

Matthew 23:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Analysis

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee (Ιερουσαλήμ Ιερουσαλήμ, ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα τοὺς προφήτας καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα τοὺς ἀπεσταλμένους πρὸς αὐτήν)—the repeated name expresses intense emotion—grief, not merely anger. Apokteinousa and lithobolousa are present participles: "the one continually killing... continually stoning." Jerusalem's prophet-killing wasn't occasional aberration but characteristic pattern.

How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not (ποσάκις ἡθέλησα ἐπισυναγαγεῖν τὰ τέκνα σου... καὶ οὐκ ἡθελήσατε)—pōsakis (how often) implies repeated divine initiative. The hen metaphor evokes protective covenant love (Ruth 2:12; Psalm 91:4). Jesus's "I would... you would not" contrasts divine willingness with human rebellion. God's sovereign will to save and human responsibility to respond stand in tension. They could not blame God—He offered repeated invitations they repeatedly refused.

Historical Context

Jerusalem's history included: killing Uriah (Jeremiah 26:23), attempting to kill Jeremiah multiple times, stoning Zechariah in the temple court (2 Chronicles

24:21), tradition says sawing Isaiah in two. Jesus Himself had ministered in Jerusalem multiple times (John's Gospel records several visits), offering salvation, performing signs, teaching in the temple. Despite repeated opportunities, the city's leaders hardened in rejection, culminating in crucifixion. Three days after this lament, they would shout "Crucify Him!"

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's lament over Jerusalem reveal that divine judgment flows from heartbroken love, not vindictive anger?
2. What does the tension between "I would" and "ye would not" teach about the relationship between God's desire to save and human responsibility to respond?
3. How often has Christ sought to gather you protectively under His wings, only to have you refuse His invitation—and what will be the consequence if you continue refusing?

Interlinear Text

Ἰερουσαλήμ, Ἰερουσαλήμ, ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα τοὺς

Jerusalem

G2419

Jerusalem

G2419

G3588

thou that killest

G3588

G615

προφήτας καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα τοὺς ἀπεσταλμένους πρὸς

the prophets

G4396

and

G2532

stonest

G3036

G3588

them which are sent

unto

G649

G4314

αὐτήν, ποσάκις ἡθελήσατε ἐπισυνάγει τὰ τέκνα σου

G846

how often

G4212

would I

G2309

gathereth

G1996

G3588

children

G5043

thy

G4675

δὲ τρόπον ἐπισυνάγει ὅρνις τὰ νοσσία ἔαυτῆς ὑπὸ

G3739

even as

G5158

gathereth

G1996

a hen

G3733

chickens

G3556

her

G1438

under

G5259

τὰς πτέρυγας καὶ οὐκ ἡθελήσατε

G3588

her wings

G4420

and

not

G3756

would I

G2309

Additional Cross-References

Ruth 2:12 (Parallel theme): The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Psalms 91:4 (Parallel theme): He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Psalms 17:8 (Parallel theme): Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

Jeremiah 35:15 (Prophecy): I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

Nehemiah 9:26 (Prophecy): Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.

Psalms 36:7 (Parallel theme): How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

Psalms 63:7 (Parallel theme): Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

Matthew 22:3 (Parallel theme): And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

Matthew 5:12 (Prophecy): Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Hosea 11:2 (Parallel theme): As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

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