

The Wednesday Word, July 20, 2016: The Jerusalem Lament

“Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that kills the prophets and stones them which are sent unto you, how often have I desired to gather your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not” Matthew 23:37

Before He spoke these words, Jesus had made a scathing, verbal assault on the hypocritical Pharisees. To the unenlightened, Christ’s words seem rude, sarcastic and belligerent. According to Him, these religious leaders were a cluster of hypocrites, snakes and murderers. One might be excused for thinking that Jesus had overstepped the mark by adopting such an unfitting, hostile attitude. How unbecoming for a man of God! But then, the sobering thought comes to us that this was no mere man speaking, this was God in full articulate flow. And these cutting indictments are exactly what God thinks of a veneered religion that conceals a wicked heart. So much for ‘Gentle Jesus meek and mild’! However, we should not be surprised by His tone, for in using this manner of speech, He is once more demonstrating His eternal Deity. We read of the Almighty in Psalms 2 that;

“He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.”

When God laughs, it’s not funny!

However, Christ then turns from his polemic with the Pharisees and mourns over Jerusalem saying these remarkable words,

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not” (Matthew 23:37).

The key word in this verse is “gathered” (*episunago*). In essence, Jesus is again referencing His eternal Godhead. It is the nature of God to gather and to cover. Indeed, Jesus, in this passage, is claiming to be the God of Psalm 91:4 where it is said of Him that, *“He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”*

If Christ was merely a man, this kind of language, once more, represents him as a religious nutcase. When He says, ‘How often,’ it implies that He had an age-long desire to gather the city to Himself. If He had His beginning, in Bethlehem, this would have been a ludicrous statement. Furthermore, can you imagine any mere carpenter who doubled as a country preacher presenting himself as the place of safety for an entire city? How absurd!

But, it was God Himself who in His unchanging love for Jerusalem had sent them prophets time and time again. Jesus, therefore, is speaking as the eternal Deity. Once more I defer to the wisdom of Mr. Spurgeon,

“Some, who have found difficulties in this lament, have said that it was the language of Christ as man. I beg to put in a very decided negative to that; it is, and it must be, the utterance of the Son of man, the Son of God, the Christ in his complex person as human and divine. I am not going into any of the difficulties just now; but you could not fully understand this passage, from any point of view, unless you believed it to be the language of one who was both God and man.”

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit “I Would, But You Would Not” Sermon No. 2381

And that’s the Gospel Truth!