my son. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to them, this is the heir, come let us kill him, have his inheritance.

And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. And the chief priests and Pharisees were under no illusion as to what was the point of this parable.

They understood, the Bible tells us, that this referred to themselves. And so Jesus uses this picture of the hen gathering her brood.

How often, he says, how often would I have gathered you? God wasn't a one-off desire, but a frequent, a frequent one in the life of the God man.

As God, it goes back into the Old Testament. But in the life of the God man, from the age of twelve years, where you find him going about his father's business, man, this is the image of one who is seeking to engather people through the way of salvation.

[25 : 24] It's an Old Testament picture. And in the Old Testament, you find God using this metaphorical language of sheltering his people under his wings.

he speaks of bearing them up on eagles' wings. And in the Psalms, and many references, to the wings of God, to the safety that is found there, to the shelter that is there, and even to the fact that his people sing under his wings, singing in the knowledge that they are safe and protected by the power of divinity.

And we, in the last psalm that we sung together here today, because you are my help alone, in shadow of your wings, I'll sing.

So, it's a picture of his love for his people. It's a picture of protection for his people, against their enemies.

And Jesus is saying, I have longed to protect you from danger, I have longed to protect you from judgment. Even like a hen, gathers their brood.

[27 : 00] and it takes you right back to scenes that were common in our island. Perhaps not so common today, but still there.

And you may remember there was a predatory bird in the sky. And the vigilant hen immediately clucks loudly an alarm to her chirping chicks, as they are called to her, and they scurry under her wings.

It's a very suggestive picture that the Lord draws here in his lament. and sometimes you might wonder, how can the chicks possibly all get under the wings of the hen?

And somehow they do. Sometimes you would see them kicking out to see if the danger was passed. A beak and a head would appear as they peered out to see had the danger gone.

And the Lord Jesus says, that's precisely what I wanted to do for you, Jerusalem. That's what I wanted to do for you, Israel. Wanted to protect you, wanted to spare you, despite your evident rebellion against God.

[28 : 28] Despite your refusal to submit to the Lord, despite that you would ultimately put him to death, despite that Jesus knew the sins of the past.

this is what he desired, that they come to him. And that's what he still desires, that we come to him. You know, there's nobody here today without a past. Everybody has a past. And everybody has a present. Future is cloudy if you are out of Christ.

But if you are in Christ, whatever may lie between you on the end of life, the future is assured. The future is assured.

And you see, whatever was true in the past, he is able to blot it out. That's how he speaks through the prophet Isaiah. I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist.

[29 : 40] The content of the compassionate lament, the context of the lament, the consequence of disregarding the lament.

Because you find these words at the end of verse 34. And you would not, or you were not willing. And the implication is, Jesus is willing. But, we were not. Now, for those of you who have been converted, look back over your life.

Think of the days when you too were unwilling. the time when you thought the gospel was not for you, not at that time.

Maybe sometime far off in the future, but not then. And what happened? The Lord made you willing in a day of his power.

[30 : 53] And so, you see, these words are not for people who lived over 2,000 years ago. These words are for us today. And immediately we have to ask ourselves, have we responded to God's gracious overture of love?

Or have we, like so many, in the days of Jesus, though we have heard the voice of the Savior in the read and preached word of God, have we rejected the overtures of grace?

How often would I have gathered you? You know, there is an indication here of the deity of Christ in our text.

Kills the prophets and those who are sent to it. Who sent these messengers? God sent the messengers. And Christ in effect is saying, I sent the messengers with the message to turn.

Now, the messengers may have been looked on as a nuisance. The messengers may have been looked upon as spiling people's fun, interfering with their lives.

[32 : 27] But what lies behind the message and the messengers? Is it not the depths of divine love? Sending out in his love a message to turn that you may experience the wealth of the riches of his grace.

that you may come under the protective care and power of almighty God in Christ. Christ. And he still is sending out messengers.

And he is the power behind the messengers that is sent out to us. Well, there is a clear warning here.

Because there is the possibility that many will reject the message. You know, remember, here were a people who were professing to be part of the people of God.

And they were rejecting the very God whom they professed to serve. The very God whom they professed to worship.

[34 : 01] God who are lost. And it is clear from the passage that those who are lost are lost through their own action and their own choice.

If a person is saved, it is holy of God. If a person is lost, it is all their own doing. God who is not because Christ was not willing to save.

But it is because they would not be saved. How, my friend, are you in that category today? Does that summarize the state of your heart today?

Are you saying in your heart that you are unwilling? Or are you perhaps guilty of procrastination? Kicking it down the road till another opportunity arises, like some in the Bible, and the opportunity never arose.

[35 : 19] well, does that not tell us something of the perversity of the kind of heart that we have?

And Jesus is saying, your house is forsaken. Those who refuse and reject Christ, abundance, and they choose desolation.

Now, that sounds crazy, doesn't it? Who would forsake abundance and choose desolation? and yet that is in essence, what do you say?

In this text of Scripture, choosing emptiness over abundance. death, and the fact that the house was forsaken tells how the presence of God was withdrawn.

home. And just before I came into the service, one of the office bearers was speaking about the number of sacrifices in which the priests were involved in the Old Testament.

[37 : 05] It was like a slaughterhouse every day. And although the people, there were times in their history when they went through the slaughter of the animals as prescribed.

There were other times when they didn't give the best animals and God pointed it out to them very forcibly. And they brought the poorest animals because they grudged giving the best to God.

But even when they followed the instructions of the law to the letter, without the spirit of worship, that worship was in vain.

And you see, when God withdraws his presence, it's a serious matter. When your house is forsaken, in other words, when my presence is not with you, there is but an emptiness.

So we need, my friends, the presence of the Most High. As we engage in every act of worship, that we are not merely following a practice or a custom, worship, but that we are truly engaged in worship in the Most High.

[38 : 49] Oh, how terrifying. This became in the experience of the citizens of Jerusalem when the temple was raised, 70 A.D.

and the city was sacked, and the prophecy of Christ was fulfilled. Forsaken by God.

Christ could speak of being forsaken by God, but he experienced forsakenness in order that sinners like you and me might never be forsaken, and might never experience the abandonment of God.

Well, what is the state of your house and mine today? Does Christ dwell in your house by faith?

Does he dwell in your heart? Or you've been filled with all the fullness of God? And that brings me, the time is going.

[40 : 04] Just let me, on that point, Rutherford used to say, if Christ's love is not in heaven, then I want to go where it is, because heaven would not be heaven if Christ's love were not there.

And that's what makes heaven heaven, that Christ is there in his presence and in his love. The consequence of disregarding the lament, being forsaken, the content of the lament, the context of the lament, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Where do we see that? Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Now there are two views on this. It's a benediction from the Old Testament, from the book of Psalms.

But it is also the promise, a promise of salvation that people shouted in greeting as Jesus roared into Jerusalem the week before he was crucified.

And then sadly they went on to reject him as we know. But I prefer to think of it as speaking of the second coming of the Lord.

[41 : 20] Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. When he comes, his coming will be visible. It will be in power and majesty and glory.

unlike his first coming in humiliation. And you see then every tongue will confess and every knee will bow.

But my friend, he's asking you to do that today, before that time when it is too late. I'm sure you all heard the phrase, perhaps when you are in school, when teachers perhaps use more power than they do today.

Do you want to do this the easy way or do you want to do it the hard way? The easy way, my friend, is to bow to Christ today.

The hard way is to do it when it is too late. And he comes in the glory and the majesty and power of his second coming.

[42 : 38] Because today is the day of salvation. Or you say, I'll wait till next week and I'll deal with them, but there may not be a next week.

There may not even be a tomorrow. Today is the day of salvation. Oh, my friend, will you not heed the lament of the Lord?

Will you not respond to it and wonder for the shelter and the security and the safety and the protection and the love that he gives to those who respond in faith.

The context of the lament, the content of the lament, the consequence of disregarding the lament, the coming of the Lord Jesus. Let us pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.