

Message #70

Luke 13:31-35

On September 26, A.D. 70, Jerusalem was completely conquered by Rome under the direction of Titus, who was the general in charge of the Roman military. In the aftermath of the siege, 1,100,000 Jews were dead and 97,000 were captured as prisoners.

Yet, when we look into various passages of the O.T., we read of a different type of Jerusalem:

- 1) We read of a Jerusalem which is the source of judgment, not the object of judgment. Is. 2:1-4
- 2) We read of a Jerusalem in which the Lord reigns, not the Romans. Micah 4:6-7
- 3) We read of a Jerusalem in which the Lord lives and blesses, not destroys and curses (Zech. 8:20-23).

So when we look at these texts and then we look at Jerusalem even today, we must conclude something has gone wrong. Something is drastically wrong from what was initially predicted to happen in Jerusalem and what has actually happened to Jerusalem.

What happened? What went wrong? Why all the destruction? Why didn't God establish Jerusalem and make it His blessed city? **Why did Christ come to be King of the Jews and then left promising judgment would come upon the Jews?**

The answer to all of these questions is found in this very passage. The nation Israel had witnessed, during the days of Jesus Christ, some of the most spectacular things the world has ever seen. John had first come and announced that the nation Israel needed to repent because the Kingdom was at hand. The King was on earth and the Kingdom was at hand.

These Jews had listened to warning after warning that they needed to repent. They observed the stupendous miracles of Jesus Christ, proving He was the King. Yet they would not repent. They did not repent and they did not change. Eventually, Christ got fed up with the hard-heartedness and rebellion and **He decided it was time to shift the program of God toward Israel from one of opportunity and blessing to abandonment, opposition and judgment.**

All people of God need to take a serious look at this text. It is specifically aimed at Israel, but it has application to us as well. The message is loud and clear:

THERE IS A TIME LIMIT TO GOD'S GRACIOUS INVITATION TO PEOPLE TO GET RIGHT WITH HIM AND IF PEOPLE DO NOT RESPOND WITHIN THAT TIME LIMIT, THEY WILL BE LEFT TO FACE THE SEVERE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

This principal is the same for anyone. Whether one is Jewish or non-Jewish, Christian or non-Christian, there is a time limit to the offer of grace. God invites people to get into a right relationship with Him. He invites people to turn from their sin to Him. He is a merciful God and a patient God. However, if people refuse, there will come a point when He says, "Time is up." If God did that to the nation Israel, He will do that to anyone.

In fact, the Apostle Paul stated this very thing to the church in Romans 11:18-21. He warns the church that if God cut off His program with Israel, He can do the same thing with us.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and things were very tense between Him and the rigid religious world. He was offering grace in a religious world of works, traditions, laws and rules.

When we come to this text, Jesus brings out three absolutes that all better see:

ABSOLUTE #1 – God’s program operates according to God’s timing and will. **13:31-33**

These verses make it very clear that God operates His program according to the timing of God and not the timing of man. Herod and these Pharisees did not have a thing to do with the timing and destiny of Jesus Christ. It does not matter who the man is or how important he thinks he is. No matter what a man may think, say or do, no man can stop or change God’s program or timing.

There are three realities brought out about this:

Reality #1 - God’s program will not be time altered by the threats of men. **13:31**

At this point in the ministry of Christ, He was heading toward Jerusalem and was probably somewhere within Perea or most likely Galilee. This was Herod’s territory. Herod was the ruler of Galilee (Luke 3:1). He was like the governor of a state. He did often go into Jerusalem.

Christ had been making a major impact in Herod’s territory and these Pharisees wanted Him out of their region. Some of the Pharisees came to Christ and told Him He had better leave because Herod wanted to kill Him. According to Josephus, Herod liked to keep things as peaceful as possible. Jesus was causing quite a stir with these religious leaders and probably he did want Him out of his territory so things could quiet down.

Naturally, when a Pharisee appears friendly and concerned about Jesus Christ, it is time to become very suspicious because Pharisees are hypocrites who are known for their religious play acting (Luke 12:1).

The Pharisees and Herodians wanted to destroy Christ for a long time (Mark 3:6). The Herodians were Jewish men who adhered to the Pharisaical traditions and supported Herod. Most of these men had been appointed by Herod. Both the Pharisees and the Herodians wanted Jesus Christ dead. His presence was a real threat to them. He was very popular and powerful and He was too impacting on the people for their liking.

I am not so sure that Herod himself actually wanted to kill Christ at this time. We know that

- 1) The Pharisees wanted to kill Christ, not protect Him (Mark 3:6).
- 2) Herod didn’t even want to kill John, who spoke against him (Mark 6:20, 25-26).
- 3) Herod wanted to see Christ perform miracles, not kill Him (Luke 9:9; 23:8).

The real source of wanting to kill Christ was not Herod, but the Pharisees. They wanted Jesus Christ gone. They wanted Him out of their territory ASAP. Christ was making an impact on their religious world and they were losing their authority and membership.

Here they appear to be so concerned for His safety and their approach is you need to leave. Jesus was not fooled nor intimidated by these guys and He was not about to alter the program of God because of the intimidating threats of these men. He was not about to change to appease them.

I think of organizations like Wycliffe. There are times when political rebels demand that missionary organizations leave their area. There have been captives taken and threats made. The reason is that the missionaries are making an impact in their world and the rebels are losing control over the people. But just like Jesus Christ, they refuse to be intimidated and they stay faithful to God.

Perhaps you are trying to do God's will and you discover that you are disliked and perhaps hated. Maybe you have been asked to leave or have even been threatened with job loss or even worse. If you are doing God's will, don't buckle to the pressure. Don't leave and don't quit. Sometimes doing God's will is lonely, but it is always right.

Don't allow anyone or anything intimidate you into changing direction to what you know is Biblically right.

Reality #2 - God's program will be completed according to the timing of God. **13:32**

Jesus basically says you go tell Herod that I will leave when I am finished with what I have to do and not one second before. In fact, the verb "reach" is one that means to bring something to a conclusion by reaching its end. The verb "reach my goal" (τελειουμαι) is one that means to finish a task in the sense of completing the plan of God. It is a passive verb, meaning God is the one causing the action and Christ is in the process of completing it.

What Christ is saying is when I have completed or finished my work to its conclusion here, I will leave and go to Jerusalem.

Christ calls Herod a fox and there are three possibilities of what He meant:

- 1) He is a fox in the sense he is a person of no significance.
- 2) He is a fox in the sense he is a cunning deceiver.
- 3) He is a fox in the sense that he is a destroyer.

Probably there is a hint of truth to all three, so the Pharisees use Herod as a reason for Him to leave Galilee. These Pharisees weren't fooling Christ and neither was Herod.

In fact, He says you go tell Herod two messages:

(Message #1) - Tell Herod what I am doing. **12:32a**

Really, Jesus Christ was an asset to Herod's state because He was helping people who lived in it. He was not harming Herod's people, but He was helping and healing them. He was casting out demons and curing people of diseases. Only God can do this. So Jesus says to the Pharisees, go tell Herod what I am doing. This would force the Pharisees to witness for Jesus Christ.

This is a great defense for proving a true ministry. Go tell people what I am doing. These religious Pharisees did not have the power and ability and authority to do what Christ did. The fact is, every one of them should have looked at what Christ was doing and said this is our God-Savior-Messiah-King.

One who is truly doing the will of God will have skills and abilities and gifts of God way beyond the norm. When they are challenged, a good thing to say is, "Tell people what I am doing."

(Message #2) - Tell Herod when I am leaving. **12:32b**

Jesus Christ makes it clear that He is the One who is calling the shots. It is not Herod and it is not the Pharisees. When He says He will leave in three days, it may mean metaphorically in a short period of time (Hosea 6:2), or it may mean in three literal days. I think Christ is referring to three literal days.

What Christ is saying is I will leave Galilee when I am ready to go and not one day sooner. Christ was not about to run because of some intimidation and neither should we. When you are doing the will of God, you need not fear anything.

The sad fact is there are many people just like Herod today when it comes to Jesus Christ. They do not want Him in their lives. Many people would rather have their religion, their man-made rules and traditions rather than Jesus Christ. They basically say to Christ, "go away" and "leave."

Reality #3 - God's program will be completed in the places chosen by God. **13:33**

Jesus says the plan of God is that I am going to die in Jerusalem. There is no question that Christ's destiny was Jerusalem and frankly still is. There is not another healthy person on this earth that can tell you exactly when and where they are going to die. Jesus could. The Pharisees want Christ dead. Herod wants Him dead and Christ says you are going to get your wish. Jesus assures them all, as Frederic Godet said, "that your prey will not escape." **But He makes it clear He is not running from Herod to escape death, He is actually going to Jerusalem straight into His own death.**

Christ would finish His work in Galilee and then would go to Jerusalem for execution. He was not doing this because of the whims and wishes of men; He was doing this because it was the will of God.

Now you may ask why did Jesus Christ go to Jerusalem if He knew He would die on a cross? Isaiah 53 answers it—He went there for us. Christ went to the cross to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

This was God's program, not man's. God was in charge and not the religious and political leaders. Jesus was God and He was fulfilling the will of God and no man on this earth could stop it.

ABSOLUTE #2 – God can and will abandon His program with Israel after a certain time. **13:34**

Jesus Christ loved the Jews. He loved Israel. He loved Jerusalem. He still does and frankly so do we. However, somehow some people think that love tolerates anything. It doesn't. Jesus Christ makes it perfectly clear that He was going to abandon Israel. He would leave her "desolate," which means God was going to abandon Israel and leave the nation alone for a while. Lest we think this is only for Israel, we need to be reminded of what Jesus said to the church of Ephesus. Christ warned churches, He can and He will remove candlesticks.

There are two critical reasons brought out here as to why He abandoned Israel:

Reason #1 - Israel was abandoned because she resisted God's true ministers. **13:34a**

Do you see in the mind of God what Jerusalem is known for? She is not known as the great city that reflects the Glory of God and Jesus Christ, she is known in the mind of God as the city that murdered His men.

God specifically sent many men and prophets to Israel to communicate the truth of God. They came proclaiming the inspired truth of God. Instead of learning and changing, most of them hated God's ministers and killed them. That hatred stemmed from the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem should have been known as the greatest city on earth for the glory of God. It should have been known as a place where God's word was carefully taught. Instead, it was known to God as a city that killed His men.

There is a pastor I know who was contacted by a church to become their pastor. He did some research and discovered that some good men had gone to this church, but didn't stay long. He found out that one by one the men were rejected by the congregation. The people made life miserable for every man God sent. My pastor friend refused to go and he said today that church is dead.

Reason #2 - Israel was abandoned because she refused God's invitation. **13:34b**

Jesus Christ did everything He could, including stupendous miracles, to draw this nation to Himself. He wanted to gather her as a hen gathers her chicks and give her the Kingdom. Had Israel repented and responded to Him, this is what He would have done.

Christ offered her salvation, protection, forgiveness and blessings, but the vast majority did not respond to His invitation. As a result, God said, "I have had enough." She would not listen to Him so He would leave her. There is always a time element to the grace of God. Refuse to respond to conviction and He will leave.

ABSOLUTE #3 – God can and will abandon people for a long time. **13:35**

Notice Jesus does not say you will never see Me again, He says you will not see me again "until" the time comes when this nation wants Me to return and cries out to Me to return. Do not overlook that adverb "until." There is a time coming when this will happen.

We know from studying Biblical prophecy from both the O.T. and the N.T. that it will take the Great Tribulation to bring the nation Israel to the point where she as a nation will cry out for Jesus Christ to come back and reign.

It has been nearly 2,000 years since Christ uttered the words of **verse 35**. God is still carrying out this abandonment. The national program of God with Israel that had given her all of the blessings was temporarily brought to a halt because of her rebellion and rejection.

But this warning is not just for Israel. God's grace does have limits:

- 1) God can abandon an unbeliever to his unsaved condition and hell. Rom. 1:24-32
- 2) God can abandon a believer to no growth and ignorance. Heb. 6:3
- 3) God can abandon a church to reflect no glory and deadness. Rev. 2:8

People who don't think they need to respond to the word of God are making an eternal mistake. They risk being abandoned by God. There is a time limit to grace. If God's word speaks to your heart and convicts you, do not refuse it.