**The Green Wood and the Dry**

*Luke 23:27-31*

**Introduction**

1. The scene of Jesus’ agony:
   1. Exhausted from a night of unjust trial.
   2. Raw and bloody back/body from Roman scourging.
   3. Bloody (crown of thorns) and sweaty face.
   4. Simon compelled to bear His cross because His tortured body could not withstand the load. (Body incapacitated.)
   5. On the way to Calvary to be executed in the most ignominious, agonizing form the world had seen – Roman crucifixion.
2. Mourning Jewish women (called “Daughters of Jerusalem” by Jesus) – **Luke 23:27**
   1. Not necessarily believers in Jesus.
   2. This emphasizes the macabre nature of the scene. Even unbelievers are moved to tears and sympathy.
3. Jesus’ ominous warning – **Luke 23:28-31**
   1. **(vv. 28-30)** – You think this is bad (My crucifixion – Jesus), something worse is coming for you!
   2. Explanation in proverbial form – (**v. 31)** – Green wood (moist, wet, life in the wood), dry (ready for burning) – GREEN WOOD DOES NOT BURN WELL, THE WOOD MUST BE DRIED OUT FOR BURNING – SUCH DRY WOOD BURNS THOROUGHLY.
      1. Christ – green wood – innocent, holy – being burned through this unjust torture and execution.
      2. Jews – dry wood – guilty, unholy, rebellious – if Jesus is receiving such treatment, how much worse will you get it?
      3. “They” – ROMANS – God through the Romans, both for Jesus’ death, and the punishment of the Jews. (Wrath of God displayed on Jesus even though just, wrath of God on Jews as unjust.)
      4. “Luk 23:31, i.e., if they thus by the fire of their wrath treated Christ, the guiltless, holy, the fruitful, what would be the fate of the perpetrators, who were like the dry wood, exposed to the fire of Divine wrath.” (VINE)
   3. Generally – if this kind of severity happens to One who is purely innocent, how much worse will it be for those who are guilty?
4. The Death of Jesus and the Destruction of Jerusalem
5. Israel’s Rebellion
   1. Mistreatment of God’s Law – **Matthew 15:1-9** – Bound traditions (added to law) which nullified God’s law. (**v. 13** – God won’t stand for this)
   2. Killing of the Prophets – **Matthew 21:33-36** – speaking of God sending prophets to Israel, and them killing them.
6. Israel’s Rejection of Christ
   1. **Matthew 21:37-45** – Last of all the son was sent – speaking of Jesus, and their rejection of Him, and murder of Him.
   2. This parable has implications for both the punishment of Israel as well as any who reject Christ.
   3. The last straw for the wrath of God to be poured out on the nation was their rejection of His Son.
7. Destruction of Jerusalem – Prophecy
   1. **Matthew 23:31-39** – Because they killed the prophets, and did not follow Jesus and accept the peace He offered, Jerusalem would be UTTERLY destroyed.
   2. Jesus described the severity of such to the “Daughters of Jerusalem” – **Luke 23:28-30**
8. Destruction of Jerusalem – Fulfillment A.D. 70
   1. “neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries…from the beginning of the world” (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book V. Chap. X, p. 5).
   2. “If the miseries of all mankind from the creation were compared with those which the Jews then suffered, they would appear inferior.” (Josephus)
      1. **Luke 21:20** – Roman army surrounded Jerusalem.
      2. Starvation set in – “Moreover, their hunger was so intolerable, that it obliged them to chew everything, while they gathered such things as the most sordid animals would not touch, and endured to eat them.” (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book VI. Chap. IV, p. 3) JOSEPHUS GOES ON TO DESCRIBE A WOMAN WHO ROASTED AND ATE HER OWN BABY.
   3. Then the city was taken and destroyed:
      1. “yet hath not its great antiquity, nor its vast riches, nor the diffusion of its nation over all the habitable earth, nor the greatness of the veneration paid to it on a religious account, been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed. And thus ended the siege of Jerusalem.” (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chap X, p. 1)
      2. “there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited.” (Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book VII. Chap. 1, p. 1)
9. The Green Wood and the Dry – A Comparison
   1. Jesus (green wood – innocent and holy) died, but then conquered death and lives to this day – **Acts 2:23-24** – you crucified Him, but God raised Him up.
   2. The Jewish nation (dry wood) were rebellious, and rejected God and His Christ. They suffered unimaginable things, and would never recover.
   3. JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED, BUT NOT FULLY CONSUMED BECAUSE THERE WAS NO GUILT IN HIM. THE JEWISH NATION WAS GUILTY OF KILLING THE SON OF GOD AND WAS UTTERLY DESTROYED.
10. The idea behind the proverbial statement of Jesus – **Luke 23:31** – if those, like Jesus, who are innocent, righteous, and devoted to God suffer, what unimaginable agony is in store for those who are guilty, unrighteous, and opposed to God in how they live?
11. The Suffering of the Righteous and the Destruction of the Wicked
12. The Righteous Will Suffer but Will Be Relieved
    1. Green wood may not catch fire easily, nor hold a burn for long, but God has assured His people they will suffer through various fires their entire lives – **1 Peter 1:6-9**
       1. Does not come from God, but allowed by God for the testing of our faith.
       2. WE ARE FORMED BY GOD IN THE CRUCIBLE OF TRIAL AND TRIBULATION. (**cf. Romans 5:3-5** – tribulation, perseverance, character, hope)
    2. The road to heaven is overgrown with tribulation – **Acts 14:19-22** (Paul, after preaching in Lystra, and being stoned.)
    3. Green wood, thought it may burn some, often loses its flame well before it is consumed. God promises His children they will not be consumed:
       1. Paul’s word’s concerning the apostles – **2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18**
          1. **2 Corinthians 5:1** – that not seen is the spiritual house from God.
          2. This house is indestructible – **1 Corinthians 15:42-45**
       2. **Romans 8:18** – not to be compared, and the glory SHALL be revealed.
          1. Nothing can separate us from God’s outpouring of love – **Romans 8:37-39**
    4. Our question should not be, “If there is a God, why do bad things happen to good people?” Our question should rather be, “If there is a God, and bad things happen to good people, what is going to happen to bad people?” (**cf. Luke 23:31** – essentially what Jesus said)
13. The Wicked Will Suffer for Eternity
    1. If fiery trials are the norm for the righteous, what will be the end for those who are wicked? – **1 Peter 4:12-19**
       1. **(vv. 12-16)** – Exhortation for Christians to not be confused about what they’re experiencing, but rejoice because of the fellowship with Christ, and the reward to come.
       2. **(vv. 17-18)** – if such is the reality for the righteous first, what is coming for the sinner?
          1. Judgment – i.e. how God judges His people as being faithful or unfaithful – **cf. 1 Peter 1:7** – genuineness of faith tested.
          2. Judgement from men – part of the suffering – **1 Peter 2:12; 3:16; 4:4-6**
          3. **(v. 18)** – from **Proverbs 11:31** – recompense, i.e. reward, but negative.
             1. Scarcely saved? – Not a matter of fomenting doubt, rather, a consideration of difficulty on the path of righteousness by suffering for such.
             2. If the people on the way to heaven have it so difficult, what is the end for those on the path of wickedness?
       3. **(v. 19)** – suffer for doing good, because God will reward in the end – He is faithful to do so.
    2. Rich man and Lazarus – **cf. Luke 16:19-31**
       1. Rich man likely to have seen Lazarus suffering every day – maybe had the attitude, “I’m glad I’m not that guy!”
       2. RICH MAN EXPERIENCED THE ULTIMATE REALITY OF JESUS’ WORD’S – **Luke 23:31** – He saw what was done in the dry.
    3. Count the cost:
       1. Some hesitate to become a disciple because of what it might cost them – WHAT YOU HAVE TO GIVE UP, PERSECUTION, BEING OSTRACIZED, PHYSICAL DEATH – **cf. Acts 24:25** – Felix when he heard Paul.
       2. Instead, there must be a greater consideration of the cost of NOT becoming a disciple – **Mark 8:35-37; Luke 14:31-32**
    4. IF THE RIGHTEOUS ARE NOT SPARED FROM THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS LIFE, THEN WHAT WILL BE THE END OF THE WICKED?

**Conclusion**

1. We must all come to terms with what comes next – i.e. after life under the sun.
2. Yes, we may suffer, even if we fit the Lord’s description of “green wood.”
3. However, what is more ominous is the prospect of eternal fire – **cf. Mark 9:48; Revelation 14:11**
4. Isn’t it better to suffer now, and receive eternal glory later, than to avoid suffering now, and experience far greater for eternity?