

Hope in the End

Jeremiah 31:1-17

Joy to the World?

As we see and experience the tragedies and sufferings of this world today, does "Holiday Cheer" seem shallow? Is it a little harder to sing "Joy to the World"? Celebrating and pleasure are going to be hard for many this year, but we must remember that our joy is in Christ, not in world events or worldly pleasures (John 16:33). Even the Christmas story is marked with earthly tragedy and sorrow (Matthew 2:9-18). Whether it is Christmas or any other day, we have to stay focused on the promises of God to maintain our proper sense of direction in life (II Peter 1:2-4).

Rachel Weeping in Jeremiah's Day

Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. These two sons represent the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, after Israel was divided. Joseph was the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, two major tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Benjamin was the tribe that stood with Judah in the Southern Kingdom. Ramah was the city where the Babylonian forces assembled the Jewish prisoners to be chained and transported to captivity (Jeremiah 40:1). Old and sickly people were slain. In poetic language, we see Rachel weeping for her children as they go off into captivity. God comforts Rachel, in that her children will be brought back again, from captivity (Jeremiah 31:15-17 cp. 29:10-14).

Rachel Weeping in Jesus' Day

Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin and was buried near Bethlehem. As she passed away, she named her son "Benoni:" ("son of my sorrow"). Jacob renamed him "Benjamin" ("son of my right hand"). See Genesis 35:16-20. Both of these names typify Christ and His coming to earth. He first came as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3). Then, victorious over death and sin, He is now at the right hand of God (Acts 5:31; 7:55; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:3).

As we consider the events of Christ's birth, we see in poetic language, Rachel (from Bethlehem – south of Jerusalem) weeping so loudly that she can be heard in Ramah (north of Jerusalem). There was sorrow among many mothers, because of Herod's actions, that day. Yet, Christ, not only survived the slaughter of children, He returned from Egypt, fulfilling another prophecy of God (Matthew 2:11-21 cp. Hosea 11:1). God was in control all along.

Weeping Today — Hope for Tomorrow

In calling His people out of this sinful world, God uses sorrow to teach and train us. We suffer in this world, but ultimately we will not perish with the world (John 3:16; Galatians 1:3-4; I John 5:4-5). **Consider the following passages:** Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 15-16; Psalm 30:5; Romans 8:28-39; 13:11-14; I Peter 1:2-9; 5:6-10. This **Christmas season** comfort those who sorrow and suffer. Point them to the one who came to die for our sins (Revelation 1:5-6) and to dry our tears, making all things new (Revelation 21:4-5).