

Lamenting Jerusalem

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[0 : 00] If you'll please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew in the 23rd chapter. Our sermon will be focusing on verses 37 through 39.

I've included in our text 34 through 39 just for us to read the context and see the flow from what we saw last week. But we'll be looking there together, Matthew 23 beginning in verse 34.

Therefore, I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.

Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it.

How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you are not willing. See, your house is left to you desolate.

[1 : 35] For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we again thank you for your word, and we pray asking for your spirit's help that you would help us to understand this.

As we're moving into parts that would really get into some apocalyptic language that can be very difficult for us to comprehend. And so, Lord, we pray for clarity from your messenger.

We pray for your spirit's help in this. And we pray that, Lord, that we would not get bought down, Lord, with the text itself, but that we would be encouraged by it to look to Christ and to worship him.

We pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. We've now come to Jesus' final public teaching in the Gospel of Matthew. So we've been working through it, and this is the last time he's going to teach the public at all in the Gospel of Matthew.

What follows this is the Olivet Discourse. And we're getting into some of that now. We see hints of it already, but you can look at chapter 24, verse 1. And then you see verse 3, And he said on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately saying, Tell us, when will these things be?

[2 : 57] And so even now we're getting into some of the things Jesus is saying is opening questions for the disciples asking, What are you talking about? And when are these things going to happen? So Jesus publicly speaking to the crowd, from here on out it's all going to be private until we get to the cross itself and even afterwards as well.

But Jesus' teaching will all be private. So we see in this passage, I think what we see is both Jesus' compassion and the righteous judgment of God.

We see both of these things taking place, the compassion of God and the righteous judgment of God. So Jesus here begins to tell, begins to tell, a great, catastrophic, and really unprecedented judgment upon Israel.

Judgment upon the leaders and the people of the nation that will bring about the destruction of the capital. So we think Jerusalem as the capital of the nation of Israel and the temple are facing destruction.

I really want us to understand this in the context of what we've already seen, what we just saw last week. Remember last week we saw the seven woes that Jesus declared on the scribes and Pharisees.

[4 : 09] So the religious leaders of Israel, he judges, he proclaims a judgment upon them. And remember what he said. He even called them children of hell, that they were headed for hell, that they made those who followed them even worse off than they are.

He calls them a brood of vipers and serpents. And we talked about at that time that he's specifically saying that they're followers of Satan. They're doing Satan's work. They're under his power and dominion.

They're not under God's authority. They're not a part of God's kingdom. And so remember the context of that. Jesus is just called the religious leaders of Israel unregenerate, unsaved, and misleading of the people.

And that then I think naturally leads into what we see here. That's why we went back and read verse 34. He talks about that they're the ones who were killing the prophets, that they're guilty. Remember we talked about the two seeds.

Their seed is guilty all the way from the beginning. It being those who oppose God's people. And so what's left for them? But judgment. And so then we see this transition really in verse 37.

[5 : 18] Jesus really lamenting Jerusalem. But notice the connection. Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. And so he's mourning for them, but also understanding that the judgment he's just proclaimed on the scribes and Pharisees is falling not on the leaders alone, but is an extension really to the nation of Israel.

And when he speaks of Jerusalem, it's not just that he has something against one city, but that it's a proclamation of judgment upon the nation of Israel as the capital. It'd be as if someone says that they hate Washington, D.C.

and they were going to perform an attack on Washington, D.C., but it has nothing to do with our country. Well, of course it has stuff to do with our country. Washington, D.C. is representative of the United States. And so too, Jerusalem here is really representative of the nation of Israel as a whole.

So Jesus is just called the most respected Jewish leaders, religious leaders, hypocrites. So they're headed for hell. And then he's listed out specific sins that they've committed that's brought about this judgment.

And now he's saying God's judgment is coming because of their accumulated sins. These sins he's listed out, they're going to bring about the judgment of God upon them. And of course, that's demonstrated in the woes he's already declared.

[6 : 30] So we see here, first, God's willingness to save contrasted with their unwillingness to be saved. So our first point is going to look at God's willingness to save, God's compassion, but their unwillingness to be saved.

And second, we see the judgment that results from their rejection. I want to be careful as well. We know that God's outside of time, but we also understand that human decisions have consequences.

And so their rejection of the compassion that's extended to them is ultimately bringing about their judgment of God upon them. So let's look first at their unwillingness and unbelief and the compassion of God.

Look at verse 37. Verse 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills her prophets and stones those who are sent to it, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you are not willing.

So the first thing I think we have to observe in this passage is that God has been gracious. We can say God is gracious. It's part of his character's nature. Let's just note in terms of his relationship to these people that he's speaking of, to Jerusalem, and as an extension of that to all of Israel, God has been very gracious to his people.

[7 : 45] That grace has been demonstrated particularly in his sending the prophets to them repeatedly. He sent messengers to them. He sent prophets to them to draw them back to himself when they repent.

Excuse me, when they sin. To draw them to repentance. To bring them to salvation. And so God has extended himself to them. He's made an effort to them, and we can even say in terms of the Old Testament, in ways that were not made to other peoples more broadly.

We see instances of that with Nineveh and then a few individuals who God makes an effort to send prophets to them. But apart from that, the rest of the world hasn't really experienced this kind of messenger from God.

These prophets sent to them to draw them to repentance. But Israel has. God has been very, very gracious to them. And we even see, express here, God's desire.

Why has God sent prophets and messengers to them? And don't forget, these are the prophets and messengers that we see back in verses 34 through 36 that they put to death. Why has God sent messengers to them?

[8 : 49] Well, we see God's desire expressed to us in verse 37. He says, How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you are not willing.

And so we have this picture, whatever it may be, that the chicks are in danger. These baby chickens are in danger. And so the mother draws them up under her wings.

And in looking at commentaries, there were several examples given. Most of them all said the same examples, but you have the hawk, which we had chickens, and trust me, the hawk tore our chickens up.

You have the hawk that's after the chickens. And the mom covers them up to protect them. She's even willing to die that she might protect the little chicks under her wings. Or it could be that there's a storm or something else.

It could be just cold that she's drawing them in to give them the body heat. But you have this picture of this mother hen who's doing what she can to save them from death. And I think as we look at this passage in light of the passage, we understand that what's being spoken of is God's judgment's coming upon the wicked, the godless, those who would oppose him, those who will not put their faith in the Messiah.

[10 : 02] And so God has sent his prophets. Why? That he might draw them up under his wings and protect them from the wrath that's to come. God's wrath's coming. I want to protect you from that wrath.

And they say, no, we're not interested in that. No, thank you. And so when we see this picture, we see God's desire is to gather them in, to protect them.

And we have to understand that in terms of salvation. There's this desire in God that his people would be brought into salvation and save from the wrath to come, which is even his wrath, his righteous judgment upon sin.

He wants to spare his people from that judgment. But we see this contrasted with Jerusalem, who's characterized by their rejection of God's messengers and therefore the rejection of God's grace, his mercy to them.

Over and over again, they have put to death the prophets. In fact, to this point, Jerusalem's characterized by that. Jerusalem is the physical and spiritual capital of the nation. And it's representative of the nation as a whole, as I've already said.

[11 : 07] But look, in verse 37, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to it. So what characterizes Jerusalem? They're the city that kills the prophets.

If we understand that even in terms of representative of the nation, if this is a spiritual center, the heart of the spiritual aspect of the nation, and in the heart of the spiritual part of the nation, they're killing prophets, how much worse is the situation throughout the rest of the nation?

Luke even includes in his account of this, and we understand if Luke's including this, this is something Jesus said that Matthew doesn't include, but Luke 13, 13 includes Jesus saying after that, it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.

Nowhere else are prophets going to get killed. If Jesus is going to die for his people, he's got to go to Jerusalem. You remember, we saw this back in Matthew earlier on.

Jesus knew he was going to his death. He said, we've got to go up to Jerusalem that these things could take place. Why? Because Jerusalem is the city that kills the prophets. This is remarkable even when you consider foreign countries.

[12 : 20] Nineveh received a prophet and repented. Jerusalem is the city that kills the prophets. And of course, that then leads to what he says in the second part of verse 37, that they're unwilling to be gathered in under the wings, under his wings, under his protection.

I think as we, as we think of the broader picture here, I said of the grace of God, the mercy of God, we have to understand that what's being taught to us here about the character of God is that the reality is there will not be one person who will stand in the judgment who will be able to bring a charge against God.

That God was not willing to be gracious to him. That God was not willing to show mercy to him. There are ways in which God has extended that to all people. And if there's any of us who will ultimately be condemned in hell, it will be because of our own decision to reject the grace and mercy of God.

And I say that in no way denying the sovereignty of God. I believe in the sovereign God and yet, that does not in any way demean or in any way discredit human responsibility.

What we see played out in this passage is men will be held accountable for their own decisions. And what we see is that God is a God of grace and mercy. But their rejection of it means that they're going to be responsible.

[13 : 44] Everyone condemned to hell will know that it's their own unwillingness to receive God's grace that's condemned them. Nothing else. And so there may be some of you in this room who even imagine, pretend right now that it's not really your fault that you don't love the Lord.

That if God, there's ways we can think in hyper-Calvinistic ways even. We can justify this theologically. Well, if God wants me to save, he'll save me. Kind of against my will. Or if God wants me to repent of that sin, he'll make me do it.

But I think those lies don't work in heaven. There's not one who will stand before the judgment who will say, God, you're responsible for this. God in no way has sinned against his people. In fact, what we see over and over again is his grace and his mercy.

He sent prophets. He sent messengers. You can even argue now, though I'm not a prophet in the biblical sense, I'm one here proclaiming to you the word of God and calling you to repentance.

That is mercy from God. That is God's grace upon you. J.C. Ryle says, The ruin of those who are lost is not because Christ was not willing to save them, not, excuse me, nor yet because they wanted to be saved, but could not, but because they would not come to Christ.

[15 : 09] And I think that's a great summary of the reality of this. It's not that Christ is not willing. It's not that someone wanted to be saved, but they just couldn't pull it off. It's that they're unwilling to receive Christ and his mercy, the grace that's ascended to them.

Maybe another way of saying this is that Christ is more willing to save than we're willing to be saved. There's a greater desire in God to save than there is in the sinner to be saved.

So that beds the question in my mind, how have you responded to the ways in which God has extended his grace and mercy to you?

If this is true for Israel as a nation and we understand as it's essential that the church today, you're sitting under this, I've said already that there's been ways in which God has sent his messengers to you, he sent his word to call you to repentance, how have you responded?

I even think, let's just for a moment compare ourselves to Israel because maybe we think, well, they really had great unfair advantages. God has sent not just prophets to you, God has sent his finished word.

[16 : 22] You have what no one in Israel in that day had, the finished word of God in this holy scriptures, the Bible. And so he's given his word to you to draw you to repentance. How have you responded?

As I said already, even now he sends his messengers like myself, your elders, others who would fill this pulpit to call you to repentance. How have you responded to that?

I want to encourage you even today that you would respond to God's grace and mercy, that you would receive that, that you would not be counted along with those who fall under this judgment. it. And of course that really draws us to the second major point of our message which is the coming judgment that we see really in verses 38 and 39.

He says, See, your house is left to you desolate, for I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Bless is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Now, I will say already we're getting into some difficult passages.

The Olivet Discourse is going to make it even more difficult. Chapters 24 and 25. Jesus speaks in apocalyptic ways that are not expressly clear. You pray for me that God would give great discernment and wisdom as I study the word, but in the coming sermons that it would be clear and point us in right ways.

[17 : 48] But even now we see a bit of that as Jesus speaks of this. I think what we see given here, I just want to remind you of a principle that I've been trying to present all along in terms of the flattening of prophecy.

What I mean by that is that God in the Old Testament and even Jesus in his life oftentimes speaks of prophetic things that will take place in the future. And sometimes they're flattened out that we would expect them the way they're described to happen in one instant.

And in fact, I think they happen over large periods of time. Sometimes we can see that even in terms of the already not yet principle. There's ways in which we already see fulfillment of the prophecy, but it has not yet reached the consummation, the full fulfillment of the prophecy.

So we think we could talk even in terms of covenants and we see prophetic fulfillments of the covenant to Abraham, to David, in terms of a son reigning on the throne, but yet we waited until Christ came, until we see the full fulfillment of one who would reign forever.

And even now, we know that Christ is reigning, but not every knee has bowed yet, right? So we're still waiting for future fulfillment of this promise, even though we know it's already been partially fulfilled. And so if we understand this is a principle that God gives prophecy, and Jesus speaks in prophetic ways that some of them come to fulfillment immediately or quickly, and some of them were waiting for fulfillment, I think that would be helpful to us.

[19 : 19] And so even in verse 38 and verse 39, I see ways in which we see a present prophecy and a future prophecy, if that makes sense. We see things that are going to come to pass very soon and things that aren't going to come to pass for a much longer time.

So in particular, in verse 38, I think we see, I don't want to say immediate, but very soon fulfillment of the prophecy. He says, see your house is left to you desolate.

This present tense, we read it even as left to, almost as past tense, but it can be translated as well from the Greek as see your house is being left to you. And so I think it's already being fulfilled as he speaks it.

The declaration has already taken place that it's happened because of what we just saw in terms of their rejection of the prophets and ultimately we're going to see that in their rejection of the prophet that Dave spoke of earlier in the worship leading, right?

They're going to reject the great prophet, the one greater than Moses. They're going to reject Christ. And so their rejection of these things brings about this judgment that's coming. And so even now Jesus is saying, your house is left to you or being left to you desolate.

[20 : 31] And so let me, just as we think in terms of our last point, say in verse 38, that we have to acknowledge that to choose, excuse me, to reject Christ is to choose desolation.

They reject Christ, they reject the prophet, and so in turn, they've chosen to have their house left desolate. In other words, God isn't sending some judgment upon them that wasn't by their own doing.

God's not going to be unfair with the judgment that's coming that we'll talk in greater detail about. They've chosen that by rejecting Christ. And just as I said for all of us in this room one day, should we stand before God and be condemned eternally to hell, there will not be one who said that's unfair.

Even this day, you may be making that choice if you're rejecting Christ, you're choosing desolation. Without the protection of his wings, there can be no other outcome.

But again, don't forget our gracious God, that his desire is to draw you under those protective wings. And so as we look at verse 38, my belief is that we see Jesus here speaking of the temple specifically and Jerusalem and Israel more broadly.

[21 : 47] Jesus refers to the temple in verse 38 as your house. And even the language, when we think of the temple, our expectation would be it's God's house, right? So what is the implication for Jesus to say to them, your house is left to you desolate?

I think symbolically Jesus is saying that God is at this moment in time forsaking the temple. God's leaving the temple. temple. It's over for them with the temple.

And so there are implications of this that will come. And look, some of you are going to be really excited. You may have lots of questions for me. Just wait. We're going to get into more detail of this in chapter 24.

Just pray for me. Okay, but the implication of this, God's leaving his temple. And so let me just start with one great implication. I don't want to get too much into this.

This is in my notes and it's all coming. So the veil to the temple is torn, ripped in two. Why? Because God's presence isn't behind some curtain. It's now going to be through his Holy Spirit and dwelling every believer, the fulfillment of the new covenant.

[22 : 52] So this is blessing for God's people. But God's not there in a space. Instead, there's coming a time when we will worship God in spirit and truth. That time comes with Jesus on the cross.

No longer is the temple the central place of worship. We don't travel to Mecca or some central place to worship our God. We worship God wherever we are in spirit and truth. See, I'm getting way into this, but this also means there's nothing necessarily holy or sacred about this building.

This building isn't where God dwells. God's spirit dwells every believer. And what's special about this gathering is that God's people gather together with that spirit inside of them and we worship God together here.

It can be anywhere though. It can be outside, whatever, but when God's people gather together for worship, that's what makes it holy, not the building itself. And so likewise, the temple, there's nothing special about the temple anymore.

Now, obviously, we'll talk more about this, but that has major implications in chapter 24 with the destruction of the temple. But to begin with, Jesus is saying God's presence is leaving the temple.

[23 : 56] Your house has left you desolate. Definition of desolate. Desolate means deserted and in a state of bleak and dismal emptiness.

So, by desolate, it doesn't just mean like, oh, it's kind of dirty or something, right? Desolate specifically means there's no one there. And so your house is left to you desolate means God's abandoning it.

He's leaving it. This was foretold in several of the prophets, go figure, Jeremiah 12, 7, where God says, I have forsaken my house, I have abandoned my heritage, I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.

Okay, so in Jeremiah, God's speaking, saying, I have abandoned my heritage, I have forsaken my house, I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies. Just for a second, in terms of flattening a prophecy, we understand as well that this is speaking of the Babylonian captivity, but I'm arguing it's not just from that destruction, but it's speaking to a future destruction.

So there's immediate fulfillment and a future fulfillment. And Jesus is saying, that fulfillment's about to happen. what you've been waiting for, you got a taste of in the exile, but there's a greater fulfillment coming in the future, and in the immediate future.

[25 : 16] Then Ezekiel foresaw a vision of the glory of the Lord departing from the temple, and departing from the temple, I didn't write down the chapter, forgive me for that.

Ezekiel 43 is the follow-up to that. In verses 8-10, for the glory of God leaving the temple, and then leaving all of Jerusalem, and I think Jesus is arguing what Ezekiel and Jeremiah spoke of is now coming to pass in their very presence.

I even want to argue that there may even be a physical way that Jesus lives out prophecy before them. Look at chapter 24, verse 1. Jesus left the temple, as Annette's words.

Jesus left the temple and was going away when these disciples came to point out to him the building of the temple. Now, I would argue, not hopefully too speculatively, but I would argue that what Jesus is doing is representative of that.

This is Jesus' last time speaking to the public. He will no longer address the nation of Israel as a whole in teaching them. So the time of you hearing the word of God in the temple is over.

[26 : 26] And the example of that is I'm leaving the temple. My presence as I leave representative of God's presence as a whole leaving the temple for good. It's over for the temple. And so I think that's what's being portrayed for us in verse 38.

But I would argue that the destruction of their house also extends beyond God's physically or spiritually leaving the presence of the temple. We'll talk more about this Lord willing in the coming sermons, but we know that in 8070 the temple is actually destroyed.

And so we think back to Jeremiah 12, I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of our enemies. And so we know that the Roman Empire will destroy the temple in 8070.

So the temple itself will be destroyed. That's a judgment upon God on the nation of Israel. In some ways we also see this as an expression of mercy by God. Lest temple sacrifices continue and be wrongly directed toward God.

There is no more temple sacrifices. One sacrifice is come. The ceremonial system is over. The temple is representative not just of the presence of God, but the ceremonial system. So on one hand it's the judgment of God, on the other hand we see it also as a mercy that God is saying the temple is not where it's at anymore.

[27 : 39] Goodness, I'm getting ahead. But by implication that also means if we sought to try to rebuild the temple, we would be going back to the shadow and rejecting the reality who is Christ. Our goal is not to rebuild a physical temple in Israel.

I know there's great discussion about this in our nation that we're to support the nation of Israel and rebuild the temple, but that's not the goal. In fact, that would almost be working against God's purposes and plans and going back and rebuilding the shadow that we may worship again in the shadow when the reality has already come.

Instead, we're to worship God in spirit and truth. And so in some way I see this even as a mercy of God. So now I've covered all my material for next week's sermon. next week gets much more detailed than that, so forgive me, I'm sure there will be some overlap.

So I'm arguing that verse 38 then we see the more immediate fulfillment. Immediate in terms of right after Jesus is done saying this, he walks out of the temple. And so he's saying God has left your house desolate.

But even with that we could say there's a prophetic flattening, isn't there? Because if we see the final fulfillment of that, final in one sense, in AD 70, there's a 40 year gap.

[28 : 55] Just imagine again, you hear Jesus' words, it's left desolate. Well, could you immediately conclude that that means it's going to be destroyed? Not necessarily from those one words, it could just be Jesus leaving it, it could be God leaving it.

But more than that, it also means destruction. So bear with me in terms of our understanding of prophecy, I think we have to understand that it doesn't always happen in an instant like we might like for it to happen. That sometimes Jesus speaks all of everything happening in one prophetic telling of it when those things may be spread out over large periods of time.

Forty years, arguably, even is a large period of time. And so we have the immediate fulfillment, and then verse 39, I would argue, is even further in the future. Verse 39 speaks to Jesus' return in the future when every knee will bow to him.

So it says, For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Now, just think of everything he said about the scribes and Pharisees. I mean, if we were taking odds here, what are the odds that the scribes and Pharisees are going to say when they see Jesus coming?

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. If they're truly serpents and a brood of vipers, when are they ever going to rejoice or say that about the coming of Christ?

[30 : 15] Let me start by saying verse 39 points back to something, and hopefully you caught it already, but the triumphal entry. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, do you remember the cries that were said then? So this is back in 21, chapter 21, verse 9, the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, Hosanna to the son of David.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. And we talked about Hosanna means salvation has come. So Jesus has come in the present. Salvation has come. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

And those words are taken from Psalm 118 that speak of the Messiah entering the gate to the city, and they speak of God's steadfast love for his people. Now we know even back then, the crowds were saying it, not everyone shared in that, this wasn't all of Israel, this wasn't all of Jerusalem.

No doubt the scribes and Pharisees weren't joining in those cries. But the language that Jesus is using is specific from his triumphal entry of his entering into Jerusalem.

And what I want to argue is that what Jesus is speaking of in verse 39 is Jesus' second coming, his return. So Jesus is going to return, and when he returns, what are people going to cry?

[31 : 28] The same thing that they cried when he entered into Jerusalem the first time. So when Jesus returns, the cries are going to be the same. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. But it also says, for I tell you, you will not see me again until you say.

So again, when will unbelievers ever say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord? Why would they ever say that? Well, I think the answer is given for us when we read of the fact that when Jesus returns in the second time, when he mates his rule and his authority known to all creation, what's going to happen.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. This is the expression of every tongue confessing. So I would argue that what he's saying in verse 39 is not that there's coming a day when the scribes and Pharisees are going to rejoice to see Jesus return, but rather when Jesus returns, they're going to confess that he is the Lord, almost against their will, in opposition to him, but they will acknowledge his reign, his authority for the first time.

So this may, again there are multiple possibilities here, this may be speaking of not just the scribes and Pharisees, but the Jews as a nation being grafted into the people of God.

As Romans 11, even Romans 9 through 11 seems to point to the fact that there will be a great turning of the Jews, it may be universal, it may be just a large portion of the Jews who will turn, and it's not a separate salvation for them, but they will turn and be regrafted back into God's people, the church.

[33 : 04] They will look to Christ as the Messiah. So it may be speaking to a day in terms of that, or it may more broadly be speaking of what we see prophesied in multiple places, including Philippians 2, 10-11 that I just said, in the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So we have to give room for the prophetic idea that there may be a day Jesus saying, Israel's going to repent, and they'll proclaim this. But I think more broadly we have to understand that the language of Jesus entering into Jerusalem is repeated when Jesus enters into the world a second time.

The same cries will be heard from Psalm 118, and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he truly is the Lord, even those who oppose him. so either way, the next time Jesus publicly proclaims the gospel to them, it will be at his return.

Jesus isn't going to do it again until he returns. That's when they'll hear him speak again these truths. I mentioned before, Ezekiel had a vision of the glory of God departing the temple and the city of God.

Ezekiel also has a vision of the glory of the Lord returning to the temple. Ezekiel 43, 1-5. Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east, and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east.

[34 : 27] And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city. And just like the vision I had seen by the Chabar Canal, and I fell on my face as the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the gate facing east, entered court, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled his temple.

And so, it's not just that God's leaving his temple, there's coming a day when he will return. Now, again, we'll have opportunity to get more into this, but everything else I see in God's word that makes clear about Jesus' return is this.

When Jesus returns, this earth will be consumed with fire. It will be destroyed. There will be a new earth and new heaven, which doesn't mean the place where God dwells, it means sky. There will be a new sky created.

There may be new stars, new constellations, there will be a new earth, but all the creation will be destroyed and there will be a new creation. And God's presence, his glory will come and it will dwell in the temple, which again isn't necessarily the physical temple that we have here on earth, but that God will dwell with his people.

We will be his people and he will be our God and we'll dwell in his presence. So what I see being spoken of here is when Jesus returns, his second coming, will usher in the new creation, the new earth, us being in the presence of God.

[35 : 50] There'll be no sun, he will be our light, we'll be in his presence, we'll worship God. No longer will we need the intermediary of a temple, even the idea of us having to worship in spirit and truth in terms of it being in some way non physical or God not present with us, but God will be present with us.

And so we see a greater fulfillment of the temple that the shadow that the temple was pointed to even more so. So we will dwell in his presence and he will be our God and we will be his people.

So I know that's a lot and there's more yet to come. Let me just try to draw our hearts to some points of application. And if a lot of this is confusing, again give me a few weeks to make it more confusing and then please come ask Dave and Paul and DNR, anybody you want some questions, okay?

You can come to me really if you have questions afterwards. But for now I want us not to dwell on the questions that we have as much as what we see the truth in terms of application being presented here.

First, I remember the prayer of Habakkuk to God. He said, in judgment remember mercy. And I think that is exactly the character of the God that we see portrayed for us in this passage.

[37 : 08] It begins with his mercy. In judgment God remembers mercy. Even the destruction of the temple itself when it comes is a call to the Jews to return to God to repent and turn away from the shadow to the reality which is Jesus Christ.

And so even that is merciful from God. God as he pours out his wrath upon these people who have rejected him, he even in that moment is calling for repentance to them.

He's giving them time to repent. It's not a final judgment. I think again, let that sink in for a minute. The prophetic flattening that I was describing to you.

There's no reason God couldn't have flattened it all out the way we expect it. And so the AD 70 could have been the end of all history. There'd be no hope of repentance for anyone. But we look on the other side of that almost 2,000 years later and say how much time has God given for repentance to draw people into the kingdom, to bring the nations in from the ends of the earth.

How merciful and gracious is our God. John the Baptist even earlier we saw in Matthew chapter 3, John the Baptist, it says, but when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him, coming to his baptism, he said to them, you brood of vipers.

[38 : 29] Remember what that means. Same words as Jesus. He's saying you're not really saved. Who warned you to flee the wrath to come? But John goes on to say, bear fruit in keeping with repentance and do not presume to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father, for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

Even now the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So John the Baptist sees the Pharisees and Sadducees coming, he declares that they're brood of vipers, that they're unregenerate, but they're wanting to repent, they're coming to the repentance of baptism.

He says, bear fruit in keeping with repentance. There's still time for you. It's not over yet. Repent and show the fruit of it. The axe is already laid to the tree.

Jesus is really saying the same thing here. God's spirit is departing from the temple. The tree's being cut down of Israel. But, if you bear fruit in keeping with repentance, every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

But, if you bear fruit in keeping repentance, there's still hope for you. That's true for those who are physically a part of Israel today, that their hope is in Christ the Messiah, not in the religion of Judaism.

[39 : 55] But, that's true for all of you who are in this room today as well. Take what we see here, this judgment that we're going to see in the coming chapters even as a warning for you, that God's not playing around. That there is judgment for all who would reject Christ, but, God also is gracious and merciful.

He's giving you time. We don't know how much time we have till Christ returns or till we die, but God is gracious. And so, this is a warning for them, but it's also a warning for us, calling us to repentance.

Secondly, I want to remind you that in this passage we get a glimpse of the character of our God, what God is like. He is a God of compassion, who does not delight in the destruction of the wicked.

Rather, God's desire, his delight is in saving sinners. And so, we read in 1 Timothy 2, 3-6, this is good and is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all. And so, God's desire is to see men saved.

[41 : 03] He desires that all would be saved. Now, I could get broader into detail. I'm not eager to do so right now, but we understand that there's a will of God, there's multiple wills in God, and what comes to pass isn't necessarily in keeping with what is willed here in his desire.

But I want you to see that there's a desire in God that all would be saved. And I think even when we see who gave himself as a ransom for all, we even see that stretch into the nations, that God died to save people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

But to what extent does God desire to see men saved? Because I think there's ways in which we could say, all of us desire to see everyone saved. But how far are we willing to go to see that happen?

Well, we're scared to talk to our coworkers or our family members and share the gospel with them. But here's what it says. For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

So God means this to the point that he sent his son to be the mediator between him and his people. Him and those people who rebelled against him, who deserve his righteous judgment. God sent Christ that he may die in their place, that we could be reconciled to him.

[42 : 10] Again, 2 Peter 3, 9. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness. Now, to be fair, we know now 2,000 years later that most of us count slowness. 2,000 years is pretty slow when our lives don't last very long, by our standard.

But Peter reminds us that the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

So why has God been slow by our count in waiting 2,000 years to send Christ back? Because his desire is to see people repent. And so, I want you to see how gracious they are, God, my hope is that the preaching is meant not just to penetrate our heart and to encourage us and to bring about repentance to sin, but also to lead us to praise and worship.

We ought to sing praises to this great and merciful God who sent his son to reconcile us to himself. But it's also a call for us that we might receive his mercy and forgiveness. If that's the character of our God, why have you not yet received that mercy?

And then thirdly, I just want to close by reminding you what I said earlier, that God no longer indwells the temple or any physical building, but rather the hearts of his people through his spirit indwelling them.

[43 : 31] So, if we just think about that for a second and think about Jesus' proclamation of judgment upon them, his proclamation of judgment is, see, your house has left you desolate.

If you allow me to spiritualize this a little bit and say, so where is the temple today? Where is the house of God today? It's in our hearts. And so, have you allowed your heart to be left desolate?

Is your heart desolate? Is the spirit of God indwelling your heart? Or has it been left desolate? My prayer for all of you today is that by faith, that Christ would indwell your hearts.

Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you again for your word.

And we pray that you would help us to understand your word, that you would make it clear, that there's any way that your messenger today has misunderstood your word, that you would strike it from our minds, and that you would help us to focus upon what is true and what is right.

[44 : 32] And Lord, we know that what we see about your character is true. And Lord, we pray that we would leave here both warned that we might repent, but also that we would leave here desiring to praise you, to worship you, that you are a God of grace and mercy.

There's not one of us here who have deserved that mercy, and yet, Lord, there are many of us here who have received it. And we pray for those who have not yet put their trust in Christ, that, Lord, that they would see that you are a gracious God, that you desire repentance, that you desire to save, and that they would come to you knowing that you will receive them with open arms like the mother hen that stands her wings for protection, that you would hide us under your wings, that we would never stand to face your judgment.

We pray all these things in the name of our great Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.