

The Jerusalem wedding disaster—a warning for us

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WHEN SPEAKING about his return the Lord Jesus said: “For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Mt. 24:38,39). It was perhaps to these words that our thoughts first went when hearing the news of the wedding disaster in Jerusalem. On Thursday 24 May twenty-three people were killed when the third floor of a wedding hall collapsed. Hundreds of guests were dancing at the time. It is suspected that poor building work was the underlying cause of the accident.

The sudden nature of the accident, interrupting without warning the celebrations of a wedding, captures the essence of the warning spoken by the Lord Jesus. We might be tempted to cite this incident as typical of what is yet to befall the Jews as a whole. Is not this a microcosm of the Jewish nation? They are carrying on with the daily things of this life, ignoring the teaching of Christ, and are soon to be overtaken by the events of Armageddon. However, before we self-righteously talk about the faults of others we might be better advised to consider our own position.

In Luke 13:1-5 we have some instruction from the Lord Jesus as to how we should react to disasters such as that which recently happened in Jerusalem:

“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”.

The Lord Jesus tells his listeners that if they did not repent they too would suffer a similar end to

those who had been killed by the Romans and the collapsed tower. Most of the Jews did not repent. Around the time of A.D. 70 these words came to pass. Many were killed by the Romans and the buildings were overthrown. The buildings destroyed included some of the towers.¹

We live in a world which, despite its mounting problems, is intent on enjoying the pleasures of this life. A similar spirit was present in Judah as the threat of the Assyrians grew on the horizon. Instead of repenting, the people adopted a fatalistic attitude: “. . . and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die” (Isa. 22:13).

We must ensure that we do not fall into the same trap. If we are honest we are all influenced in some way by the world. Are we so engrossed in the cares of this life that the return of the Lord Jesus will take us unawares? When Christ does return it will be sudden. The ground will not literally open beneath our feet, but our own little world with its pleasures and plans will collapse. If we have no other foundation than the things of this life then we will indeed be in a miserable position.

The Lord Jesus commanded: “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Lk. 21:36). With the prospect of invasion before them, the Jews in the days of Isaiah should have watched and prayed. Isaiah asked: “What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?” (22:1). They should have used the roofs as a place of prayer (Acts 10:9), after the type of the altar of incense with its roof and walls (Ex. 30:3, mg.). But instead they were feasting. As we reflect on the ways of Israel and the rest of the nations, who are “marrying and giving in marriage” but are unmindful of the impending return of Christ, let us resolve to remain separate, and to “watch and pray”.

1. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, vi, 8, 4.