

Biblical Notes — Matthew 23:38

38 – Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! (38. ἰδοὺ ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν)

“The desolation of “your house” in 23:38 probably refers to the temple (21:13; 24:1–3, 15; cf. 1 Kings 9:7–8; Isa. 64:10–11; Jer. 26:6; 2 Bar. 8.2; Jdt. 9:13), although it may be a metaphor for Jerusalem or the nation itself (Matt. 22:7; Jer. 12:7; 1 En. 89.56). The temple, along with the city, represents the life and destiny of the entire nation (Garland 1979: 98–100). Some scholars take Matt. 23:39 as stressing only the certainty of judgment (e.g., Garland 1979: 204–9; Meier 1980b: 274–75), but the image of the hen gathering her chicks (23:37) speaks of compassion, not rejection (W. Davies and Allison 1997: 323–24; Garland 1993: 232–33). There is a glimmer of hope for salvation if only Israel will acknowledge Jesus to be its Messiah. Israel has sinned in rejecting Jesus, and there will be punishment for that sin. But here as throughout biblical history, repentance after sin and judgment brings grace and redemption (cf. Rom. 11:1–2, 11–12, 15, 23–27). Jesus will return only when Israel in true repentance utters the words that were uttered without adequate understanding in Matt. 21:9. (See Allison 1983; Bruner 1990: 835–37.)”

—— David Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Baker Academic, 2008), 562.