

Rachel's Tears

(and the Aim of All Stupid Philanthropists)

Matthew 2:13-23

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[Video Clip: The Voice of the Martyrs, "Faces of Persecution"]

Imagine . . . Islamic soldiers force your ten-year-old son to gather wood for a fire. The soldiers pressure him to convert to Islam. When he refuses, he's thrown on the burning wood he collected and left to die.

[James Jeda] "They told me I would be released if I became a Muslim. I told them that was not possible. I am a Christian. So they threw me on the fire."

Your son escapes, but the scars remain, a reminder of his sacrifice.

Imagine . . . Your teenage daughter goes to Bible camp. On the second day the students are attacked. One of the attackers secures her hands behind her back while another holds a piece of broken glass to her stomach. She is told to deny Christ.

[Rikka] "I did not answer him. So he pressed the glass harder against me. 'Do you believe your God can help you?' he asked."

Ripped with fear, she cries out, "Help me, Lord! I do not want to deny you!"

Imagine . . . Your pastor has refused to register his church with the government. During the service he's dragged from the church and beaten by the local police. When the officers find a Bible hidden in his shirt, he is beaten with it.

[Pastor Li De Xian] "After returning home I felt pain all over my body. It was almost numb at the beginning, but later it became so painful that I could not sleep."

It is the fifth time he has been arrested. If he's caught again, the police say they will kill him.

Every day thousands are persecuted for their faith. Hundreds are martyred, about one every three minutes. They're not heroes or statistics; they're family. In over forty nations around the globe our family is assaulted for the testimony of Jesus Christ. In most instances the persecution could have been averted if they had simply denied Christ. But they didn't, and they won't.

In Sudan an Islamic army set on "jihad" or holy war has systematically targeted Christians. Death and suffering can be seen throughout the countryside. Countless Christians are being displaced within their own country. Lean from persecution, they've lost everything, often arriving at refugee camps with nothing more than the clothes on their backs.

In spite of heavy persecution, the church in Sudan continues growing at astonishing rates. Many of the believers bear the scars of their faith, but they also bear a testimony to God's faithfulness.

Over 500 churches have been destroyed in Indonesia. On the island of Ambon Christians have been massacred in a so-called religious cleansing by radical Muslims. Facing increased persecution, pastors in Jakarta have encouraged their congregations to stand firm, confident that their suffering is a prelude to coming revival.

With the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, many have hailed its defeat. But Christians in North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, or China would disagree. Hmoung villagers have been imprisoned in Vietnam and Laos after converting to Christianity. Some have had boiling water poured down their throats for simply possessing a Bible in their own language. The Hmoung tribe is the largest in Southeast Asia, numbering 10 million. Meeting secretly in homes, more than 2 million have recently committed their lives to Christ.

The persecution facing our brothers and sisters is not a human tragedy. It is a spiritual reality facing the body of Christ. We may not be able to stop the attacks, but we can ease their pain. Through prayer, encouragement, and practical assistance, we can fellowship in their suffering. We can show them that they are not forgotten.

It's hard to ignore their pain after you hear their cries. [Rikka crying]

Wouldn't you like to take those tears away? Send our army to places like China, Sudan, Indonesia, and Vietnam to wipe the tears away?

I've read that humans are the only animals that weep. Other animals cry to get irritants out of their eyes, but only *people* weep because of irritants in their souls. You know, if it weren't for tears, we'd probably all be blind, our eyes full of scratches and caked with dirt.

Let's pray:

"Father, we ask that you would open the eyes of our hearts so that we could see you, and that you would help us now to preach. In Jesus' name, amen."

Matthew 2:13:

Now when [the wizards] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the [wizards], was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more."

In those five verses there are allusions to Israel, Rachel, the sojourn in Egypt, Moses, the Exodus, David, and the exile in Babylon. For Matthew, the whole history of Israel is about Christ and contained in Christ. God has been telling this story all along. This is the story that contains all stories, including your story.

The story —
The Gospel of King Jesus —
The conquest of humanity by the King of Hearts.

King Herod was threatened by King Jesus. King Herod controlled all Israel, but he could not control one human heart. Herod had poisoned his favorite wife and murdered his brother-in-law and two sons and countless others by the time of Christ's birth. So the murder of twenty or so young boys in Bethlehem would have gone largely unnoticed. However, it was certainly noticed by the mothers of Bethlehem. Their tears were epic. And I bet you Herod noticed those tears.

For in the spring of 4 B.C., probably only a few weeks later, Herod ordered all the notable Jews to come see him on his deathbed in Jericho. Upon their arrival he had them locked in the Hippodrome and gave orders to his sister Salome to have them slaughtered at the moment of his death, so that all the families of Israel would weep. You see, he feared that at his death not one tear would be shed. He wanted tears like those shed in Bethlehem. So he tried to steal them.

Well, at his death Salome let all those Jews go, and there was much rejoicing.

Herod was not king over one heart. He was not lord of one tear. But every baby boy in Bethlehem commanded a river of tears that awful day . . . every baby boy, except one: the last baby from Bethlehem. For Joseph and Mary were warned by God in a dream, fled to Egypt, and missed persecution. And that seems kind of wrong. But maybe Rachel and the mothers were weeping for Him even then. For if the Christ hadn't been born in Bethlehem, there would have been no weeping, perhaps ever.

Well, Rachel still weeps. Rachel is a picture of the people of God. She is Israel; Israel is the Church; the Church is the mother, sister, and brother of Jesus: "Whoever does the will of my Father," said Jesus. Christ is born in and through His Church, and Rachel still weeps wherever Christ is born.

Rachel weeps in Sudan, Pakistan, Indonesia, China, and Mozambique, where Christ is born and His body grows at an unprecedented rate.

Rachel weeps more than ever, and we'd like to stop the tears. We'd like King George Bush to stop the tears. And we wonder why King Jesus hasn't stopped them yet. Some say He would like to but doesn't have the power. Well, it's abundantly clear that God could have prevented the massacre in Bethlehem . . . just a few more dreams . . .

Even more incriminating, everything was happening according to plan to fulfill prophecy.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah . . . Rachel weeping . . . (Matthew 2:17-18).

Ramah was a town north of Jerusalem where Rachel was said to be buried. Jeremiah pictures her weeping from her tomb as the children of Israel were led through Ramah into captivity and exile.

- The tears are part of God's plan.
- Is God trying to steal tears like Herod tried to steal tears?
- Why doesn't He eliminate all tears?

In the novel Lilith by George MacDonald, a certain Mr. Vane has some incredible dreams in which he travels to other lands. At one point he encounters a land of delightful children, who are subjected to dull-witted giants. The children are innocent, but they lack knowledge and meaning. They're afraid to grow, for those that do, turn into dull-witted giants themselves.

Mr. Vane escapes the giants and leaves the children to try and find a way to help them grow. He thinks it may be a lack of water. Finally he encounters the Christ figure in the story—the second Adam—Mr. Raven. Mr. Raven rebukes Mr. Vane for not helping the children as he should have.

“You saw they were not growing — or growing so slowly that they had not yet developed the idea of growing! they were even afraid of growing! — You had never seen children remain children!”

“But surely I had no power to make them grow!”

“You might have removed some of the hindrances to their growing!”

“What are they? I do not know them. I did think perhaps it was the want of water!”

“Of course it is! they have none to cry with!”

“I would gladly have kept them from requiring any for that purpose!”

“No doubt you would – the aim of all stupid philanthropists! Why, Mr. Vane, but for the weeping in it, your world would never have become worth saving!”

That is, Mr. Vane, you should have helped them weep so they could grow. But to prevent their weeping . . . that's the aim of all stupid philanthropists. It's vanity.

Later in Matthew Jesus tells Peter and the disciples that Hell cannot prevail against His Church. Then He tells them that He must suffer many things. Peter rebukes Him saying, “May it never happen to you!” (“I'll prevent the tears!”) And Jesus says, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God but of man!” (“You stupid philanthropist!”)

Men hate weeping. I bet Herod never wept. He just wanted everyone else to weep. “Jesus wept” — John 11:35. (Shortest verse in the Bible . . . great for Scripture memorization . . .)

Men hate weeping, *real* weeping. They love whining and whimpering, but they hate weeping.

[Singing]

I won't disturb the slumber
Of feelings that have died
If I never loved I never would have cried

I am a rock
I am an island . . .

Hiding in my room
Safe within my womb
I touch no one and no one touches me
I am a rock
I am an island

And a rock feels no pain
And an island never cries

A rock is dead, and an island is dead. And if you think you're an island or a rock, perhaps you're insane.

“This tendency to avoid problems and the emotional suffering inherent in them is the primary basis of all human mental illness,” writes M. Scott Peck. Perhaps all mental illness is somehow a refusal to truly weep.

A few years ago a fairly distant relative hung himself in the basement, leaving four little children and a wife. At the interment the pastor read some poems no one heard and then said, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” We went back to the house and had a deli-tray and talked about the Denver Broncos and Kansas City Chiefs but not Doug and Heaven and Hell and death and life and how Jesus overcame the world with blood and tears. There was no weeping, like Doug had never really died . . . or we had never really lived.

Perhaps if you don't weep you don't grow and live . . . or if you *do* grow, you grow dead and insane.

[Singing]

If I never loved I never would have cried . . .

Hiding in my room
Safe within my womb
I touch no one and no one touches me
I am a rock

“Thus says the Lord God . . . I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36). Ouch.

Well, if weeping can make you grow, how does it work? I don't know exactly. Perhaps that's because it's not about making my *head* grow as much as my *heart* grow. But it does seem that weeping is often a death to my old heart—my old affections—my old world—old King Herod.

When Herod slaughtered the infants, he really didn't kill them. “To such belongs the kingdom of God.” A momentary pain, and then they were in the arms of God. Herod didn't slaughter the

infants so much as he slaughtered himself in the hearts of the weeping mothers, in the heart of Rachel—Israel. He dethroned himself.

Rachel was forced to choose her king: Herod or Jesus. And as she wept King Herod died in her heart, and King Jesus was born.

Real weeping is the death of this world, and I'm not speaking about tears in the eyes. (Some people get those all the time and never weep.) I'm speaking of mourning that washes the soul. Physical tears wash the dirt from our eyes. Perhaps there are tears that wash this fallen world from our souls and cleanse the blinded eyes of our hearts. So maybe tears are the holiest water around.

A man asked a priest, "How do you get holy water?" The priest said, "That's easy. You just take regular water and boil the Hell out of it."

Maybe suffering and loss are the heat, and we are the vessel (regular, earthen vessel), and the water boils up from inside us such that sometimes the spring of living water takes the form of tears.

Real weeping is death to our old world, old selves, and old King Herod, and mystically it is the birth of King Jesus.

Rachel Scott's biography from Columbine High School was entitled Rachel's Tears. In her backpack they found her diary. She had prophetically drawn a picture of eyes weeping thirteen tears that watered a bloody rose.

Jesus is the rose of Sharon.

He grows in us and through us,
watered by tears,
according to His plan.

Last week at our Presbytery meeting I heard See Tan Lee from Cambodia. (Thirty-eight members of his family were killed in the killing fields by the Khmer Rouge.) He was exiled to the U.S., but in 1990 he returned to preach the Gospel. He was immediately imprisoned and persecuted. He said that one night he got so discouraged he started yelling at God. "What's the meaning of this? Why did you bring me here if you didn't want me to preach? I'm going to preach to the *wall* if I can't preach anywhere else!" He threw a fit and collapsed in sorrow and, I imagine, tears. He fell asleep, and in the morning he preached to the wall.

It turns out the wall was bugged, and in an hour the guard was converted. That night the second guard came to Christ. The guards brought others to hear the Gospel.

See Tan has led something like 50,000 Cambodians to Jesus. He went out into the jungle where he heard that 35,000 of the Khmer Rouge were hiding, planning an insurgency against the

government. He led many of the generals to the Lord. Many of them are now on his staff. And he's done it through suffering and tears.

Although the mourners can't understand it at the time, the tears of Columbine, Cambodia, and Bethlehem have meaning. And the meaning is Jesus.

Surrender your tears to Jesus, and then they are His. Not only do your tears have meaning (logos, Jesus); Meaning has your tears. Jesus has your tears. They are His tears.

In ancient times it was the custom to collect the tears of mourners in bottles called lachrymatories. These tear bottles were buried with the deceased for whom the tears were shed. In the book of Psalms, David prays to God saying, "Put my tears in your bottle."

A wise counselor once said, "I cannot wipe away your tears, my dear. I can only teach you how to make them holy."

Surrender your tears to God in Christ Jesus, and they become holy. They become His, and you weep *His* tears for this fallen world. And He is also the One for whom you are weeping. He is the deceased; He is the one who died for the fallen world.

So God Himself collects our tears and places them in the tomb with the deceased. The Father has collected tears like a parent collects finger paintings and baby teeth and old photos. They are all gifts of a growing love, and they are precious to Him.

He collects your tears and places them in the tomb of the Christ. Buried with Him, they're resurrected with Him.

In the prophecy of Rachel weeping (Jeremiah 31), exiles come back to receive new hearts, better than before! And God turns their mourning into dancing. He turns your sorrow into joy, says Jesus. But I believe for all eternity He holds your tears in His bottle.

Give Him your tears.

Satan always tempts us to hang on to our tears.

- Some people make an idol of their tears. They use tears to get attention, to make excuses; they use them to manipulate others; they even use them to avoid real sorrow. Tears become their idol and their identity. They whimper, whine, and complain, stuck on feeling sorry for themselves, but they don't surrender their tears to God.

If you truly weep, the weeping ends.
For God has the tears in His bottle.

- Some people bottle their tears and bottle their hearts and try to hide them forever. Hidden tears stunt our growth.

Last year a friend of mine shared an absolutely horrifying memory of abuse. It happened to her when she was a little girl, and she didn't weep. She *couldn't* weep, for fear of more abuse. It was like a part of her shut down and couldn't grow. (I believe it was the Lord's mercy, perhaps even good for a time.)

But as we prayed Jesus appeared to her in a vision and said to her, "Now I want you to let go of your heart." She said, "No, no no!" And she said to me, "If I start weeping, I'm afraid I'll never stop. I won't be able to control the sound."

But we all agreed it was a bad idea to argue with Jesus. So we went down in the basement, Susan laid her hand on our friend's back, our friend buried her face in my shoulder, and we asked Jesus for help. And she began to scream and weep and wail . . . like Rachel in Bethlehem. And after a long time, she stopped.

Jesus appeared again to her in the vision in the room where she was abused as a little girl. Jesus asked her to give Him her sorrows. When she did, He told her, "I will hold them for all eternity." He took her by the hand—a little girl—and walked her out of that old room and into my basement where she sat as a grown woman praying with her friends. (She's one of the most sane, alive, beautiful people I know.)

The King of Hearts is infinitely more powerful than King Herod. Jesus commands the stars, but better yet, He owns all the tears.

Perhaps you're thinking, "Wait a minute. *God* allowed the babies in Bethlehem to die. It was *His* plan. Isn't Jesus trying to steal tears just like Herod? The women weren't crying for Jesus. He had left for Egypt."

Jesus made every one of those babies in Bethlehem. And Jesus loved every one of those babies in Bethlehem. And I believe Jesus was *in* every one of those babies: "in the last and least of these his brethren."

Whenever you weep over the loss of a good thing, you're weeping over Jesus. He is the good.

Furthermore, those babies were in Him at His cross where He makes all things new. The babies live. It's the living who are truly dead and insane. It's Rachel, it's us, it's the dull-witted giants like Herod.

And . . .

- maybe God is not a stupid philanthropist;
- maybe God knows the power of tears;
- maybe God in Jesus even supplies the water for our tears.

Rachel will weep for the last baby from Bethlehem. He returns and in thirty-three years hangs on a cross and suffers more than all the rest combined, for He takes the sins and the sorrows of all

the rest. He bears the sin to Hell and holds the tears forever in a bottle. They are *His tears*, the cost and prize for loving people like us.

The tears are His for eternity but ours for a moment in time as we taste His sorrows.

He doesn't steal our tears;
He allows us to taste His,
 that we might know Him, so we can grow to the fullness of the knowledge of His love,
 the eyes of our hearts cleansed by the tears of God to see Him as He is.

If you have trouble weeping and you need to grow, at His cross and His table is where He supplies the water for your tears. His Spirit is the very river of life you're asked to weep.

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion [shared passion] . . . so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born. . . . On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (Zechariah 12:10, 13:1).

If you have trouble weeping and mourning, do you see you crucified the last baby in Bethlehem, the One who made all the rest? It is according to the plan, because the dead children of Adam needed water for their tears, tears of sorrow and joy.

On the night that King Jesus was betrayed, having given thanks He took bread and broke it, saying to His disciples, “This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And in the same way after supper He took the cup saying, “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for the forgiveness of many. Do this as often as you drink of it in remembrance of me.” He also said, “I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until I drink it with you in my Father's kingdom.”

This sermon is about the persecuted church. And I hope you see the point: God is not a stupid philanthropist. We must do all we can to alleviate the suffering of others. So write your congressmen, send money and aid when possible, but we're not called to eliminate all weeping. We're called to help them weep. “Weep with those who weep.”

Like the little boy who climbed into the lap of a weeping old man who had just lost his wife . . . When the boy's mother asked him what he had said to the man, the boy replied, “Nothing. I just helped him cry.”

That little boy will grow up fast and well.

We're the little boy, and we need the persecuted church. The truth is, you come to this table and you *are* the persecuted church. We are one body, and we are suffering. It's just that some of us are denying the tears. That's sad . . . for we're missing the birth of our Lord and stunting our growth.

Come to the table and commune with Jesus in you—Emmanuel—and Jesus around the world.
And may He grow till you burst with joy and your tears are the very wine of blessedness.

In Jesus' name, amen.

[Communion]

[O Come, O Come, Emmanuel]

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel,
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show
And cause us in her ways to go.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all man-kind
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease
And be Thyself our King of peace

Pray silently with me: “Lord Jesus, you are my King, and so I give you my heart. Put my tears in your bottle and make them holy.”

Now, for some of you, you may be aware of a place where you need to weep. And the Lord may want you to find another believer, a member of the Prayer Team, or someone with whom you can weep those tears as you give them to the Lord and He puts them in His bottle.

Some of you have been weeping tears recently, perhaps over a loved one who died, or a child in rebellion, or someone you know suffering immensely . . . As you weep those tears you wonder, What is the meaning (the purpose, the logos) of these tears? And you're angry with God. In fact, maybe you've even been using the tears as weapons against Him. Surrender those tears. He wants to make those tears holy, and when He makes them holy, the meaning is Jesus. He redeems those tears. Don't waste them.

So give Him your tears. And I believe He would say to you, after a good cry, “Feel free to dance! For I love it when my children dance in prison cells in the land of sorrow. I love it when they preach in jail in Cambodia, and when they sing my praises while locked in chains, and when they worship me even from a cross.”

In Jesus’ name give the Lord God your tears.

Meister Eckhart said this: “Surely, if I knew for certain that all my stones should be changed into gold, the more and the larger stones I had, the better I should be pleased.”

And Jesus says, “I turn your sorrows into joy.”

We need to share in the tears of our brothers and sisters around the world. God gives us tears here, but we need to share in their tears as well.

So, yes, I think I want some tears.

In the name of Jesus, may you weep some tears for *His* glory, for He changes all of our tears into absolute joy. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Further Reading

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more."

-Matthew 2:16-18

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men."

-Matthew 16:21-23

Don't talk of love
Well I've heard the word before
It's sleeping in my memory
I won't disturb the slumber
Of feelings that have died
If I never loved I never would have cried
I have my books
And my poetry to protect me
I am shielded in my armor
Hiding in my room
Safe within my womb
I touch no one and no one touches me
I am a rock
I am an island
And a rock feels no pain
And an island never cries

-Simon & Garfunkel

But what I've discovered since is that the lifelong fear of grief keeps us in a barren, isolated place and that only grieving can heal grief; the passage of time will lessen the acuteness, but time alone, without the direct experience of grief, will not heal it.

-Anne Lamott

The first thing that Jesus promises is suffering: "I tell you . . . you will be weeping and wailing . . . and you will be sorrowful." But he calls these pains birth pains. And so, what seems a hindrance becomes a way; what seems an obstacle becomes a door; and what seems a misfit becomes a cornerstone. Jesus changes our history from a random series of sad incidents and accidents into a constant opportunity for a change of heart.

-Henri Nouwen

We need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts.

-Charles Dickens

He that goes forth weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

-Psalm 126:6

A woman in great distress over the death of her son came to the master for comfort. He listened to her patiently while she poured out her tale of woe. Then he said softly, "I cannot wipe away your tears, my dear. I can only teach you how to make them holy."

-Anthony DeMello

Thou hast kept count of my tossings; put thou my tears in thy bottle! Are they not in thy book?

-Psalm 56:8

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

-Isaiah 53:3-5

. . . that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

-Philippians 3:10-11

It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

-Romans 8:16-17

“Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.”

-Luke 6:21b

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.”

-John 16:20

“They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more. Then shall the maidens rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, says the LORD.” Thus says the LORD: “A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are not.” Thus says the LORD: “Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, says the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country. . . . Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

-Jeremiah 31:12-17, 31-33

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born. . . . On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.”

-Zechariah 12:10, 13:1