

WEEPING STONES!

Lk. 19:39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Last weekend, - from Saturday evening (11th March 2017), and continuing through Sunday, - the Jews were celebrating the *Feast of Purim* ... the festival commemorating how the Lord halted, - almost 2,500 years ago, - Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews, as described in the Book of Esther.

Haman, of course, was only one of many who had such an evil aspiration. ... Indeed, it is a *passion* which is growing stronger ... and that explains why, for example, many nations in the Middle East have made it their stated aim to wipe Israel from off the map. In the West, there are subtler approaches, lurking behind the programs of such duplicitous bodies as the United Nations and the European Union. As we have noticed recently in our studies of the Prophets, Joel referred to this type of manoeuvring, **Joel 3:1** For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, ² I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.

Israel has to take some of the blame though. I believe, generally, it has behaved impeccably in the face of constant opposition ... but where I see it has to take the blame is not because of its relationship with other nations, but because of its relationship with God. ... Time and again throughout their long history, that has been at the source of their problems, - they have not treated God as they ought, for their religion treated and continues to treat His Son with contempt. ... They are a nation greatly blessed since their establishment in the Old Testament, and particularly, they were granted the greatest measure of God's goodness when He sent them the Lord Jesus. However, they rejected Him, and the consequences of that rejection will only be rectified when they acknowledge Him as their Saviour, Lord, and Messiah.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus had travelled from Galilee, and down through Perea along the territory east of the River Jordan ... He then crossed the river again at Jericho and made His way up to Jerusalem for the Passover. An increasing crowd gathered themselves to Him the nearer He approached His destination. Previously, He had frowned upon open public display but He permitted it now because He was on the threshold of fulfilling His purpose for entering this world. ... Also increasing was the attention and opposition from the Pharisees.

In the city, at that Passover time, there would have been anything up to two million people. Records from ten years later (c. 40 AD) indicate there were 260,000 Passover lambs slaughtered ... and usually, one sacrificial lamb served ten people.

Such a crowd was waiting for Jesus, - excited, expectant, enthusiastic, eager, exuberant. ... *He* was *the* unrivalled attraction. They heard how He had come from Jericho, where He had healed the blind Bartimaeus - ... and how He had recently raised Lazarus from the dead. ... In the highly-charged religious atmosphere of Passover the crowds were all watching to see what great thing He would do next. ... Hopes were 'running high' that He could be the Messiah!

In John 12:1, He arrived in the village of Bethany on the previous Saturday, - six days before the Passover. On the Saturday evening, a supper was given in His honour. On the next day, the Sunday, the word had circulated throughout the area, including into the city of Jerusalem, that Jesus was at the house of Lazarus. And so, the crowds came out to see Him (Jn. 12:9-11).

On the next day, which was the Monday ... He rode into the city on the donkey, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. Let's read from Lk. 19, ²⁸ And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called *the mount* of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, ³⁰ Saying, Go ye into the village over against *you*; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring *him hither*. ³¹ And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose *him*? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. ³² And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. ³³ And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? ³⁴ And they said, The Lord hath need of him. ³⁵ And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. ³⁶ And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. ³⁷ And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; ³⁸ Saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. ... This adulation was taken from Ps. 118:25, with the hope Jesus would be the long-awaited Messianic King.

It just takes a few to start ... and then the whole crowd erupts. ... On previous occasions, Jesus would have 'clamped down' on anything like this, but the time was right for Him to allow it.

However, some of the Pharisees from among the multitude (v.39) considered it *very* misplaced and disorderly! ... ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. ... Now, here is something encouraging ... It is only *some* of the Pharisees that confronted Jesus here, - it was not them

all. ... Sometimes the enemy likes to *bend* the fact, and to make more out of them than what is available! ... We know from the Gospels there were at least two, - maybe three, - Pharisees who would not have taken part in the confrontation. There was Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea ... and possibly Gamaliel. ... The point is the devil could not claim he had all the Pharisees in his clutches ... but only *some* of them, as indicated here. ... The devil doesn't have as much and as many as he sometimes likes to boast!

Another interesting fact is that this is the last you'll read about the Pharisees in Luke's Gospel, and this is their final comment, **Master, rebuke thy disciples**. They said this because they didn't reckon Jesus deserved the adulation of the people. In the Pharisees' opinion, the crowds were giving Him far too much attention. Yes, they knew the people were usually 'hyper' round this time of year ... but this was *far* too much! ... And there was no point appealing to the disciples, - they wouldn't listen, - so they charged Jesus directly ... "Tighten up on your followers!" "Stop them making these presumptuous claims!"

Aye, but it was alright for them, - the Pharisees, - to have previously made their claims ... when they tried to rouse the people with accusations of Jesus being in league with Beelzebub ... It was alright for them to go around spreading lies about Him! They had one law for themselves, and a different law for everybody else ... They could say whatever they liked, but when they heard the crowds claiming Jesus was the Messiah, they had to be silenced! ... The devil's people play by unfair rules! They talk about freedom of speech and equality ... but even here in Jerusalem, it was one-sided! ... There is only freedom of speech and equality of you agree with them!

Aye, the Pharisees reckoned the crowd was getting out of control, and they told Jesus, - in no uncertain terms - to 'rein them in'! ... Rebuke/reprove/admonish Your disciples! Here and now, - in front of all these people, - make a whole show and tell them off! ... What would *that* have looked like?! ... How would it have looked if Jesus had done as the Pharisees wanted Him to do? ... It would have made Him and His cause look ridiculous ... But, of course, that is what the Pharisees wanted. ... If He would have chastised His disciples in front of everyone He would have made Himself look so foolish in front of the multitude! ... It would have made Him look so disorganised and farcical ... and His followers nothing better than an uncontrollable rabble ... But that is how devious those religious serpents were!

And now we come to how the Saviour dealt with them, - this was the turning-point. This flabbergasted the Pharisees! They were ‘boiling over’ at what Jesus said to them next, ⁴⁰ *And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. ...* This was like a ‘red rag to a bull’, as we say ... for *Jesus was pronouncing judgment!!* ... This was unforgivable, what He was insinuating! ... Now, what He was saying needs to be explained to us, as Gentiles ... but the Jews understood *exactly* what He was saying ... He was pronouncing *judgment* upon *them!*

Who did He think He was?!! ... He, - this upstart from Galilee, - had come all the way down to *their* city and was prophesying judgment and condemnation upon them ... *the cheek!* He was casting threats at Jerusalem, - that’s how they saw it! He was claiming to possess the authority to denounce them, and also to know the future! This was getting more disgraceful by the moment!!

Granted, they didn’t like the Roman invaders in their land but they had learned to tolerate them ... anything for a quiet life! There’s ‘peace’, - it’s not perfect, - but it will do! ... But *this Jesus ... He* was something else!

Now, though, take your eyes off the Pharisees and look at the crowds ... As far as they were willing to believe, Jesus could potentially be the Messiah, foretold in the Old Testament. He is prophesying the future. ... But now, from this point on, He is bringing judgment for the scene is about to move from happiness to horror, from jubilation to affliction. They are crying peace, but He begins to speak of destruction. The crowds pronounce on Him glory, but He begins to pronounce on them disaster. Nothing could have been further from the euphoria of the people than what Christ was prophesying, for He said, *I tell you that, if these [people] should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.*

... Jesus emphasises, *If these people keep quiet, - be silent, hold their peace, - ... if Jerusalem ceases from praising Me, and turn their back on Me ...* There was a foreboding air as He looked them straight in the eye. He went on to tell these Pharisees that if they manipulated and influenced these people to reject Him, dire judgment would fall upon Jerusalem, its people, and the nation ... and *the stones would immediately cry out ...* the stones would witness to their calamity.

Sadly, this is the last occasion the crowds came out to worship Jesus. That is because the Pharisees succeeded in turning them against the Saviour. There was nothing like this during the remainder of the week ... there was no more praise, - not on the Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday!

In fact, the next time you hear them making a noise about Jesus ... they were in a frenzy, shouting out hysterically, “Away with Him!” (Lk. 23:18) ... What a turnaround! ... Instead of cheering Jesus, they were condemning Him! ... Pilate tried to turn them, when he asked the question, **Mt. 27:17** *Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?* ... Barabbas, of course, was the murdering robber on death row ... *Barabbas or Jesus, - that was the choice!* ... And they chose the murderer over the Master, ... **Lk. 23:21** *Crucify him, crucify him ... Mt. 27:23* they cried out the more, saying, *Let him be crucified ... Lk. 19:14* *We will not have this man to reign over us ...* And then the devastating words which fell from their lips, **Mt. 27:25** *His blood be on us, and on our children.* ... They did not realise the enormity of their words! ... The very people who were praising Him on His way into the city were the same people who renounced Him on His way out, **Is. 53:3** *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

You see, Jesus knew these people would become *silent* regarding Him. He knew, - for He is God, - they would turn and be completely in opposition to Him. Yes, on the Monday they were greeting Him, but by the Friday they would be rejecting Him.

How fickle! They did a complete turnaround ... and they have not changed their minds in two thousand years for the religion of the nation of Israel continues to reject Christ, to this very day. ... But it is not only the Jews who reject Him, for multitudes of Gentiles reject Him also, - we don't want Him! ... We'll choose everything and everyone else ... but we'll not have Jesus!

What eventually *did* happen in Jerusalem? ... The stones *did* cry out, in fact, they screamed (κράζω). When you visit that city today and stand at the Western Wall of the old temple, the stones are continuing to wail ... it is called the *Wailing Wall*. *That* city is not free yet. How? It's not free yet because they are bound in their rejection of the Messiah. ...

Turn over to Habakkuk 2, where we find these same words used. In the first chapter of this prophecy God was relating to Habakkuk how He would judge and chastise His people by using the wicked Chaldeans. Then when His purpose against Israel is concluded, - and the Chaldeans/Babylonians have finished, - He points Habakkuk to how He is going to judge the Chaldeans, **2:5** *Yea also, because he [i.e. the Babylonians] transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: 6* *Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that*

increaseth *that which is* not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! ⁷ Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? ⁸ Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and *for* the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. ⁹ Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! ¹⁰ Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned *against* thy soul. ... He [*i.e. the Babylonians*] has come in among My people and ransacked my House, and took away what wasn't his, and I am going to punish him, ¹¹ For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. And then, verse twelve, ¹² Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity [*injustice, lawlessness, unrighteousness*]! ... The stones in the walls of their houses and the timbers of their roofs plundered from others gained by bloodshed and usury, will *scream* of their wickedness, and will *scream* of their guilt. And Jesus is describing how the same will happen here, against the Jews who considered themselves almost untouchable.

These stones, - said Jesus, - in the walls of Jerusalem will cry out against you as the stones in the past cried out against the Babylonians. ... And that was why the Jewish leaders were so astounded and furious with what He had said, **Lk. 19:40** I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. - He was comparing *them* to *pagans*! ... And that is also the explanation for why He said what He did at the start of the next verse, ⁴¹ And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ⁴² Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. ⁴³ For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, ⁴⁴ And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Almost forty years later, in 70 AD, the Roman General Titus ransacked Jerusalem. He pulled down their beloved temple. He murdered their people and chased the survivors out of their land. He would leave that whole area in rubble and destruction *for centuries*. The land on which their beloved temple stood is today occupied by a blasphemous building that never should be there, - the Islamic Dome of the Rock! ... But no-one else is to blame but the people of Israel who rejected the Saviour, God's gracious gift ... and the stones are a continual testimony against them! ... The stones are crying out! ... You can see them today ... ancient stones, - over two thousand years old, - lying on top of each other. They used to belong to the temple and the city ... but today, they are lying in no order. They are not anything ... They are just *there*, as a testimony

against a people who turned their back on God ... a people to whom He had given so much. ...

The siege of Titus the Roman general lasted for five months. He and his armies cruelly and mercilessly overpowered the starving hopeless Jews. They enjoyed the fun of rampaging through the city slaughtering men, raping and murdering women, and defiling young children. The entire city was affected ... and the stones cried out.

They had brought it upon themselves for they had rejected Christ. ... Is there any hope for Jerusalem and the nation? Yes, indeed there is! In a similar passage, Jesus cried over the city, **Mt. 23:37** 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! **38** Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. **39** For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

... *What* was it they had declared when Jesus rode through the gate and into the city? ... **Lk 19:38** Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord ... They are going to say it again, but the next time they say it, their hearts will have been changed, and they will mean what they say, for they will realise Jesus coming as their Messiah.

How do we draw our study to a conclusion? It has two applications. First of all, within the context of these words of Jesus being a warning to the Jewish nation ... It is a warning to make the right decision, that is, not to reject Christ. The Pharisees rejected Him and they influenced their people to reject Him too. As a consequence, the Roman enemy destroyed their beloved city, and left their nation in tatters. ... The most important possession anyone has is the soul, - it is more important than anything made with hands, for the soul will live eternally in either one of two places, - either Heaven or Hell. And it is only in this life we have the opportunity to believe in Christ and be saved, in preparation for Glory.

The second application is to believers ... and that is, to keep Jesus Christ in His proper place, that is, on the throne ... otherwise, He will allow the armies of the ungodly to turn us into spiritual rubble ... and the stones will cry out against us in judgment. ... We see the stones crying out against us in Scotland ... a land which has produced great servants of God such as David Livingstone, Robert Moffatt, Mary Slessor, and many others ... The stones are a testimony against God's people who used to have a voice in the land, but sadly that voice has been silenced, and it is as a witness against us.

This little fellowship is where He has placed us, and for which we are responsible unto Him. ... If we do not stand up for Him, we shall fall ... and we shall deserve to fall, - that is the simple but powerful lesson from this passage. ... Jerusalem didn't fall because the enemies were too powerful for it, but Jerusalem fell because God removed His hand of protection from them at that time. ... How we need to pay attention to God's Word in these days! ... I trust the stones of this building will not be crying out against us, but that this building will continue to be a testimony to the faithfulness of God's people to the Saviour for many years to come. Amen.