

Divine Compassion for Those Deserving Condemnation, Part 1

Luke 13:34-35

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This morning as we come to our time in the word of God, I want to draw you to the final two verses of the 13th chapter of Luke's gospel. Luke chapter 13, verses 34 and 35. In the words of our Lord Jesus, as follows, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it. Behold your house is left to you desolate. And I say to you, you shall not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

There are obviously in these words elements of finality. This is in itself a judgment pronounced. The Lord understands that He came unto His own and His own received Him not. And the judgment is rendered in verse 35. "Behold your house is left to you." And the translators add, borrowing from Matthew 23, "desolate." The history of the Jewish people since the time of Jesus Christ is a long, excruciating desolation. And it really all began to unfold about thirty years after Jesus. In fact, it is a period of time that Jesus Himself called, in Luke 21:22, the days of vengeance. And they began to unfold really in the year 66 A.D., as I said, about thirty years after the death of Jesus. It was May of the year 66 when the Jewish revolution against Rome broke out. Having taken about as much as they could tolerate of Roman oppression, Roman injustice, pagan idolatry, the Jews turned against their occupying rulers, largely driven by a particular group of Jews called Zealots, the party of radical nationalism, known for their guerrilla tactics and terrorist strikes. Many Jews took up whatever arms they could find and joined in the rebellion. Rome struck back and Rome struck back with devastating force.

The first strike fell on Jews in northern Galilee when the Romans soldiers came and slaughtered thousands of them. Eventually Titus himself, Titus Vespasian, the Roman ruler, came down to Jerusalem with an army in excess of 80,000 men, more than twice the size of the population. After stationing his army in and around the city he demanded the full surrender of the Jews. They replied with mocking laughter according to some historians and the attack was unleashed. And before it was done, Jews were massacred everywhere. The massacre also went all the way to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the demolishing of the temple. And about the same time the Gentile inhabitants in Damascus, which is north and east of Israel are said to have caught the spirit of the Romans and in their own hatred for the Jews slit the throats of some 10,000 Jews living in and around the area of Damascus.

That got it all started. It was several centuries later that the Roman Emperor Theodosius II enacted a legal code that declared Jews were inherently inferior as a race and did not deserve the same legal rights and protections and privileges as other people. And so anti-Semitism became codified as law in the ancient world. These anti-Semitic views permeated subsequent western culture and law. In A.D. 630 the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius banished from Jerusalem all Jews who had come back

and resettled there.

Four hundred years later, you come to the crusades, the first one in the year 1096. In the crusades, the established church in Europe, and I say the established church, not Christians, but the quote-unquote "Christian church," the established church, instigated what was declared to be a holy war to deliver the holy land from the occupation and control of Muslim Turks who had ruled it for many centuries. The monolithic system of Catholicism determined to take back the holy sites for "Christianity," and to go there and attack in a series of crusades the Muslim Turks. However, as a sidelight, they feared the Jews might want to resettle the land once it was freed from the Turks and might want to lay claim to it and so many crusaders, as history records, repeatedly engaged in brutal massacres of European Jews to try to eliminate that possibility.

And sad to say they did it in the name of Jesus Christ as they marched toward Jerusalem. Jewish people don't forget this. You know they don't forget the Holocaust and many of them who know their history don't forget that in the name of Christ they were slaughtered all over Europe. It's not just a matter for them of believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's getting past the fact that people in the name of Jesus Christ exterminated their people.

During that crusade atrocities were committed that are hard to even understand. Sometimes the soldiers would herd all the Jews into town or city together into a central place, give them an ultimatum. The ultimatum was confess Christ or be publicly...and be publicly baptized in the name of Christ or die on the spot. Some Jews, under the duress of that, would confess Christ and be baptized to save their own lives. Others would refuse and be executed where they stood.

There are records of atrocities such as trampling the Jews under the horses' hooves as well as other means of execution that are too brutal and unnecessary to talk about. Rather than face this kind of defecation as they saw it to save their lives, rather than face humiliation and a horrible death, many Jews committed suicide when they were informed that the crusaders were on the way to their town. And so the thousand years after the time of Christ was a horrific time for the Jews.

For a few years after that, they were given a bit of respite and a little asylum, relatively safe and untroubled years, particularly in England. But a Dominican monk, in the 13th century, began to study the Hebrew Scriptures ostensibly in order to understand Jews so he could do mission work with Jews. He himself, however, in the study of the Old Testament decided to convert to Judaism and he actually had himself circumcised. In an irate reaction, the Roman Catholic Church had all Jews expelled from Cambridge, England.

And so, the persecution of Jews was front and center again even in England, where they had had some protection for a while. In other parts of Europe, however, Jews were facing terrible, terrible circumstances. Falsely accused of counterfeiting coins, accused of other crimes, almost an endless list. They were put through sham trials or no trial at all. The accused would be then tortured, imprisoned, exiled or even executed. In many communities, the Jews had to wear some kind of identifying arm bands. Hitler didn't event that by any means. That was done back in the 13th century, arm bands or badges to set them apart. Even in London a group of Jews had their arms and legs tied to horses that were then driven off in opposite directions. And the bodies, after being ripped apart, were draped on gallows for the townspeople to see how Jews were to be treated.

It was the 14th century in Europe and the Black Plague hit Europe, killing hundreds of thousands. Many people blamed the Jews for the Black Plague. That resulted in more torture and death. In France, they were accused of poisoning the water wells. In one town, a synagogue filled with worshipers was burned to the ground while fully occupied. In desperation, many Jews fled to Poland and others fled to Russia. They fled to the farthest reaches...reaches of Europe where many of their descendants still live today.

Having found some freedom in Poland, they established several outstanding Talmudic schools and seminaries there. They were, however, later oppressed by the church. Nevertheless, they did join the government in fighting the Russian Cossacks. However, when the Cossacks were victorious over the Poles, the Jews were vengefully massacred by the Cossacks. The Jews who fled to Spain found no refuge there either. Among their worst persecutors, believe it or not, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, who were commissioners of Christopher Columbus, the two monarchs who basically commissioned him to come and discover this new world.

That country, that is, Spain, was described by one Jewish poet as the hell of the Jews. And during the Spanish Inquisition, the graves of those who had converted to Judaism were opened up and the bodies were exhumed and desecrated. The heirs of all Jews and proselytes had their property confiscated as a warning to others who might consider converting. Every Jew had to wear a symbol of burning crosses on him at all times, and in 1492, the very year that Christopher Columbus began his first voyage, most Jews were expelled from Spain. A large number emigrated to Russia, where persecution in varying degrees broke out and has continued in some ways ever since.

It wasn't Nazi Germany that invented persecution of the Jews. It was medieval Germany. Jews were accused of using the blood of Christian children in their Passover rights. They were accused of drinking the blood of German children. Some were charged with stabbing the host. If you know anything about Roman Catholicism, you understand that the bread in Catholic theology in the Communion service by the power of the priest is trans-substantiated. That is it has changed from being bread to the real body of Christ.

This is a fantasy and an illusion, but it's what they believe. And so they believe that that is the real body of Christ. They therefore accused Jews of stabbing the host as a means of killing Christ, thereby re-enacting His crucifixion. Such accusations were lies, of course, but those accused of things were tortured and killed in a variety of cruel ways. So for many centuries anti-Semitism polluted most of western civilization. It was 1894, a Jewish army officer by the name of Albert Dreyfus, in France, falsely accused and convicted of treason simply because he was Jewish. The terrible Dreyfus Affair, something all of us have studied in history.

Then comes the Holocaust. And before Hitler is done, in excess of six million of them have been slaughtered, gassed, killed in a myriad of ways. And some of the horror stories are known to all of us and to some of us many of those stories are known. I just finished reading an amazing little book telling of the massacre of Jews in a town in Poland. It went on all over the place, horrific. All of that stuff is demon-inspired atrocity, not grounded...not grounded really in religion only, but in racial prejudice mixed with a twisted perspective on religion.

There's no justification for any of it, but with little rest and little relief for 2,000 years the Jews have endured persecution after persecution, falsely accused, treated unjustly, denied dignity, even driven out of country after country. Not infrequently massacred without mercy, for no other reason than just

being Jewish.

And the modern state of Israel continues to be besieged and beleaguered by an endless array of terrorists who attempt to blow them into eternity at every opportunity. They have a very, very clear and well-established monument to their 2,000 years of suffering. It is the Wailing Wall. The Wailing Wall is the partial western wall of the temple, Herod's temple. You can actually tell the story of Israel's desolation in the destruction of the temples. They build one, it's destroyed. They build another, it's destroyed. They build another it's destroyed.

And this particular temple destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D.... It's very absence and the remaining Wailing Wall is a monument to 2,000 years of persecution. Even though the modern state of Israel was founded in 1948, it's still a beleaguered people. They suffer relentless threats and assaults from the people around them even now. All this suffering can be traced back, all the way back, to Deuteronomy 27 and 28 where God promised, "You obey me; I'll bless you. You disobey me, I'll curse you."

But that comes into clear focus right here in this text. Because when Jesus says to them, "Your house is left to you desolate," it is because they have rejected the Messiah. Thomas Sowell, who is really a very gifted and very helpful black man who...who writes ably and wisely of social issues, was asked recently in a discussion that I heard regarding him why it was that the Jews had suffered so terribly for so long and he said a one word answer, success, success. And the interviewer said to him, "What do you mean, 'success'?" He said, "Well, it's jealousy because of their success." And the interviewer then said, "What would solve the problem?" And he said in one word, "failure." All they need to do is fail.

His idea was that they're getting all of this because they're out there ahead of the pack. Whether it's in the arts or business or science or wherever it is, they are a noble part of the human family tree. But it's not that simple. It's...maybe it's exacerbated by success. Maybe the world would feel better about Jews if they came back to the pack. But it's really not about that. The problem is, verse 35, "Your house is left to you." This is what happens to a people unprotected by God.

There are plenty of nations in the world that have suffered. They're not the only people that experienced genocide. They're not the only people that get massacred. They aren't the only people that have been persecuted. It's just shocking in their case because they are the people of God. But when Jesus said in the original, "Your house is left to you," that's how...that's what it says in the Greek. You're on your own. You're on your own. This is what Romans 1 talks about is the wrath of abandonment. God gave them over. God stepped back. The restraint is off. The protection is off. That great Redeemer and provider and protector, that loving Father of Israel who sent His son, says with finality, I'm out. You're on your own.

And of course, in 1 Corinthians 16:22, Paul wrote this, "If anyone doesn't love the Lord," meaning the Lord Jesus Christ "let Him be accursed." If you don't love the Lord Jesus Christ, you're cursed. And they did not love the Lord Jesus Christ. They hated Him. And for so long they had so much. Look at Romans 3. Romans 3, verse 1, "What advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?" "Circumcision," meaning simply, being Jewish; circumcision being the mark of being a part of the covenant people. What...What's the advantage? What's the benefit of being Jewish?

And by the way, I might say at this point that I don't have many regrets in life, but in all honesty one of them is that I'm a Gentile. I feel like I missed out on something very wonderful, because I'm not Jewish. And all my heroes really are Jewish, Moses, David, all the prophets, Jesus, the apostles, Paul, etc., etc. I remind Jewish people of that. It is so advantageous to be a Jew, to understand not only the New Testament, but to have been raised to understand all the richness of the Old Testament. What...What a benediction that is to a Jew who comes to completion in Christ. But what is the advantage? What is the benefit?

Verse 2, "Great in every respect." No matter how you cut it, to be a part of the people of God, the Jews, is great in every respect. "Dominantly." "First of all," meaning, "dominantly." "That they were entrusted with the oracles of God." They were entrusted with the Scripture, the truth. This is what matters. The truth that saves and sanctifies and glorifies. The truth about having entered the kingdom of God and having your sins forgiven and live forever in the glories of heaven, the truth that really matters. This is the great advantage, that there's no greater advantage than to have the truth.

I feel like I get into that when I get into these conversations with all these people who don't know the truth. We all have conversations with people who don't know the truth, but I have to have them on world television. And I'm very much aware of the fact that I know the truth and it's not because I'm smarter than everybody else. It's because I understand that the word of God is the truth.

The other night, off the air, Larry King said to me... We were talking a little bit about that woman who was an atheist and he said, "How do you feel about that woman?" I said, "I feel heartbroken. I feel sad. I feel grieved. I think it's tragic." And he said, "Well, maybe it makes her feel good to believe that." I said, "This isn't about feeling. This is about reality. How you feel about what you believe is meaningless. You just better believe the right thing." To feel good about believing a lie is ridiculous.

My heart aches for somebody like that because they've cut themselves off from the truth that saves. It's not about how you feel. It's about what's real and what's true and we know what's true because God's word has given it to us and this was the benefit of the Jews. This was the great, massive gift from God, Scripture. Go over to chapter 9 and you can see a little bit of this same attitude. Romans chapter 9, verse 1, Paul says, "I'm going to tell you something that's...that's really true," and he has to sort of say this a couple of times because it seems so amazing, "I'm telling you the truth, I'm not lying, my conscience bearing me witness." Boy he's really stacking up the things to make us want to believe him. "This is what I'm telling you. I have sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart."

I don't think anybody can look at the unbelieving people any other way. People ask me sometimes when I'm in that environment, do you get angry? And I can honestly say I've never been angry, because I can't get past the sadness. I can't get...wherever anger is, I never get there. I don't feel hostile. I don't feel, I guess, superior. I just feel sad. I want so much that they would understand. And I feel sad for the dishonor of God and the dishonor of Christ. It's not about one-upsmanship. It's not about winning. It's not about being more clever. It's about trying to speak the truth out of a certain sadness.

And the more that I get to know these people, the sadder I become, because then you...you make a connection in a real way with a real person and it becomes very personal. Paul's the same way. I have great sorrow, unceasing grief in my heart. I'm not mad. In fact, it's so profound, verse 3, "that I could wish I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh who are Israelites." Boy that is some statement. I could wish that I gave up my

salvation for theirs. It's just so sad.

And then he says about them... Look at verse 4. What were the privileges? "They had the adoption as sons of God." The glory, the Shekinah came and dwelt with them. The covenants, the giving of the law, the temple and theirs are the fathers, the patriarchs and from whom is the Christ, the Messiah according to the flesh, who was over all, God, blessed forever, amen. They had it all. They had it all. And didn't Jesus say, "To whom much is given," what, "much is required." They had it all.

These words are final words. Let's go back to our text. There...There's real finality in these words. When Jesus says, "Your house is left to you," this is it, I'm done. In the language of the parable back in verses 6-9, you remember that little parable. Jesus told the parable about a man who had a fig tree, planted it, looked for it to bring fruit...forth fruit and it never did. He said to the man who was keeping it, cut it down. He said give it one more year. He said, OK one more year. If it bears fruit, fine, if not, cut down. Well, it's cut it down time. It's cut it down time. The day of opportunity for Israel's salvation has gone. It doesn't mean that there won't be some Jews who will believe. There will be some who will believe. In fact, there will be 3,000 on the day of Pentecost and a few thousand more after that.

But the truth of the matter is the nation has set its course. He came to His own, His own received Him not. That's fixed. And Jesus here is in the final winter of His life. This is the final winter of His ministry. And in the spring He will arrive in Jerusalem and He will be executed. He will die at the very hands of the people He came to reach. That's set. The die is cast. The day of opportunity is over and this is a pronounced judgment. Cut it down.

As I said, this is late in the winter, looking forward to the spring when He arrives. In the spring, a few months after this, when He arrives in Jerusalem, there is a triumphal entry short-lived. And He goes into the temple...and He goes into the temple and He looks to the people and the leaders and He repeats exactly what He says here. It's recorded in Matthew 23 verses 37-39 verbatim. What He said here in Perea, a few months before He arrives in Jerusalem, He says again exactly when he arrives there. There He uses the word "desolation," which isn't really necessary. But that's why the translators moved it back here. To say your house is left to you is to say it's desolate. God's not there.

It's like Ichabod, when the glory departs. But He says exactly the same words, Matthew 23:37-39, at the end of that great chapter in which He indicts the leaders of Israel. And they are really tragic words. They are heartrending words to God's special people who were given the oracles of God and the adoption and the covenants and the promises and the prophets and the law and the temple and the Messiah. But they have disobeyed God and God has abandoned them.

This is hard for Jewish people today and when I talked to Jewish people about this, they always wonder why. Why, if they are God's chosen people, why do they suffer at the hands of the world's most wicked people? They can't find an answer to that. If the Scriptures are the oracles of God and they have been given the Scriptures, then why has God abandoned them? Because those Scriptures promised that God is their protector and God is their deliverer and God is their provider and God is their Redeemer and God is their Savior and defender and shield and they don't understand.

They can't even understand their own history, because they are unwilling to recognize that they have

truly rejected their Messiah. Why? If God called all of His holy prophets from among them — they were all Jewish as were all of the apostles — why if God has called all His prophets from among them has He deserted them to the prejudice and malice of ungodly people? Why, if Israel is the apple of His eye, why so much hatred? Why so much aggressive evil against them? How can they ever explain the incalculable misery, anguish, suffering that just never stops.

And I understand their pain. Any true Christian feels this pain deeply, because we feel a unique love for the Jews. It is a terrible, terrible pain. I've gotten to know Rabbi Daniel Lapin, who is maybe one of the most prominent rabbis in America. And he says to me that America has been the best haven for the Jews in the world. He says America has provided the safest place for Jews where they have flourished and flourished and flourished and succeeded; where they have literally risen to power economically, in terms of literature, the arts, science, and he will tell you as he's told me, that this is because America has had the strongest influence of the Christian gospel.

This has become a haven. And we remember the covenant with Abraham. Whoever blesses Israel will be blessed. Whoever curses Israel will be cursed. We reach out to them, not because we embrace them as brothers in the faith, but because we embrace them out of mercy, compassion, pity, and hopefully we can live truly Christian lives before them that make Christ attractive rather than associating Christ with those who killed and slaughtered them.

But it's very hard for them to understand how the world could treat them the way it does and America almost be the only real haven they've had for centuries. They don't understand it because they will not go back and understand Deuteronomy 28, in which God promised curses if they didn't obey Him. And God never said anything to anybody more important than, "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him." And if you don't do that, that is the supreme act of disobedience.

And then to call for the death of the Messiah is to leave yourself desolate. And so our Lord recognizes the desolation of Israel. We see it. It's historic. It's still going on. Now, all that leads us up to this text but it has led us to the end of our time. And that's OK. I want to break this passage into three parts. And I'm just going to introduce it this way. This is the judgment, "Behold your house is left to you." That's a judgment. But there's not just judgment here. There's tenderness here. "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I wanted to gather your children together!" And there's even hope here. Verse 35, "You won't see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Listen, this chapter that is being read by all of us right now isn't the last chapter in God's book with Israel. There's another Chapter. Here you have compassion in verse 34. You have condemnation in verse 35. And then you have the promise of conversion at the end of verse 35. From Christ on, this is Jewish history, compassion, condemnation, conversion. And we're going to unpack those three words. Let me just look briefly at the word "compassion" just to give you a sense of it, because I think this is so important. As Paul's heart ached so should our hearts ache over the unbelief of Israel. Listen to Jesus.

"Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together just as a hen her brood under her wings and you would not." This is grief. And may I say quickly to you that Jesus' grief is equal to His wrath. Yes, He went in and cleansed the temple. Yes, He made a whip and threw them out. Yes, He called it a den of thieves. Yes, He pronounced judgment on that generation. Yes, he pronounced judgment on the leaders in

very scathing language in Matthew 23 and we'll see it in Luke 21.

But on the other side, His heart is filled with compassion. It was the same in the past. God sent the prophet Jeremiah to Israel and said God's going to judge you for your sin, your iniquity, your idolatry. God's going to judge you, but listen to what it says in the 13th chapter of Jeremiah as Jeremiah gives the message. He says this, "Give glory to the Lord your God," verse 16, Jeremiah 13. "Before you bring darkness, before your feet stumble on the dusky mountains and while you're hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness and turns it into gloom." In other words, he says you better glorify God before judgment falls.

Verse 17, the next verse, "But if you will not listen to it, my soul will sob in secret for such pride. My eyes will bitterly weep and flow down with tears because the flock of the Lord has been taken captivity." That's why Jeremiah's called the weeping prophet. You couldn't look at the judgment pronounced on Israel in his day without it bringing tears. These are the tears of God wept through the eyes of Jeremiah. God finds no pleasure, He says, in the death of the wicked.

And here with Jesus is this deeply emotional, tender grief. Go a little later. I'll give you previews of what's coming. Luke 19, verse 41; Luke 19, verse 41; this is jumping a few months ahead to when Jesus came to Jerusalem. It...I guess it starts out looking like it's going to be a great event. Jesus comes in, verse 37, approaches, coming down the descent of the Mount of Olives. The multitude of the disciples begin to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they'd seen. It was all about the miracles.

And they said, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest." They were celebrating His entry. Some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." It was the disciples who were doing this and they were told to rebuke, to be rebuked and Jesus answered and said, "I tell you if these things...if these become silent, the stones will cry out." Then verse 41 when He approached, instead of being glad because of the celebration, He approached, He saw the city and He wept. Strong word, He sobbed.

Here again is God weeping through the eyes of Jesus as God wept through the eyes of Jeremiah, as God weeps through the eyes of the apostle Paul. As He weeps through the eyes of any who look at the plight of those who don't believe and particularly the plight of Israel. It is absolutely heartbreaking. Verse 42, He says, "If you'd known in this day, if you'd only known, even you, the things which make for peace, but now they've been hidden from your eyes." It's over.

If you'd only known...and He wept. And then He told them that the enemies would come and make siege and surround them and level the whole place to the ground and that prophecy, of course, was fulfilled in 70 A.D. You know, He was already feeling that sorrow. Let's go back to Luke 13. He was already feeling the sorrow months before. The tears would burst when He came into the city, when He saw it, when He came in. But even here the pain is there. The pain is in the "Oh." "Oh Jerusalem!" "Oh!" It's almost like a groan and nothing more, an inarticulate surge of emotion. And then to say "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," is indicative of... of the pathos as in Luke 10:41 when He said, "Martha, Martha." There's emotion in that. Or in Luke 22:3, when He says, "Simon, Simon." Or in Acts 9, when He said, "Saul, Saul."

It's kind of like David, you know, back in 2 Samuel, I think it's chapter 18, where he says, "Absalom,

Absalom, oh my son Absalom. Absalom, my son, if only I had died for you, oh Absalom, oh my son." It's that kind of emotion, pathos, grief, agony. Jerusalem, not just the city. It stands for the whole nation. Again in italics it says the city, but it's really "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem," symbolic of a nation that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her. And by the way, those are two parallel statements; killing the prophets and stoning those sent to her, is saying the same thing. Both are present participles: who are killing the prophets and are stoning those sent to her. They weren't done. They had one it in the past and they were still doing it and they would continue to do it.

It wouldn't be long until they would imprison James and cut his head off and stone Stephen and slaughter Christians as we see in the 8th chapter of Acts. They weren't through. And it wouldn't be very long until they would kill their own Messiah. By the way, stoning was the way the Jews were told to execute apostates, blasphemers. Leviticus 24, an interesting passage. Leviticus 24:14, "Bring the one who is cursed outside the camp and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head. Then let all the congregation stone him." The idea was to put him below, maybe the difference between this platform and the ground below with the floor, not much further than that, get people above him throwing down huge boulders on his head, crush out his life. You do that. Anyone who curses his God, "anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord," verse 16, "shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him."

You see this was for blasphemers. This was for apostates. This was for the worst of sins, which is blaspheming the name of God. In Leviticus chapter 20, the Lord said, "Any man from the sons of Israel or aliens sojourning in Israel who gives any of his offering to Molech," idolatry, "put him to death, stone him with stones." And that's what the Jews did to Stephen. They threw him off a little edge, crushed out his life in Acts 7 because they said he was a blasphemer.

And that's what they did. Unfortunately, however, they killed the true prophets. Their history is the history of killing the prophets. This is a characterization. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem that kills the prophets and stones those that sent to her." How would you like that to be the byline for your city? You know, when you pull into Jerusalem, the sign says, welcome to Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those that are sent to her. That's the permanent fixed characterization. That's what they did. Even back in the Beatitudes, you know Jesus made it very clear, "Rejoice and be glad when you're persecuted because your reward in heaven is great, for so they have persecuted the prophets who were before you."

They did this all the time. Matthew 23 talks about it. Luke 20 talks about it. Matthew 23 Jesus repeats it again and again and again killing the prophets, killing the prophets. We saw it back in Luke 11. Go back there for just a moment and we'll finish with this passage. But back in Luke 11, verse 47, Jesus says, "Woe to you," brings judgment on them, "for you build the tombs of the prophets and it was your fathers who killed them." You hypocrites, you fakes, you frauds, you rebuild a monument to a prophet that your father killed.

"In truth," verse 48, "you approve the deeds of your fathers, because it was they who killed them and you build their tombs." You're...You're really no better off than your fathers. Verse 49, He says, "I will send to them prophets and apostles. Some of them they will kill, some they'll persecute. Eventually all the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world will be charged against this generation from the blood of Abel," the first martyr, to the blood of Zechariah, the last Old Testament martyr, the prophet who died between the altar and the house of God. It'll all be charged to this generation. We've gone through that in detail. I won't go back over it, simply to say this. The

generation in Jesus' day was just as murderous as their fathers. And while they tried to honor the prophets in some symbolic way by sort of embellishing their tombs, the truth of the matter is, they hated those who brought the truth just as much as their fathers did. That's why they killed the prophets. That's why they killed the apostles. That's why they killed the Messiah. They killed in the past, they'll kill again. They were murderers of the righteous. They were murderers of the messengers of God. They perpetuated their own suffering by their constantly killing those whom God sent.

In a sense, all the centuries of sorrow the Jews have endured are the cup of wrath filled with the blood they have spilt. How can one generation suffer for all that? How can one generation be the generation that suffers for all the past? Well, that's the way it is. The flood drowned the whole world, accumulated sin for generations and generations and finally God drops His temporal judgment.

But certainly in the case of the Jews, the last generation, the generation that gets the judgment is the most guilty of all because they have rejected all the warnings of the past. The generation on whom the judgment finally falls, engaged in the same sins of past generations, demonstrates disregard for all those past warnings and all those past judgments and therefore has a greater accumulated guilt. They had the Old Testament. They had the whole record of it. They had what God said in Deuteronomy 28, that blessing would come if they obeyed. Cursing would come if they didn't. They had the warnings of all the Old Testament prophets. They had John the Baptist. They had Jesus. They had the twelve. They had the seventy that were sent out.

And when the judgment finally falls, it falls on that final generation because they are more guilty than any other because they've had the greatest exposure to the truth. And so they were all charged with that, from the killing of Abel all the way down to the killing of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, murdered in the temple. They bore the guilt of all of that because they learned nothing from it. They rejected all the judgments, and so in that powerful statement in verse 50, chapter 11 that it may be charged against this generation. The end of verse 51, "I tell you it'll be charged against this generation." And that generation, folks, felt it and that takes us back to where we started. It was May and the year was 66 A.D. and the radical Zealot Jews revolted against Rome and the long 2,000 years of desolation began.

The slaughter was on, but the heart of God was and is broken. That's why Jesus says, "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often," how frequently, "I wanted to gather your children together just as a hen gathers her brood under wings and you would not have it." And so we say during this period of time when Israel is left without a protector, God still grieves over her and so should we and take every opportunity we can to bring the message of Jesus Christ to every Jew as well as every other person that they might be delivered and that they might have a protector, a Savior, a Redeemer to care for them. More on the compassion next time. Let's pray.

Our Father, the...the power of this is obvious. Simple words of Jesus contained in two verses give us an understanding 2,000 years of human history with regard to this one nation. Two simple verses and we not only know the horror of the desolation of leaving people on their own, particularly these people who had You as their protector, but we see as well Your compassion and we know that if Jesus wept and if Jeremiah wept, heaven still weeps. We know that if Paul had such sorrow and continual heaviness of heart that he could almost willingly give up his own salvation for the sake of Jews, that that hasn't changed and that You want to weep through our eyes. And our tears will in a real sense be the tears of God as we weep over those of Israel and any other nation who know not

the Savior.

Father, we thank You that we are a people protected, because we have come in true faith to Jesus Christ and been redeemed and saved and given eternal life. You are our shield, our protector, our deliverer, our Savior, our strong tower. You are our safety, our provider, our defender. Nothing that can ever come against us can defeat You. And so in Christ we are more than conquerors and we triumph not because of who we are, but because of who He is. We thank You that we can know You, the great and glorious God, and that You are our loving, supplying, protecting, life-giving Father. Use us, Lord, to bring the message of Jesus Christ, the saving gospel to those who are around us, Jew and Gentile. And give us Your compassion for those who are lost.

Father, we thank You this morning that You've given us Your word because it sets things before us as they really are. We understand this history. We know many, many Jewish people do not. They cannot understand it. They cannot understand that they have disobeyed Your law. They cannot understand that they have rejected Your Messiah. They are blind. Their own sin blinds them. The God of this world blinds them and all we can pray is that as we proclaim the truth, the blindness might come off, that as we bring the glorious light of the gospel shining in the face of Jesus Christ, it might dispel the darkness.

We thank You that in this congregation there is a remnant of Israel who have come to true and saving faith in their Messiah. Give us a great, evangelistic love for these people and for all whom we meet. Make us faithful to live the gospel so that it's not just a message devoid of life, but that we are truly Christian and demonstrate the very character of Christ. May we pray in His name, Amen.

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