

Requiem for a Chosen People

Scripture Reading:

II Chronicles 36:14-16 “MOREOVER ALL THE CHIEF OF THE PRIESTS, AND THE PEOPLE, TRANSGRESSED VERY MUCH AFTER ALL THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE HEATHEN; AND POLLUTED THE HOUSE OF THE **LORD** WHICH HE HAD HALLOWED IN JERUSALEM. AND THE **LORD** GOD OF THEIR FATHERS SENT TO THEM BY HIS MESSENGERS, RISING UP BETIMES, AND SENDING; BECAUSE HE HAD COMPASSION ON HIS PEOPLE, AND ON HIS DWELLING PLACE: BUT THEY MOCKED THE MESSENGERS OF GOD, AND DESPISED HIS WORDS, AND MISUSED HIS PROPHETS, UNTIL THE WRATH OF THE **LORD** AROSE AGAINST HIS PEOPLE, TILL THERE WAS NO REMEDY.”

Introduction

The word requiem is not one that we hear or use very often in today's world. The word originated in what is called Middle English sometime around the 13th or 14th century. It is applied most often to a Catholic Mass given for the dead or to a song, hymn or dirge that is associated with mourning. This is why I chose it to entitle this lesson. God raised up a chosen people called Israel. He gave them life, freedom, a land filled with milk and honey, protected them, and tolerated them, until they met his limit. In their rebellion and wickedness they degenerated into sin until the sacred scripture says “THERE WAS NO REMEDY”. As a result; their nation was taken away, they were exiled into captivity for 70 years eventually destroying them as a nation. As we study the scripture further it is easy to see that God preserved them for only one purpose. He saved them from the total destruction which came later solely to fulfill the seed promise made in **Genesis 3** and to raise up a Savior for mankind.

But that is not focus of our lesson this day. In the brief time that we have I want us to consider why they became such as “THERE WAS NO REMEDY”. I want us to see their errors so that we don't repeat those errors in our own lives; or in the congregation of the Lord in our day. For after all we too are a chosen people:

I Peter 2:9 “BUT YE *are* A CHOSEN GENERATION, A **ROYAL PRIESTHOOD**, AN HOLY NATION, A PECULIAR PEOPLE; THAT YE SHOULD SHEW FORTH THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO HATH CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT;”

Compassion for Israel

First of all we see that God had great compassion, a great love for these people. When the family of Jacob, renamed Israel, were but a group of wandering shepherds they were taken to Egypt to escape a great famine that covered the earth. There they stayed for 400 years and with the blessings of God grew and multiplied into a nation.

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So great that Egypt feared and oppressed them. Then when Egypt held them as slaves; God had compassion on them:

Exodus 3:7 “AND THE **LORD** SAID, I HAVE SURELY SEEN THE AFFLICTION OF MY PEOPLE WHICH **are** IN EGYPT, AND HAVE HEARD THEIR CRY BY REASON OF THEIR TASKMASTERS; FOR I KNOW THEIR SORROWS;”

During their wanderings in the wilderness they proved themselves to be an obstinate and rebellious people. In spite of that; at the end of their wandering in the wilderness the great prophet Moses assures them that when they disobey God and are cursed with punishment and oppression that if they repent:

“THAT THEN THE **LORD** THY GOD WILL TURN THY CAPTIVITY, AND HAVE COMPASSION UPON THEE, AND WILL RETURN AND GATHER THEE FROM ALL THE NATIONS, WHITHER THE **LORD** THY GOD HATH SCATTERED THEE.”

Deuteronomy 30:3

And God continued with a tolerance and compassion for these people far beyond what a human being would be capable of having or perhaps even understanding. In a psalm of Asaph reminding Israel of God’s blessings he records these words:

“BUT HE, **being** FULL OF COMPASSION, FORGAVE **their** INIQUITY, AND DESTROYED **them** NOT: YEA, MANY A TIME TURNED HE HIS ANGER AWAY, AND DID NOT STIR UP ALL HIS WRATH.” **Psalm 78:38**

Many times God bridled his anger and controlled his wrath against Israel, so much so that in a prayer David includes these words:

Psalm 86:15 “BUT THOU, O LORD, **art** A GOD FULL OF COMPASSION, AND GRACIOUS, LONG SUFFERING, AND PLENTEOUS IN MERCY AND TRUTH.”

God’s love and compassion has been made manifest to us today as well. Because he gave his “ONLY BEGOTTEN SON” to die in our place that we might be preserved as his chosen people. In addition he continues to tolerate a world that is almost as wicked as the one He destroyed by water. (**Genesis 6**)

Warnings

In his love and compassion for Israel God gave them warning of the consequences of rebellion. As far back as the beginning of their journey when they had been in the wilderness only three months we find these words spoken to them by God:

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Exodus 20:3 “THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.” **v.5** “THOU SHALT NOT BOW DOWN THYSELF TO THEM, NOR SERVE THEM: FOR I THE **LORD THY GOD AM A JEALOUS GOD**, VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH **generation** OF THEM THAT HATE ME;”

God not only gave them this warning but also gave them law that would keep them from harm; that would allow them to keep themselves in favor with Him and mankind. Then He warned them repeatedly of the consequences of sin, the result of rebellion. These warnings are recorded in many places in their history:

II Chronicles 19:10 “AND WHAT CAUSE SOEVER SHALL COME TO YOU OF YOUR BRETHREN THAT DWELL IN YOUR CITIES, BETWEEN BLOOD AND BLOOD, BETWEEN LAW AND COMMANDMENT, STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS, YE SHALL EVEN WARN THEM THAT THEY TRESPASS NOT AGAINST THE **LORD**, AND **so** WRATH COME UPON YOU, AND UPON YOUR BRETHREN: THIS DO, AND YE SHALL NOT TRESPASS.”

They are warned by the words of their prophets. Isaiah is commanded:

“CRY ALOUD, SPARE NOT, LIFT UP THY VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET, AND SHEW MY PEOPLE THEIR TRANSGRESSION, AND THE HOUSE OF JACOB THEIR SINS.”
Isaiah 58:1

Ezekiel was made a watchman to warn God's chosen people:

Ezekiel 3:17 “SON OF MAN, I HAVE MADE THEE A WATCHMAN UNTO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL: THEREFORE HEAR THE WORD AT MY MOUTH, AND GIVE THEM WARNING FROM ME.”

We as God's chosen people today are also given warnings as well regarding protecting our spiritual welfare:

I Thessalonians 5:14 “NOW WE EXHORT YOU, BRETHREN, WARN THEM THAT ARE UNRULY, COMFORT THE FEEBLEMINDED, SUPPORT THE WEAK, BE PATIENT TOWARD ALL **men**.”

“...KNOW YE NOT THAT THE UNRIGHTEOUS SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD?...” **I Corinthians 6:9**

But God's chosen people despised His law.

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Despised Law

God had given his chosen people law, law that would not bring them redemption from sin; but law that would keep them in favor with Him. He gave them law that would allow Him to atone for their sins until such time as a redeemer would be brought into the world. But they chose to break that law within just a few days after it was spoken to them by God himself.

Exodus 32:8 "THEY HAVE TURNED ASIDE QUICKLY OUT OF THE WAY WHICH I COMMANDED THEM: THEY HAVE MADE THEM A MOLTEN CALF, AND HAVE WORSHIPPED IT, AND HAVE SACRIFICED THEREUNTO, AND SAID, THESE *be* THY GODS, O ISRAEL, WHICH HAVE BROUGHT THEE UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT."

They despised the Law of God. Throughout their history, even down until the time that they were destroyed as a nation and led into captivity Israel was stiff-necked, rebellious and for entire generations refused to obey God's Law. Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 30:9 "THAT THIS IS A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE, LYING CHILDREN, CHILDREN **THAT** WILL NOT HEAR THE LAW OF THE **LORD**."

And because they despised the Law of God they did not know that Law. The consequence of not knowing God's Law is that they could not obey it or serve God acceptably.

Hosea 4:6 "MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE: BECAUSE THOU HAST REJECTED KNOWLEDGE, I WILL ALSO REJECT THEE, THAT THOU SHALT BE NO PRIEST TO ME: SEEING THOU HAST FORGOTTEN THE LAW OF THY GOD, I WILL ALSO FORGET THY CHILDREN."

so He rejected them.

The prophet Amos, a herdsman and dresser of sycamore trees was sent by God to the Kingdom of Israel to call them back to the Law of Moses and to God. But he also spoke of Judah:

Amos 2:4 "THUS SAITH THE **LORD**; FOR THREE TRANSGRESSIONS OF JUDAH, AND FOR FOUR, I WILL NOT TURN AWAY *the punishment* THEREOF; BECAUSE THEY HAVE DESPISED THE LAW OF THE **LORD**, AND HAVE NOT KEPT HIS COMMANDMENTS, AND THEIR LIES CAUSED THEM TO ERR, AFTER THE WHICH THEIR FATHERS HAVE WALKED:"

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The attitude of Israel and Judah toward the law of God continued even into the time of the ministry of our Lord here on earth. In confrontation with the Pharisees he gives us one of the main reasons for their rejection of the Word of God.

Mark 7:9 “AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, FULL WELL YE REJECT THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD, THAT YE MAY KEEP YOUR TRADITION.”

They like all of the denominations and a good many of our brethren reject the law of God to teach and practice their own traditions. Today our brethren err one of two ways. They either bind laws where God has not bound laws or they reject laws that God has commanded. As God's chosen people we must reject, not fellowship, approve or condone either of these diversions from the will of God. We must respect and obey the Law of God.

Despised Instruction

The Israelite nation not only despised the law of God when they knew what it commanded they despised instruction in God's law. They were like a lot of folks today. When they encountered something in the law of God that did not agree with their preconceived ideas or doctrines they refused to hear it. Twice within recent times I've had internet Bible students drop out of the program because they were unwilling to hear or read what the Bible taught on a particular subject. One rejected the Bible doctrine of the necessity of baptism and the other because she believes in the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, miracles and divine healing today. This kind of attitude is part of the reason that there was need for a requiem for God's chosen people of the Old Testament and the need for a requiem or funeral for many of the souls of our brethren today.

We see another example. When King Hezekiah, one of the good kings of Judah, cleansed the temple, restored the Passover and destroyed the altars built to idols he sent out letters to all the people of Israel and Judah inviting them to come to Jerusalem for the feast as God had commanded. He admonished them to repent saying:

“FOR IF YE TURN AGAIN UNTO THE **LORD**, YOUR BRETHREN AND YOUR CHILDREN *shall find* COMPASSION BEFORE THEM THAT LEAD THEM CAPTIVE SO THAT THEY SHALL COME AGAIN INTO THIS LAND: FOR THE **LORD** YOUR GOD WILL NOT TURN AWAY his FACE FROM YOU, IF YE RETURN TO HIM.” **II Chronicles 30:9**

And what was the response of the northern kingdom of Israel?

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II Chronicles 30:10 “SO THE POSTS PASSED FORM CITY TO CITY THROUGH THE COUNTRY OF EPHRAIM AND MANASSETH EVEN UNTO ZEBULUN: BUT THEY LAUGHED THEM TO SCORN, AND MOCKED THEM.”

They not only refused to hear the call of the king to worship God has they had been commanded they scorned and mocked the messagers.

The Psalmist Asaph writes:

Psalm 50:16-17 “BUT UNTO THE WICKED GOD SAITH, WHAT HAST THOU TO DO TO DECLARE MY STATUTES, OR *that* THOU SHOULDEST TAKE MY COVENANT IN THY MOUTH? SEEING THOU HATEST INSTRUCTION, AND CASTETH MY WORDS BEHIND THEE.”

The wisdom of God recorded by Solomon calls people who do this fools:

Proverbs 1:7 “THE FEAR OF THE **LORD** *is* THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE: *but* FOOLS DESPISE WISDOM AND INSTRUCTION.”

Later Solomon writes that strangers would be filled with their wealth, they would serve as slaves in the house of another, they would mourn when the flesh and their bodies were consumed because they said:

“...HOW HAVE I HATED INSTRUCTION, AND MY HEART DESPISED REPROOF: AND HAVE NOT OBEYED THE VOICE OF MY TEACHERS, NOR INCLINED MINE EAR TO THEM THAT INSTRUCTED ME.” **Proverbs 5:12-13**

Israel's Sins

Were the sins of Israel any different than the sins of men today? Did they do anything differently than the multitude of denominations that reject the word of God for their own traditions and doctrines today? Did they do anything differently than many of our brethren are doing today in rejecting part of the commandments of God that they don't like. Not really.

They forgot the admonition of God that was given them at Mount Sinai:

Exodus 23:2 “THOU SHALT NOT FOLLOW A MULTITUDE TO *do* EVIL; NEITHER SHALT YOU SPEAK IN A CAUSE TO DECLINE AFTER MANY TO WREST *judgment*.”

He warned them about “following the crowd”. He warned them about wresting or twisting judgment to their favor as did the rest of the world. He warned them that the popular sins of their day were a way to destruction and they ignored Him.

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If we follow the crowd into the popular sins of our day we will suffer the same destruction today, destruction if carried to its natural end will be for which "THERE IS NO REMEDY."

God has always desired the worship and honor of man. He told the Israelite nation at Mount Sinai that he is a jealous God and forbid them from worshiping other gods. Moses admonished them further in his parting sermon, speaking of the Canaanite people:

Deuteronomy 12:30 "TAKE HEED UNTO THYSELF THAT THOU BE NOT SNARED BY FOLLOWING THEM, AFTER THAT THEY BE DESTROYED FROM BEFORE THEE; AND THAT THOU ENQUIRE NOT AFTER THEIR GODS, SAYING, HOW DID THESE NATIONS SERVE THEIR GODS? EVEN SO WILL I DO LIKEWISE."

Did Israel obey the admonition of God and the instruction of the great prophet Moses? No. The worship of idols plagued them from the very beginning of their history until their captivity in Babylon. But idols weren't all that they worshiped. We have this account in:

Ezekiel 8:16 "AND HE BROUGHT ME INTO THE INNER COURT OF THE **LORD'S** HOUSE, AND, BEHOLD, AT THE DOOR OF THE TEMPLE OF THE **LORD**, BETWEEN THE PORCH AND THE ALTAR, *were* ABOUT FIVE AND TWENTY MEN, WITH THEIR BACKS TOWARD THE TEMPLE OF THE **LORD**, AND THEIR FACES TOWARD THE EAST; AND THEY WORSHIPPED THE SUN TOWARD THE EAST."

When they returned to Jerusalem from Babylon the Jews went to the other extreme. They became so legalistic and dogmatic, interpreting and adding to God's commandments that their traditions became a plague and burden to the Jewish people.

Matthew 23:4 "FOR THEY BIND HEAVY BURDENS AND GRIEVOUS TO BE BORNE, AND LAY *them* ON MEN'S SHOULDERS; BUT THEY *themselves* WILL NOT MOVE THEM WITH ONE OF THEIR FINGERS."

So not only did they bind traditions and doctrines upon the people that God did not bind, they refused to keep the traditions that they created. We have brethren that bind their traditions on men today and we must guard against becoming like them.

The reason that Israel became idolaters is because of their associations, their fellowship. God had warned them about the Canaanite people:

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Deuteronomy 7:2-3 “AND WHEN THE **LORD** THY GOD SHALL DELIVER THEM BEFORE THEE; THOU SHALT SMITE THEM, *and* UTTERLY DESTROY THEM; THOU SHALT MAKE NO COVENANT WITH THEM, NOR SHEW MERCY UNTO THEM: NEITHER SHALT THOU MAKE MARRIAGES WITH THEM; THY DAUGHTER THOU SHALT NOT GIVE UNTO HIS SON, NOR HIS DAUGHTER SHALT THOU TAKE UNTO THY SON.”

Why would God give such a warning?

Deuteronomy 7:4 “FOR THEY WILL TURN AWAY THY SON FROM FOLLOWING ME, THAT THEY MAY SERVE OTHER GODS: SO WILL THE ANGER OF THE **LORD** BE KINDLED AGAINST YOU, AND DESTROY THEE SUDDENLY.”

But Israel didn't listen:

II Kings 17:15 “AND THEY REJECTED HIS STATUTES, AND HIS COVENANT THAT HE MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS, AND HIS TESTIMONIES WHICH HE TESTIFIED AGAINST THEM; AND THEY FOLLOWED VANITY, AND BECAME VAIN, AND WENT AFTER THE HEATHEN THAT *were* ROUND ABOUT THEM, *concerning* WHOM THE **LORD** HAD CHARGED THEM, THAT THEY SHOULD NOT DO LIKE THEM.”

Israel didn't destroy the heathen that occupied Canaan. They lived with them, intermarried with them, copied their idol worship, copied their sins and endured God's punishment throughout their history as a result. The result was that they became an abomination to God:

“IN THAT YE HAVE BROUGHT *into my sanctuary* STRANGERS, UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART, AND UNCIRCUMCISED IN FLESH, TO BE IN MY SANCTUARY, TO POLLUTE IT, *even* MY HOUSE, WHEN YE OFFER MY BREAD, THE FAT AND THE BLOOD, AND THEY HAVE BROKEN MY COVENANT BECAUSE OF ALL YOUR ABOMINATIONS.” **Ezekiel 44:7**

Because they became totally corrupt God sent other prophets to Judah to continue to warn them:

Zephaniah 3:1-2 “WOE TO HER THAT IS FILTHY AND POLLUTED, TO THE OPPRESSING CITY! SHE OBEYED NOT THE VOICE; SHE RECEIVED NOT CORRECTION; SHE TRUSTED NOT IN THE **LORD**; SHE DREW NOT NEAR TO HER GOD.”

Just as God had warned Israel; God has warned us today as well:

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I Corinthians 5:9-10 "I WROTE UNTO YOU IN AN EPISTLE NOT TO COMPANY WITH FORNICATORS: YET NOT ALTOGETHER WITH THE FORNICATORS OF THIS WORLD, OR WITH THE COVETOUS, OR EXTORTIONERS, OR WITH IDOLATERS; FOR THEN MUST YE NEEDS GO OUT OF THE WORLD."

We today, as God's chosen people must heed the same warning or suffer the same fate.

Summary

God had compassion on Israel, his chosen people
God warned them of the consequences of rebellion
Israel despised God's Law
Israel despised instruction
Israel followed the crowd "TILL THERE WAS NO REMEDY"
God destroyed them
Why, oh why can't men and especially our brethren today see that many of them will suffer the same fate at the hands of an Almighty God. It is Lord God Jehovah who rules all that exists. In the day of judgment He will bring perfect justice to the world and everyone that is in it.

Invitation: