

Introduction To “Lovers of the Desolate Jerusalem”

from Hebrews 13

Jerusalem was the place where God Himself found a home. King David brought the Presence of the Lord into its place of rest in Zion with great rejoicing! God’s people worshipped, had feasts, and God was with them in their midst for generations. And then, for days without number, the people of God grew cold in their love for Him. They forgot Him, and left Him in their hearts (Jeremiah 2:32). So much became religion and duties and empty vain things. The Lord began to abhor their feasts and empty worship. He cried unto them days without number but they did not hear Him for they had left Him in their hearts.

A time of chastisement came upon God’s own for the way that they treated the Lord. And God, *being a sacrifice in nature*, took upon Himself their chastisement. Isaiah 53 declares that the Lamb was led to slaughter not only for our sins, but also for our chastisement (Isaiah 53:5). And so the Lord took upon Himself the punishment that His people should have borne for the way they treated Him. It is in this dealing with God’s people that Jerusalem itself was burned and demolished, while the people of God were sent to Babylon which was a very comfortable, flourishing culture. During this time Babylon not only took the Judeans captive, but sought to assimilate them into its culture, business and government. The people of God were given opportunities in Babylon for comfort and even affluence. The people of God were absorbed into this culture for a 70 year time period that God had ordained in order to deal with their hearts while Jerusalem lay in death and ruins. While the people of God were forging out a new life in Babylon, back home in Jerusalem the temple was burned, demolished, and lying in rubble. It lay forgotten, overgrown, and overtaken by enemies and wild beasts. Herein is a powerful picture of Christ Crucified. We can see our slain Lord in type and shadow in those burnt stones and broken down walls. Jerusalem lay there in reproach and desolations for 70 years, while His people were far away in a foreign land. He lay forgotten and alone. This Jerusalem bore the penalty of a people who had opened their hearts and gates to foreigners, while rejecting and forgetting the God Who was in their midst. The God Who had cried out His heart to them for so many generations only to be unnoticed and rejected now lay in the shame and nakedness of that rejection. The ark was gone, the favor was gone, the people were gone, ... and only reproach and death remained.

“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach”. Hebrews 13:10-13

After 70 years the time of chastisement was fulfilled (Daniel 9:2), but at that same time many of God’s people in Babylon were comfortable and had established their lives. Very few remembered the Jerusalem that lay desolate outside their camp,... yet herein we find a picture of the body of Him Who was crucified for our transgressions. Very few thought upon Him and even less returned to love Him, to remember and rebuild. But there was a remnant that forgot not this Jerusalem (Psalm 137). These are those who kept their hearts for Him and returned to rebuild when the 70 year period of captivity was over. We will be digging into the scriptures that share their stories over the next several months, but before we do let us look at some New Testament scriptures that also share this heart and passion for the Crucified Christ.

*Hebrews 13:3 **REMEMBER** those who suffer adversity in the **BODY**”.*

There is a ministry that reaches the heart of God. This ministry speaks of those who remember the One who gave Himself for us and care for Him in His broken and poured out body. This ministry speaks of those who separate their hearts and lives to pour over Him for Who He is and not just what He does and gives. Mary of Bethany noticed Jesus in a way that caused her to minister to the Lamb of God **before** He went to the Cross, and she anointed His body for burial (John 12:7). In the Old Testament we find Judeans in Babylon who thought upon and prayed towards the Jerusalem that lay fallow and burnt, and remembered Him **after** the destruction (*Nehemiah / Daniel*). In both the cases of Nehemiah and Mary of Bethany we find a memorial set forth unto the heart of God forever (Nehemiah 2:20. Matthew 26:13).

Hebrews 13:10 “We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle.

Those Judeans in Babylon during the 70 years of captivity did not have a temple with an altar to worship upon. They were unable to celebrate the feasts in Babylon. But some remembered that there was an altar and a place where they could go and worship and feast outside the walls and safety of Babylon that lay approximately 800 miles away in the burnt and crucified Jerusalem.

*Hebrews 13:11 “. . . for the bodies of those beasts. . . are burned
outside the camp”.*

The outpoured blood of Jesus the Lamb of God is readily available for everyone to receive the benefits of forgiveness and atonement; but where is the body of that Sacrifice that poured out that blood? The scriptures tell us that “**the bodies** of the animals used in sacrifice **were burned** outside the camp.” During the time period of the captivity the burnt stones of the desolate Jerusalem lay outside of the camp where the people of God were dwelling. These burnt and discarded stones were far removed from sight or mind. Who is going to think upon that distant and destroyed city? Who is going to seek out the emptied corpse of the Sacrifice once they received the merits of the outpoured Blood? Most would only consider the benefits of His death rather than the One Who died and poured out all. Others might think upon their failure to love and relate to the living God Who once dwelt so deeply in their midst, and be thankful for the Blood that forgave their trespasses against Him. Although this is tender it is still centered on their condition. Who is going to think about His condition and care for the body that is laying there poured out and crucified as pictured in the burnt Jerusalem? Who will think upon the burnt stones and the broken down walls? Who among us remembers the One Who gave Himself for us and not just the benefits He gives us? Notice the words in verse 11: “**bodies... are burned.... outside the camp**”. How intently these verses point us to consider Him and not just His benefits!

Hebrews 13:13-14 “LET US GO FORTH therefore UNTO HIM . . . outside the camp bearing His reproach, for here we have no continuing city but we seek one to come”.

Those who returned to the desolate city are a picture of those who are not just returning to rebuild, but those who are returning to Him. They are returning to the body of Him Who lay burnt, bound, and crucified for their transgressions. Because they forgot Him days without number they were sent away. But it is only those who remember Him, feel Him, and **HEAR HIM IN HIS SILENCE** that return. These were those who longed for Him, the true Him, and wanted to be with Him in death, weakness, removal, brokenness, and poured out love. These are those who wanted to rebuild THAT relationship with the Crucified. Every stone burnt speaks of the one true glory, the glory of a slaughtered Lamb.

This slain Lamb is our continuing city... Not just His benefits but His Body, His Being... Him. We may be able to partake of His benefits while our hearts yet dwell in a far country from Him, but HE is our eternal home. He is our continuing city. We can take His things with us while our hearts yet abide far from Him.

We are all aware of the aspect of Christ's death for the sins of the world, and how the Father raised Him up bringing salvation to all who would receive Him. Yet there is another aspect of Christ's death that is in regards to His own, those who have already received salvation. This aspect of His death is for those who belong to Him, yet have trespassed the Lord in leaving Him to go their own way. In this knowing of His death it is not just the Father who raises Him, but the Bride who chooses to "go unto His poured out Body/Being", return to the burnt stones, and be built into the Crucified Christ as a place wherein He can dwell and find rest. As she returns to Him to be rebuilt as His temple, He is raised up in His Body and Bride as Life and fullness.

LET US, therefore, go forth unto HIM! It is our choice to love this desolate and crucified One Who has poured out all for us. It is our hearts and love for Him that will guide us to where He can truly be found for Who He is... a slaughtered Lamb. Such hearts are not seeking His benefits or things. Such hearts are not content to receive gifts and blessing while still dwelling in a far country from the One Who gave Himself for us. Such hearts love Him for Who He is.... lovers of the crucified Christ, lovers of the desolate Jerusalem. In the Old Testament we find it in type and shadow within the context of the Babylonian captivity and those who returned to rebuild the destroyed Jerusalem. In the New Testament we find it in fulfillment in saints like Paul who determined not to know anything but a crucified Christ, and counted all loss to gain Him (I Cor. 2:2, Phil. 3:8).