

## 555 “and ye would not”

In last week's Reflection we considered how the Lord sent Ezekiel to the wayward people of Israel, who were described as rebellious, transgressing, impudent children and stiff-hearted (from Ezekiel Chapter 2, KJV). This theme of God approaching His sinful people, to call them back to Himself in repentance, is common across His Word in both the Old and New Testaments. In the King James Version we have a telling pair of phrases which sum up the usual reaction of His people – “but they would not hear” and - “and ye would not”.

Thus for instance in Isaiah Chapter 28 we read, “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower ...” (from v.1). Despite many warnings the Lord still says to them, “This” (that is, the Lord's word to them) “is the rest [wherewith] ye may cause the weary to rest; and this [is] the refreshing: yet ye would not hear” (28.12). Then again, in Isaiah 30.15 we read, “For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not”. We have similar rejections of God's gracious mercies in Jeremiah 13.11 and 29.19.

Then we come to the classic incident in Jeremiah Chapter 36. The Lord had told Jeremiah to write down in a “book”, (a scroll or roll), all the words that the Lord had spoken against Israel and Judah since the days of Josiah up to the present (vv.1-4). This scroll was duly produced, and was read first to the people, then to “the princes” (vv.5-19), and finally to the king. The scene is beautifully described - “Now the king sat in the winter-house” before a fire burning in the hearth (v.22). After he had heard some words from the scroll, words addressed to him from the Lord, the king cut those words from the scroll and cast them into the fire, until there was no more scroll. In response to pleas not to burn the scroll, we read simply - “but he would not hear them” (v.25). Rather, King Jehoiakim sought the arrest of Baruch and Jeremiah (v.26), and he duly received the Lord's judgment (eg., Jeremiah 22.18-19 / II Kings 24.1-6). Do we not see close parallels between this king's contemptuous rejection of the Lord and His Word and the conduct of so many present-day world leaders?

Later on Jesus' words uttered over Jerusalem contain the same message of rejection – “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen [doth gather] her brood

under [her] wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13.34). As a result of this latest rejection - the rejection of God's own Son by God's own covenant people – Jesus spoke regarding Jerusalem, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate ..." (v.35a).

Nearly two thousand years of "the Church Age" have now passed. The Jews are now back in a portion of their Promised Land, living in the Jewish state of Israel, still largely blind to Jeshua, still surrounded by numerous enemies and still so often at the heart of global affairs; yet by God's grace their future is assured (Luke 21.24 / Romans 11.25ff). Along with the parlous state of the world these days, with calamities, threats and dangers wherever we look, surely we are seeing signs of our now being in "the last times". We know from scriptural precedents that these signs are being allowed or directed by the Lord as warnings and urgings to the nations, leaders and peoples to return to Him in repentance, under the Lordship of Christ, while there is still time.

We can therefore assume that the Lord's two-phased return may well be imminent, first for the removal of His true Church (eg., John 11.25-26a / I Thessalonians 4.13-18 / I Corinthians 15.50-52) and second, after the 7-year tribulation (Daniel's "seventieth week", Daniel 9.27), Jesus' public return in glory as Messiah, Son of David and divine Judge (Matthew 24 / Mark 13 / Luke 21), followed by the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth (Matthew 6.10).

In view of current events, our recent Weekly Reflections have tended to home in on the spiritual urgency of the situation, requiring from us robust Christian faithfulness and appropriate witnessing. May we steadily pray that the Lord's mercies in Christ will be no longer rejected by this sinful world, so that the Lord does not have to utter again those fateful words – "and ye would not".

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