Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus' Last Words to Israel, Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 23:37-39
Code: 2365

Let's open our Bibles this morning together and we do so with great joy to study God's word and to learn His truth, what a privilege. Let's open to Matthew 23. This morning we come to the last few verses of this very, very powerful Chapter. We're going to look at verses 37-39. But I want you to just kind of hold your place there for a moment and I want to set up if I may in your thinking a scene that will help you grasp the very great significance of this passage. Let me begin by saying no one could possibly have a greater love or a greater compassion for the nation Israel than a truly committed Christian. And that's the way I feel.

I find myself almost inordinately favoring Jewish people. And I guess it has to do with the fact that all the favorite people in my life are Jewish, Jesus, Paul, Peter, Moses, Abraham, and a few folks here at Grace Church, many in fact. And I have such a great heart for Jewish people. I...because they're God's special people. And a great sense of compassion over the plight of Jewish people. I feel in my own heart the pain of their unbelief, the pain of their persecution. The tremendous distress of a people who down deep inside believe they have a covenant with God and can't understand why it never turns to blessing. But why it always seems that they're under a curse. A people who believe themselves to be unique who believe themselves to humanitarianly sensitive and yet seem always to be oppressed, always beleaguered, massacred, persecuted, harassed and asking themselves why. Why?

I had the privilege a few months ago of being in the land of Israel and everywhere you go in that land you are overwhelmed with the fact that those people have known centuries and centuries and centuries of difficulty. You can see the remnants of the devastation of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. when you look at the western wall, which is all that was left after the city was raised to the ground at the order of the Roman emperor. And here and there across that country, you see the remnants of their wars and their terrible slaughters, remnants that run from ancient times to very modern times. All the way from rubble of a city to tanks overturned and sitting in the desert, reminders that the battles are still raging in that part of the world.

This people has suffered like no other nation in history. And it seems so strange that all through these centuries God has preserved them. They're never exterminated. They're never wiped out. They're never even lost in the process of inner-marriage. They just keep perpetuating themselves, and yet it is a perpetuation and punishment. It is a continual existence in chastening and you can see it written all over them all the time. Why? Why? They cry out to a heaven that never answers.

Why? If indeed we are the covenant people, if indeed we are the chosen, if indeed it is us to whom they oracles of God are committed. If we are the people of the adoption and the promises and the covenants and the law and the services and of whom even the Messiah came or is to come, why? Why have we suffered so?

Let me give you a little bit of background. The contemporary picture of the Jews in suffering really begins with the destruction of Jerusalem. In 70 A.D., Titus Vespasian came the Roman General, sieged the city and before it was over, over a million Jews were killed according to Josephus. Two years before that in 68 A.D. the Gentiles of Caesarea had slain 20,000 Jews and captured thousands more and sold them into slavery. And that really began the 2,000 years of holocaust that the Jews have suffered.

For example, around that period of time in one single day, the inhabitance of Damascus slit the throats of 10,000 Jews. It wasn't long after that, a couple of centuries, that a man came into power by the name of Theodosius. And Theodosius, under his reign, developed a legal code. And that legal code has inherent in it anti-Semitic viewpoints which state the inferiority of the Jews and unfortunately Theodosius legal code penetrated all of western law so that there was built in from that fourth century period and anti-Jewish feeling underlying much of western culture. The sad history really took on unbelievable proportions in the crusades. The first crusade occurred in 1096 and I'll just give you a brief background. You can remember your history course. The crusades were basically supposed to be holy pilgrimages on the part of the western European Christians. And I used the word Christians loosely because they were not Christians in the true sense, but only in the name of religion. And they decided to march to the holy land to recapture the holy land from the pagan Turks who possessed it.

The holy land had fallen into the control of the Turks and they thought that was a desecration of the Christian holy places. Now the fear that they had was that as they went back and laid claim to that the Jews would then make demands on them. And the Jews would want also to lay claim to the land. And so to prevent the Jews from exercising any of that, they just went across Europe and massacred all the Jews they found. So here they are in the name of Christ massacring Jews across Europe.

Now that might give you a little idea why the Jews have a distaste in their mouth for Christianity. Secondly, why the very word crusade conjures up all kinds of evil things to a Jew. So the crusades were a very disastrous event. Let me tell you what they did basically. They would go into a town, they would find a Jewish settlement. They would find a small group of Jews or a large group in a town. They would give them very often two choices. Choice number one convert to Christianity and be publicly baptized. Choice number two, die. What happened was many Jews who didn't want to do that died. Many others falsely converted to Christianity to save their lives. Some of the Jewish leaders tried to prevent false conversions and so they told the people you're better off dead and in many towns and villages, the people committed suicide as families when they knew the crusaders were approaching their village.

They were guilty of no crime, they were victims of unbelievable persecution. In one particular case that I read about this week in one village, at least, some of the women and young girls decided that they would rather die than go through what would happen in the crusades and many of them didn't have the option of being baptized. It was just a question of being killed. And so they loaded rocks on these young girls tying them in their garments and dropping them in the river so that they would drown rather than be in any way humiliated by the crusaders.

They were accused of crucifying Christian children. They were accused of drinking then the blood in the Passover of Christian children which they executed. All kinds of unbelievable horrors. In the city of Vernslater famous because of Martin Luther. The Jews refused to be baptized, so they were murdered by the mob and their corpses were dragged from one end of the city to the other to desecrate their bodies. In 1236 still in the time of the crusades, there were several of them, they went into two villages, the crusaders did Anjou and Poitou and they trampled 3,000 Jews under their horses hooves, and the worst was yet to come.

In England, there came to be a king by the name of Edward the I and under him the Jews were somewhat safe. They by now had scattered all over Europe and the dispossession of Jerusalem and their land. And they found their way into England and they had a modicum of safety there for a while until a Dominican monk, in the Roman system, the Dominicans were a very well-known and proud group, a Dominican monk decided to study the Hebrew Scriptures in order to convert to Roman Catholicism. In the process, he became converted to Judaism and was circumcised. The result of that was that the Roman Catholic Church was irate, the Dominicans felt that they had been betrayed and disgraced and so they sought to take vengeance on the Jews and they did.

They expelled them from Cambridge, laws were passed against them. They were charged with counterfeiting coins. They were hanged. They were exiled. They were made, those who weren't hanged or exiled to wear a badge saying, in effect, I'm a Jew. A badge of inferiority. In London, they took Jews and they tied horses to their extremities and sent the horses in opposite directions ripping their bodies in half and then hanging the remnants of their bodies on the gallows for all the town to see. Finally, around 1290 the king made a decree that if any Jews were left they were to be expelled. The fled, the went further into Europe into France, which already had expelled Jews under the reign of Louis the XI, but by now had released a little bit of its animosity and so the Jews could find at least a place to stay in France where they could live. They too had to put either a red felt or a yellow cloth badge on indicating they were Jews so everyone would know they were inferior.

That didn't last very long. Within about 15 years after that, Philip the Fair expelled over 100,000 Jews from France. Some of them managed to hang around and stay and when the terrible black death came in the 14th Century, the plague that went all across Europe and tens of thousands of people were killed with that terrible plague, the Jews were blamed. And it was said that the Jews had

poisoned the wells in France and caused the black death. And so they began again to kill the Jews. One entire congregation was together meeting and they burned them all in that one place.

As a result of this they fled further and this time they fled to Poland and to Russia. And in our contemporary time today we know about Polish Jews and Russian Jews, very commonly. They were chased there. Poland really became a homeland for them. It was in Poland that they established Talmudic schools. It was in Poland that they built seminaries that they did much of their work and so forth. They then came into great conflict with the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and there was tremendous persecution there. They pitted themselves on one occasion against the Cossacks in a war which the Cossacks won and therefore, the Cossacks took out their vengeance on the Jews and massacred them.

Some of them managed to flee to Spain, but historians tell us that Spain could be "the hell of the Jews," and the two people who heap the most hatred and horror on the Jews were a king and queen by the name Ferdinand and Isabella, who were the same two in power commissioning Columbus to sail, who later found the western hemisphere. So while they were giving the world the benefit of the western hemisphere, they were doing all they could to massacre the Jews in their own country.

One of the things they did in Spain that's inconceivable is they found the names of proselytes who had converted to Judaism under the influence of the Jews and if they were dead, they dug up their graves, desecrated their bodies and confiscated all the property of their heirs to make sure no one every proselyted to Judaism. This was the mark of being a Jew. All across Europe Jews became known as maranaused, swine. A mark had to be warn in Spain by every Jew compose of a series of flaming crosses. Finally in 1492, when Columbus was sent west, the Jews were sent east out of Spain. The ones that wound their way to Russia to this day have been persecuted. And we've all read about the terrible, terrible plight of Soviet Jews, haven't we? I mean, folks, it's been 2,000 years like that for these people. You can back up a little bit in the middle of the 17thCentury, the first persecution broke out in Poland. That had had some safety there for a couple hundred years and then it all of a sudden changed.

Germany began to massacre Jews. Periodically through the centuries Germany had done that. Accusing them again, also of using Christian children's blood for their Passover. And the German Catholic Church said that they took knives, the Jews did, and pierced the host in the mass until blood poured forth. In other words, they excused them of stabbing the body of Christ. Persecuted and massacred them for that. So the anti-Semitism just flowed through western civilization finally in a contemporary setting reaching somewhat of an apex in the terrible Dryfus affair in France when Dryfus who was an officer in the army was put out of the army and humiliated as a traitor simply and only because he was Jewish. An unjust accusation of treason meant to get all Jews out of the high ranks of officers in the French army.

Now in spite of all of this, the marvel of it all is this. You have all these centuries of endeavors to exterminate the Jews; and by the time you come to World War II there are 16.5 million Jews in Europe. So while God is allowing all of this, God is not allowing it to exterminate this people. So they are perpetuated in punishment. And then, of course, Hitler came and then the unbelievable, indescribable Holocaust exterminated nearly six million Jews. Only this time there was a difference.

This time it wasn't hatred based on religion. It was hatred based on race and that was a whole new thing. It had always been religious until Hitler or most always. Now it was based on race and secular society picked up the legacy of religious anti-Semitism and gave the world racial anti-Semitism. And these people still suffer from it even today. It's tragic. Now all of that to say this, why? Why? And that is the question on the lips of Jews throughout their history. Why? Why is it this way with us? Why so long do we suffer?

The answer is in our passage. Look at verse 37. "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them who are sent unto thee how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chicken under her wings and you would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Stop there at that point. What do you mean your house is left unto you desolate? The Lord Jesus is saying Jerusalem, nobody is going to plow your ground anymore. Nobody is going to cultivate your field. No one is going to plant the crop. No one is going to concerned about noble vine. No one is going to water you. No one is going to prune you. No one is going to build a hedge around you. No one is going to protect you. You are on your own left to the elements.

It's very similar to Isaiah Chapter 5 where Isaiah said to Israel just before the Babylonian captivity, a holocaust of another kind. Earlier in their history, Isaiah says God made you all that you could be. God planted you a noble vine in a very fertile hill. He put a mote around you. He protected you. He did all He could to preserve you to cause you to bring forth grapes and you brought forth sour berries and the judgment of the Isaiah was and now God's going to take away your hedge and no rain's going to rain on you and you're going to be left to the elements and whatever's going to happen is going to happen.

For 2,000 years nearly the nation Israel has had to live its life without God and without His protection, that's the difference. Why is it the way it is? Because God has removed His protecting hand. He has preserved them as a people. He has left them unprotected from all the holocausts that the world could bring to bear. Why? Because of what it says in verse 37. Jesus came and said I wanted to gather you. I wanted to protect you. I wanted to bring you under my wings and you would not. That's the issue right there. Why? Because they refused their Messiah. That's right, because they refused their Messiah. You want to hear something very, very important historically? If the Jews had received Jesus Christ, the kingdom would have come; therefore, in rejecting Him, they have gotten

what they have gotten. Jesus said He came to bring the kingdom. They refused the king, they forfeited the kingdom, they got what they got.

Instead of entering into the blessing of God, God took His hand of blessing off and left to the fate of an evil world. They have suffered immeasurably. Another way to say it is in the words of 1 Corinthians 16:22 where Paul says "If any man love not the Lord, let him be Anathema. If any man love not the Lord, he's cursed. He is cursed. If any man love not the Lord, he is cursed. Privilege was given to Israel unequal to any privilege ever given to any nation, unbelievable privilege. And with it came tremendous responsibility. Now we have gone through 23 chapters of the gospel of Matthew, 23 chapters of the coming of Messiah. His birth, His ministry, His message, His miracles, His call and His cry to Israel; 23chapters, and the sum of it is this. When it's all said and done and the Messiah has come in human flesh and He has taught and He has healed and He has preached and He has loved and He's demonstrated all that God is, they reject it totally, totally. And He says that's it. You are desolate.

Now this passage closes the sermon of Chapter 23. It is a sermon, its one sermon this Chapter, and it's the final sermon the Lord ever gave publicly. And it is a sermon against false spiritual leaders who have lead the nation to this point of rejection. Who have led the nation in their sin. It doesn't mean that the people weren't as guilty. They were for following, but nonetheless the leaders led them there. And so the chapter is against those leaders. It is a furious diatribe against those leaders. But it ends with this pathos. It ends with this grief. It ends with this lament, because though God is going to judge that nation by removing protection and letting Satan go full blast at them.

And may I suggest to you something very important here. You say God has His hand of protection off a lot of nations, that's probably right. You say why is it worse with Israel? Because Satan wants to exterminate Israel more than other nation, because they are the nation in the plan of God which Satan wants to thwart. Therefore, for God to remove His protection from Israel is to expose them to the worst furies that Satan could ever bring upon any nation, because he desires to eliminate them so that Christ can never inherit them and fulfill the promise of God to them, you see.

So these false leaders have led the people in a rejection of their Messiah. And God has removed His blessing. But the heart of God is grieved as ours ought to be. We don't gloat over that. God says I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. In Jeremiah Chapter 13 God speaks through Jeremiah the prophet and calls for the people to glorify Him and to obey Him and then says and if you don't mine eye will run down with tears. You see? This does not make God happy. This grieves Him. Now last week we looked at verses 34 to 36 and we saw there the imminent condemnation.

We saw there that God says because you have rejected the Messiah, because you have filled up the cup of sin and guilt, because you've not only rejected the Messiah, but all the prophets of the past, you have cumulatively rejected all of God's revelation. You have all the Old Testament in front of you.

You have all the preaching of John the Baptist. You have all the ministry of Jesus Christ. You've rejected it all. You've filled the cup in verse 32. That's the image there. You have filled the cup of wrath to the brim. This is it. And the cup that it took centuries to fill is going to take centuries equally to pour back out.

They filled it up with centuries of sin. It's being poured out with centuries of chastening. You say well, how could this group of people be guilty of the sins of the past? Because they knew the sins of the past and didn't learn from them, they inherited their guilt. Because they not only didn't listen to Jesus and the apostles, they didn't listen to John before Jesus and the prophets before John. They accumulated the guilt of all of it because they followed in the sins of their fathers never learning lessons their fathers pain and deprivation and punishment should have taught them. So they had a cumulative guilt.

They had rejected full light, full revelation. They had come so far as...in the words of Hebrews 6 to be exposed to the whole of the gospel, tasting the heavenly gift. Being partakers of the Holy Spirit's power and of the things of the age to come. In other words, they had a full revelation of Christ and they rejected and said He was from Satan, He was from hell, He was from the pit. And they, therefore, became the apostates of all apostates rejecting the accumulation of all revelation to them, which are summarized, epitomized, and maximized in the coming of Jesus Christ.

So He says because of this, verse 36, all these things are going to come on this generation. This is the most guilty generation in the history of Israel, because it rejected the light that had accumulated through thousands of years of divine revelation. And it's all going to come on you. You have filled up the cup and now it's going to poured out. And it started in 70 A.D. in that terrible destruction of Jerusalem and it's still going on right now. Still going on right now.

And you want to hear something else, folks? It will get worse. That's right. The persecution of Israel isn't over. The hand of God is off and Satan's doing his thing. And you want to know something? There's a time described in the Bible as the tribulation, the great tribulation. It's also called the time of Jacob's what? Trouble. We're going to learn more about when we get into Chapter 24, but that is going to be a holocaust like no other holocaust Israel has ever seen. The worst is yet to come. The cup is still being poured out.

Now may I say as footnote here, that doesn't mean that because that nation as a nation is going through this with the hand of blessing off and Satan doing all he can to destroy them to thwart the plan of God. That doesn't mean that individual Jews can't come to Christ. They can and they do and they will. Because always God has His, what? His remnant, always, always. There are some true Jews who see the Messiah, but for the whole, for the nation, for the greater part, terrible time of judgment.

Now we said verse 34 to 36 could be called imminent condemnation. Imminent in the sense that it's coming immediately and it didn't. In 30 some years it started. But the second thing, and what I want you to look at today is intense compassion, verse 37 and 38. From imminent condemnation to intense compassion, and this is an outpouring of grief equal to the outpouring of wrath. It is the climax of great emotion and compassion. It provides for us an essential balance and an essential understanding of the character of God and Christ. We have heard furious words of judgment. And now we're going to hear words of grief. God never rejoices in punishment in the sense that He gloats over the doom of the people.

No, He is grieved and so we read in verse 37, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem," and there is pathos in the repetition isn't there? Those words are filled with sorrow. And if you parallel that passage, for example with the Luke 19 passage where it says "And when He was come near He beheld the city and wept over it saying if thou hast known even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace, but now they're hidden from thine eyes." He wrote in that day of triumphal entry, that Monday of the passion week and He saw the city and began to weep and weep and weep and say oh if you only knew. If you'd only known who was here, who was visiting you, but you didn't know and now you can't see. Your eyes are blind.

So He sorrowed, He wept tears and it may well be that He wept here again on Wednesday as He had on Monday when He cried "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem." The tears of lament over a people about to have the hand of God's protection removed from them, to be turned over to Satan who more than other people would want them to be destroyed. Just the idea of the repetition is interesting. Very often in Scripture repetition like that is an indication of great emotion. For example, "Martha, Martha," in Luke Chapter 10, verse 41 or in Luke 22:3, "Simon, Simon," says the Lord. Or in Acts 9 from the voice out of heaven we hear "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me." Or perhaps best 2 Samuel, the cry of anguish and the heart of David over his son. He says, "Oh my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, if only I had died for you oh Absalom, my son, my son."

And so that repetition is the repetition of grief, the repetition of emotion. And so He says, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem." And He characterizes the city not as the city of peace, not as the holy city. He characterizes the city with present participles. "You who are killing the prophets and you who are stoning them who are sent to you, that's the city you are. You are the city that kills prophets and stones messengers." What a characterization of the holy city.

People who prided themselves on being the city of God, the city of purity, the city of peace, the city of God it's called the city of killers. In fact, later on later on in the book of Revelation God calls Jerusalem Sodom and Egypt. Sodom, perversion, Egypt pagan. So Jerusalem is the Sodom, the Egypt, the murderous city. It's not the holy city. It's not the city of peace. It's not the city of God. It's not beautiful for habitation. It's not lovely among all the cities of the earth. It's not Jerusalem the

golden. It's Jerusalem the killer, Jerusalem the murderer. And the present participles are most interesting who are killing the prophets. They were about to kill Him and He was the supreme prophet. Who are stoning those who were sent to you, they would also very soon after they killed him, kill Stephen and they would stone him to death. They weren't through doing it.

They were still doing it. They were definitely the sons of their fathers in terms of where we see earlier in the Chapter verse 29 to 31, they deny that they would kill the prophets and yet they're doing it. They think they're better than their fathers who did that, but they're not. If you remember their fathers had wanted Jeremiah dead. They hated Jeremiah because he spoke the truth. They wanted to get rid of him. Justin Martyr in Dialogues of Trifo says they sawed Isaiah in half with a wooden sword, the prophet of God. Apparently, they murdered Zechariah the prophet between the temple and the altar. I mean, they killed the prophets rather than hear their message. And so they are characterized as a city of murderers and indeed they were because they were about to murder the Son of God.

Earlier in a parable back in Chapter 21 the Lord had said you're like a group of tenant farmers who've come into a vineyard that someone else owns and when the owner sends back his servants to give you a message, you kill the servants. And finally after you've killed all the servants, the owner sends the Son, you kill Him too. That's the kind of people they were. They were killers of those who spoke the truth and represented God. Unbelievable. Murderers of the righteous. Now you ask the question, why has Israel suffered so long? This is why. Because for so long they rejected God. For so long they killed His messengers. For so long they stoned those that were sent. Finally, they filled the cup up when they executed their own Messiah. And God says, that's it, you are desolate. I take my hand of blessing off and all hell will break loose on you. Culminating in the tribulation time when Revelation tells us the mouth of the pit is open and the demons that for centuries have been bound are released to run ramped across the earth.

And you have not only the persecution of men, but the persecution of hellish supernatural demons, culminating this terrible time of Jerusalem's chastening. By the way, it's important to note that Jerusalem here is a symbol for the whole nation as it was very often in the ministry of the prophets. When He says, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He gathers up in Jerusalem's symbolic use the whole of the people and the nation. And then you see the heart of the Savior. Look what He says.

"How often would I have gathered thy children together?" I wanted to bring you into safety. Like we read in Psalm 36 this morning, I wanted you to come unto the shelter of my wings. I wanted you to be protected. I didn't want to take my hand of blessing off. I didn't want to expose you to the elements. I didn't want to leave you unprotected. But often I wanted to gather you. Does He mean just when He visited Jerusalem? No, John...the gospel of John records His several visits to Jerusalem, but He isn't only referring to that. He's saying how often? In other words, it's a way of saying so many, many times I wanted to gather you. In fact, all the time of His ministry, He wanted to gather them. He wanted to gather them. He wanted to call them to Himself. "Come unto me all ye

that labored heavy laden, I'll give you rest."

Even as He dies on the cross, He gathers a thief into His arms who is willing to believe. I mean, that's the way it was until they silenced His voice in death. He was always wanting to gather them and gather them into protection, into safety from judgment. And then He gives a beautiful analogy of that, "even as a hen," and the word in the Greek is actually a bird, "gathers her chickens or little birds under her wings." It's kind of like a little farmyard maybe and little hen and some little chicks. And the hen looks up and sees a chicken hawk flying across, gathers those little ones into protection in a private corner where she can't be seen and they can't run around unprotected and unwitting to be consumed by that preying bird.

Or maybe a storm is approaching and a crash of thundering and lightening, she gathers those little ones in the warmth of safety. The Lord would have done that. There's a beautiful intimacy here. There's a tenderness here. It isn't just some theological thing of which He speaks. It's something very personal, very intimate, very warm. He wanted to give them security and the key to the whole deal, underline it in your Bible, the last part of verse 37, "and ye would not." That's the key. You wouldn't do it.

Let me just say to those of you who tend to be hard-line Calvinists, I find no absolute determinism in this verse. I find no fate here. I find no predetermined destiny here without thought for a response. I find here that God would, but you wouldn't. That's what I find here. And somewhere in the midst of that incredible apparent paradox of sovereignty and volition, we've got to see this passage. "I would," He says. "How often I would have gathered, but you would not." And every soul that spends eternity outside the protection of God, every soul that spends eternity in hell is there because they would not, they would not.

The gospel gives no place for absolute determinism. Go back to the parable of Chapter 22, verse 3. The king sent forth servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding and they would not come. And again He characterizes the time in which He lived in the people of Israel. You got called, you got invited, but you wouldn't come. You refused to come. You find it in the parable of Luke 14. A certain man gave a great supper and called many. "Come for all things are ready," and they all with one consent began to make excuses. I have bought a piece of ground. I have to go see it. I pray have me excused. Another said, I have yoke of oxen, I have to prove them. Have me excused. Another said I've married a wife, I can't come. So the servant came and showed his lord these things and the master of the house said all right. Then go in the streets and lanes of the city and bring the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind. In other words, if the ones that were supposed to come don't want to come, we'll just go take anybody that will. They wouldn't come.

There's no determinism there. I would, but you would not. Man's choice, don't ever forget it theologically, man's choice is as much a part of salvation as is God's choice. You would not. You

would not. And anyone who goes to hell goes there because they would not, they would not. In this sense, grace is resistible and every person responsible. And so we see the heart of Christ. Look at verse 38, "Because you would not," He says, "behold," and that's an exclamation which involves surprise and shock, "your house," oh that's important. He before had called it "My Father's house," hadn't He? Now He says it's your house. It's been so desecrated now and He's talking probably about the temple which was the House of God and that was where He was right then. Your house is deserted. God just left.

To put it in Old Testament terms, Ichabad, the glory hath departed, you're on your own. You're a desert, your house. And in speaking of the temple that way, He included the city and the whole nation. God's protection is gone. In fact, in this age, God has a new house. The church is the house of God, 1 Timothy 3:15. The rest is desolate He says for you. Some time ready Deuteronomy 28. I wish I had time to do that. Deuteronomy 28:15-68, and there you will find that very early in the Pentateuch when God first established His relation with His people, He said if you turn from me, here's what'll happen. And they did it and that's exactly what happened. You read Deuteronomy 28 and you'll see it fulfilled in the history of Israel.

So here Christ rejected Israel because Israel rejected Him. Now may I add again as I said earlier, the gospel is still opened to individual Jews. On the day of Pentecost 3,000 Jews were saved. Later on, many thousands more were saved. Jews have been saved throughout all history. They're still be saved today. There are still many of them whose hearts are opened to the gospel of Jesus Christ. God will always have remnant. Individual Jews can come, but as a nation, God has removed His hand of blessing, and they're exposed.

And just what Jesus said would happen, happened. In Luke 19, verse 43, Jesus said to them, "The day shall come upon you that your enemies shall cast a trench about you and compass you around and keep you on every side...keep you in on every side." He was talking about the seize of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. And they'll lay even with you...lay you even with the ground that has flattened you. Your children within you, they'll not leave in you one stone upon another, because you knew not the time of your visitation, you didn't know when God came in the form of Jesus Christ, because you didn't know that, your city's going to be devastated.

And Josephus says the city was raised to the ground. Nothing was left but one prominent tower and a part of the western wall and the city was so flattened and so leveled not one was thrown upon another that a visitor coming to the area would not know that it was ever inhabited. It happened and it set in motion the centuries of Israel's unprotected devastation. It's a divine payoff folks for rejecting Christ and cumulative sin of a nation killing prophets, stoning the messengers of God. So sad, so heartbreaking. You say, is that end? Bless God it isn't the end.

Imminent condemnation, verse 34 to 36. Intense compassion, verse 37 and 38, and finally, insured conversion, verse 39. It's not the end. Insured conversion. Oh what a great verse. "I say unto you, you shall not see me anymore." Stop at that point. Jesus says, I'm gone. This is the end. Farewell from your Messiah. Your rejection is final and it was proven final because when the apostles came and preached after Christ was gone, they wanted them dead too. Nothing changed. It's the end of the call for Israel. They refused the grace of salvation when it was offered to them. His mission to them as Savior as a nation has ended. You want see me anymore, I'm gone.

That's the end. You say wait a minute. That's the end? Is that the end of Israel? You shall not see me anymore. Period, paragraph. Is there where the verse ends? It doesn't end there. If it ended there, it would dramatically change all of our doctrine, all of our theology. It'd be over with. I'll tell you something else it would do. It would make us doubt that we could ever trust God again. Because if He said to that nation, you will never see me again, then He's just broken some pretty strong, some pretty strong promises.

My Bible tells me in the Old Testament that He promised them that He would regather them. That ultimately he would be their Savior. That ultimately He would be their king. That ultimately they would come into a relationship with Him. That ultimately all the promises and covenants would come to fruition. If my Bible ended at the word henceforth or anymore, and there's nothing more for Israel, I've got to rethink the whole Old Testament and the character of God who made promises He's now not going to keep, but it doesn't end there.

It says this, what's the next word after henceforth or no more? Until, not unless, but until. "You're not going to see me anymore until," now there's hope in that. Just put a little circle around the word until. There's hope in that. You say you mean there's going to be an until? You mean there's going to be a time when something happens? That's right. "Until you shall say blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." You say what does that mean? Well, what does that mean?

Well, back in Matthew 21:9 when Jesus rode into the city in His triumphal entry and they were hailing Him as the Messiah, they were crying verse 9, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and they said this, from Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." That was a cry meant to identify the Messiah. Messiah was the coming one. That's the Greek text. The coming one, coming in the Lord's name or in the Lord's behalf or representing the Lord. Blessed is a perfect, always blessed, blessed in the past, and continually blessed. The always blessed coming one who comes in the name of the Lord. In other words, you're not going to see me ever again until you recognize me as your what? Messiah. That's what He's saying.

Until you recognize me as your Messiah. You say are they going to do that? Yeah, they're going to do that. They sure are going to do that. Go back to Zechariah, next to the last book in the Old Testament and watch these profound promises. Zechariah 12:9, Israel's history, now listen folks,

Israel's history is going to get worse and worse and more tragic and more tragic in the future. You can read about it in Daniel. You can read about it in Revelation. You can read about it in Matthew 24 as we will very soon. It's going to get worse and the world is going to be massed against that people.

But all of a sudden Zechariah promises, verse 9, Zechariah 12, "It shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." Oh what a reversal. Now all of a sudden Israel's invincible. "And I," verse 10, here's the key, "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitance of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication," grace and blessings, responding to their great need. "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son and shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is bitterness for his firstborn."

You know what's going to happen? When they have...when the cup is empty and the wrath is fully poured out, God is going to turn the tables and God is going to destroy the nations that come against Jerusalem. And on Jerusalem pour out the spirit of grace. And the scales are going to come off their eyes and they're going to look again at the one they pierced. Who's that? Christ. And they're going to mourn as for an only son. Is He an only son? Yes, because there was only one Messiah and they're going to say oh, oh, oh, now we see. Now we understand why our history's been like this. Now we understand it all. We mourn for we have killed the only son, the firstborn, the Messiah. And it's unbelievable what'll happen. The bitterness, verse 10 says, the mourning, verse 11, more great mourning in Jerusalem and other places all down through verse 14. All over the land and the families there's mourning. Oh all these years of all this because of what we did. And the grief is overwhelming. And the sense of sin totally consuming.

Israel's going to come to that place. You say how do that come to that place? Because God pours out on them on the spirit of grace and supplication. God gives them grace to cry out to Him for blessing and mercy. And in that day verse 1 of Chapter 13, Chapter 13, verse 1, "In that day, there shall be a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitance of Jerusalem for sin and for cleansing." God's going to wash them. Going to wash the whole nation, clean them.

"In that day," verse 2 says, "all the names of idols are cut out of the land." Never remember again. All the false prophets and unclean spirits are going to go. God's going to save His people. Glorious, marvelous. The end verse 9, when it's all said and done, "a third part will come through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, test them as gold is tested, they'll call on my name, I'll hear them. I'll say he is my people. And they'll say He, the Lord, is my God."

Listen, you know what happens when that happens? When they look on the one they've pierced and they see Him for who He is and they say blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, that's our Messiah. That's our Messiah. Jesus said in Matthew 23:39, "Then you'll see me." You won't see me until you say that. When you say that, then you'll see me. They say that in Chapter 13 of Zechariah.

Look what happens in Chapter 14, verse 3, "Then shall the Lord go forth." When they have said it, He comes. "And His feet stand," verse 4, "on the Mount of Olives before Jerusalem on the east and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst towards the east and toward the west" and so forth.

Where's He going to come when He comes back? Where's He going to come? The Mount of Olives, Jerusalem. It's going to be right after they say, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord. As soon as they recognize the Messiah, they're going to see Him. You say well, is that really going to happen, John? One final passage, Romans 11. It has to happen. It has to happen. There is no question about it. Romans 11:11, "I say then," Paul says, "has Israel," he's talking about Israel here, "stumbled that they should fall?" In other words, have they stumbled that they should fall permanently? God forbid. Listen, they haven't stumbled to fall permanently. God forbid. No.

Further on, verse 23, the end of the verse talking of Israel, "God is able to graft them in again." It's as if they're a branch cut off. They can be grafted in again. They're not fallen permanently. They can be grafted in again. Will they be? Verse 26, "So all Israel shall be saved." Verse 27, "For this is my covenant unto them when I shall take away their sins." Not if but what? When. So the time is coming of insured conversion. Oh what great hope, great, great hope. So the Lord ends this sermon with hope. You say but John, that's all a big national lesson.

What does it have to do with me? Just this, listen to me. If God has chastened and punished and cursed by abandoning His own beloved people Israel, what do you think is going to happen to you if you reject Jesus Christ? Do you think you'll fair any better who are not His people? Don't be proud. This lesson of a nation in history can be reduced to a lesson for a man and a woman in this moment of time. For it must be said to you as well, if you love not the Lord you are cursed. The principle is the same whether a nation or an individual. You make a choice. The Lord seeks to gather you into the safety of His love and salvation. Will you or won't you allow that to happen? He would, but in so many cases you would not. And bring upon yourself the same abandonment you're left to Satan's devices. Let's bow in a closing of prayer.

Someone put it in perspective in writing a poem about Christ. It says, "He wept alone and men passed on. The men whose sins He bore, they saw the man of sorrow's weep. They'd seen Him weep before. They ask not whom these tears were for, they asked not whence they flowed. Those tears were for rebellious men, their source the heart of God. They fell upon this desert earth like drops from heaven on high, struck from an ocean tide of love that fills eternity. With love and tenderness divine those crystal cells or flow, tis God that weeps through human eyes for human guilt and woe. The eye of God is downward bent still ranging to and fro, where ere in this wide wilderness there roams a child of woe. And if the rebel chooses wrath, God mourns his tragic lot. Deep breathings from the heart of God, I would, but you would not."

Father, we pray that there's no one here in hearing this message that says I would not. I will not to believe, not to receive Christ. I turn my back, oh God, what a cursed place to be. May hearts turn to the Savior and receive what He offers the blessed salvation. While your heads are bowed before we close, if you don't know the Savior, open your heart to Him.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).