

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 12/13-14/2021 *Matthew Chapter 23*

PLEASE NOTE WE WILL CONTINUE TO NEED A PASSCODE TO JOIN THE STUDY!

MONDAY 7 PM Bible Study - Time: 07:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

THE MONDAY NIGHT STUDY HAS RESUMED MEETING IN CLASSROOM HS107, CCCM, AS WELL AS CONTINUING IN ZOOM!!

MEETING ID# - 87858644763 Passcode: 087484

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Meeting ID: 878 5864 4763 - Passcode: 087484

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TUESDAY 7 AM Bible Study - Time: 07:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada).

THE TUESDAY MORNING STUDY HAS RESUMED MEETING IN THE FAMILY ROOM, CCCM, AS WELL AS CONTINUING IN ZOOM!!

MEETING ID# - 85309150746 - Passcode: 715340

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Phil Twente ptwente@gmail.com cell 714 425 9221 For Audio & notes from previous studies - www.ptwente.com

OPENING PRAYER

Matthew Chapter 23

Woe to the Scribes and Pharisees – (vs. 1-36); Jesus Laments Over Jerusalem - (vs. 37-39).

- **Chapter 23 concludes the clash between the Lord Jesus and the religious rulers.** He warns the multitudes about them and then denounces the religious rulers in unmistakable terms. No words that ever fell from the lips of our Lord were more scathing. However, in using the word “woe” eight times, we need to remember that in the definition of this word, there is the aspect of pain and sorrow. Jesus loved the Pharisees and scribes, but hated their sin, especially of pride and hypocrisy.
- **It's important for us to look at this,** not just what terrible persons the Pharisees and the scribes were, Why didn't they recognize Jesus and what He said? We don't want to miss what the passage can teach to us. I have a Pharisee, a scribe, and a Sadducee inside of me. They are plenty big and strong. I need the Scriptures to speak against that. This has something to speak to all of us. All of us are endeavoring to represent God as Christians in this world. This is a wonderful list to go through and to realize that these are

things we must avoid in our lives, if we are to properly represent the Lord in the world. As we look at what He says to them, may we personalize it relating it to our own lives!

Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees

Mat 23:1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,

Mat 23:2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit (they have seated themselves) in Moses' seat.

- **Jesus has just had a confrontation with the Pharisees, the Sadducees,** the religious leaders. It has been a rather heated conversation at times, as Jesus denounces their practices, their beliefs. He now turns from the Pharisees and the Sadducees whom He has silenced and begins to address Himself to the multitude of people, no doubt, which had gathered around to listen. The Pharisees and Sadducees are still standing there. They are steaming inside, but Jesus now is addressing Himself to the multitude and to His disciples, but still within the hearing of the Pharisees and the scribes. He begins to talk to the people concerning the scribes and the Pharisees.
- **They sit in Moses' seat!** In the Greek it is, they have seated themselves in Moses' seat. In other words, they have declared that they themselves are the interpreters and the teachers of the law. It is in a position that they have assumed. They usurped that which they had no right to usurp. They occupied very much the same position that church leaders occupy today. People looked to them for the interpretation of the truth.

Mat 23:3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

- **The law is right, listen to the law, obey the law.** But don't follow their practices because they say one thing and they do another! That, basically, is the fault that Jesus found with the Pharisees. Their religion was all outward. It was all for show. It was all for display. It was all to impress people.
- **There are those even today** who do many things to impress people. They were more interested in impressing people than they were impressing God. Back in the Sermon on the Mount, the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, as He was talking about righteousness, He said, Be careful that you don't do your righteousness before men to be seen of men. This business of trying to show off how spiritual you are, doing things just to draw the attention of people so they'll say, Isn't he spiritual? Did you see that? My!
- **That is an ugly thing about our flesh** that we want to be known as deeply spiritual people. That's a typical thing of the flesh. It wants glory from people as being a very deeply spiritual person. There is a tendency towards that, doing things for an outward show. That was the thing that Jesus had against the Pharisees.
- **He said that when you give, don't be like the Pharisees who like to make a big show** over their giving. They get a little band to go before them to draw attention as they are dropping their money in the treasury of the church. Don't be like that! He said. When you fast, don't go around with long faces and all, that you appear to men to fast. When you pray, don't be like the Pharisees who stand on the street corners. God is looking on the heart. Too many times the outward things are done to attract the attention of people.

Mat 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

- **They lay upon people these really heavy regulations,** but they're not keeping them themselves! **They say, and do not do** - The interpretation which they give to the law is basically correct, but their lives do not correspond with their teaching. It is not the duty of people to imitate their teachers unless their lives are pure. They are to obey the law of God, but not to be guided by the example of the lives of the Pharisee and the scribes. They are not to frame their lives by the example of evil people. What a great reminder for us. To have a worthwhile witness, our lives must reflect the gospel message that we are to profess. It not so much what we say, but what we do!

Mat 23:5 But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.

- **The phylacteries was a little leather box.** Under the Mosaic law, they were told to bind the law to their forehead and bind it to their wrist. (**Deu 6:8**) *You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.* Even to the present day, they have these phylacteries. But for show, these guys were making big boxes, thinking it would make them look more spiritual. We're more spiritual than you. They were also told to put these tassels on the borders of their garments. (**Deu 22:12**) *"You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself. (Num 15:39, 40) And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,*

[40] and that you may remember and do all My commandments and be holy for your God. It was to remind them that they are heavenly people, they are spiritual people. But they were enlarging their phylacteries and making their borders and tassels larger, to let everyone know just how spiritual they were. They are being condemned for it!

Mat 23:6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,

Mat 23:7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' at 23:8 But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

- **They love the best places at the feasts.** The important place at the feast was at the right hand and at the left hand of the host. There was always a vying for that place of honor, position, and authority. I want to sit at the head table! They were always working and trying to work their way up into the position of prominence in front of the people.
- **The best seats in the synagogues.** The seating arrangement in the synagogues had the ladies on the right and the men on the left. Up front of the synagogue, facing the people were the elders. Those seats were the best, also called the chief seats. That is where people liked to sit so that they could look at all the people that came in, and be recognized by the people, who would say, these are the leaders! How often am I demonstrating my desire to have the best places, the best seats and to gain attention?
- **They wear their fancy robes and all so that when the people see them, they greet them.** When they walk in the market, they say, good morning, Rabbi; good morning, Master. They loved that! They loved that spiritual power over others. I'm to be looked up to as the spiritual man in the community. Our Lord is condemning all of this.
- **We're all of us just brothers in Christ. No one has any spiritual edge over another.** God will listen to your prayers as readily as He will listen to mine. None of us have any position of hierarchy or standing above one another in the spiritual things. In fact, those that are teachers, have a greater responsibility before God to be careful of the things that are taught, being held accountable for how the word of God is taught. (*Jas 3:1*) *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.* As I teach the Word of God, I'll be held accountable before God, but it doesn't make me any closer to Him. It doesn't make me any more spiritual. It doesn't give me an edge over you in your relationship with God. In a spiritual sense a pastor or teacher is no different from anyone else. He is just one of your brothers.

Mat 23:9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

- **The Father is that which has begotten!** He is the One who gives life. Spiritually, there is only One who has given you spiritual life and that is God. We are not to address any man as "Father, from a spiritual standpoint. There is no man that gives you spiritual life. It is God, and Him, alone, who has given you spiritual life. He has begotten you. As Peter said in his epistle, (*1Pe 1:3*) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* You are not to call any man Father, on earth, in the spiritual sense because it is God who gives spiritual life. A "master" is one in a position of authority. Christ is the One in the position of authority as the head of the church today.

Mat 23:10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

- **Rabbi ... father ... teachers.** Here Jesus is condemning pride and pretense, not titles, as such. The Apostle Paul speaks of "teachers" in the church, referring to himself as the Corinthians' "father" (*1Co 4:15*) *For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel.* This prohibition does not forbid the showing of respect. Jesus is merely forbidding the use of such names as spiritual titles or in a conspicuous and showy sense that gives undue spiritual authority to a human being, as if he were the source of truth rather than God!

Mat 23:11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Mat 23:12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

- **If you want to be the greatest, then become the servant of all!**
- **Jesus said to His disciples, the Gentiles love to exercise lordship.** It shall not be so among you. Here again, the repetition of true greatness lies in serving, serving others. We remember when Jesus was having the Last Supper with His disciples, how He took the towel. He girded Himself. Then, He went around and began to wash the disciples' feet. When He was through, He said, have you seen what I have done? They said, Yes. Then He said, now you call Me Lord and Master. That is correct because I am your Lord and Master. But if I, being your Lord and Master wash your feet, so you also ought to wash one another's feet! We are to think about serving one another! (*Mar 9:35*) *And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."* The way up is down, and the

way down is up! (*Jas 4:10*) *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

- **Oh, that we would learn the lessons of just the privilege and the joy of serving the Lord.** (*Mat 10:42*) *And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."* (*Mat 25:45*) *Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'*

Mat 23:13 "But woe (ouai – pronounced "oo-ah'ee. An interjection denoting pain or displeasure; to give reason) to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

- **The Lord, turning directly to the Pharisees, uses the term *woe* eight times in this section, calling the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites seven times.** He accuses them of blocking the way to heaven by their false leadership. This is strong language.
- **And He begins to pronounce these *woes*.** This word "*woe*" is a word, which does speak of wrath, but it also speaks of sorrow! It is a combination. When you read this, don't just see fire in the eye of Jesus but also see tears. Yes, He is describing their condition which is detestable. But there's a combination of judgment and sorrow as He will conclude it with just sort of a lament. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often I wanted to gather your children together."
- **This lament, and as He is saying this, yes, there is the denouncing** of their practices but there's also that sorrow of heart because of their blindness. They are struggling to be righteous. They have a form of righteousness, but they are so blind to the real truth, that they won't open their hearts to it. They are so bound and steeped in their traditions that they're just locked into the system and can't seem to break it. *Woe to you*, you think you're on the right path. You think you're doing the right thing, but you're on the way to destruction.
- ***Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*** The "hypocrite" (*hupokrites*) was the actor in the Greek drama. He was the one that would hold up this false face. He might hold up a face that has this big smile on it, but behind, his true face was one of sadness and sorrow. The *hypocrite* is one who is wearing a false face, one who is putting on an act, one who is one thing on the outside, but something entirely different on the inside. God also looks on the inside. Man looks on the outward appearance, and you might be able to deceive man, but God looks on the heart! You can't fool God. "*Woe to you!*"
- ***For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither do you allow those that are entering to go in.*** By their rules, by their rigid rules and regulations, they discouraged man from trying to enter the kingdom of heaven. They had all of their rules and regulations. If you want to do this! These are all the things that you have to do! But by laying up all of these barriers, they themselves did not go in. They weren't observing them! They were putting rules on others that they themselves weren't really abiding by.

Mat 23:14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

- ***For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long, faulty spiritual, prayers*** Taking advantage of people, going around and preying upon widows, who often would come to the religious leaders for advice and help in time of need. That's not too far from the Tele-evangelists today who send out these pleading letters to these little widows on social security, suggesting that they go to the bank and borrow some money to send to them to help them out of their latest emergency. *Woe to you!*

Mat 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

- **A proselyte was one who was not yet a Jew but who was attracted to the Jewish faith.** They were interested in Judaism, because of the Jewish concept of one God. At that time, there was great pantheism; but there were people that were attracted to the idea of one God. These were the people that Paul basically ministered to when he would go around in his missionary journeys, going into the synagogue. They listened to him. They were fascinated with what Paul had to say. They were not yet proselytes. The proselyte was one who went through the rite of circumcision. One who was baptized into the Jewish faith. most of them actually became even more zealous than did the Jews many times concerning their religion. That is what Jesus is talking about here. *You travel land and sea to win one proselyte.*
- ***When he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves,*** or someone destined for hell! As a proselyte he became like a new born babe, but far from being like one in innocence and harmlessness, he became a child of hell, filled for destruction with wrath and malice. The same is true today of cults, like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, who are harder to reach with the true gospel, than those who have never heard!

Mat 23:16 *"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'*

- *We should notice that seven verses (vs. 16-22) are given to this subject of oaths and on what, by which you swear them!* They had created a double standard on which oaths had to be performed and which did not! By the temple, or by the gold on the temple! By the altar or the sacrifice on the altar!
- *Woe unto you, you blind guides, who say, Whoever swears by the temple.* This is the way they were interpreting. If you swear by the temple? Is that binding, do you have to keep the oath? They said no, if you just swear by the temple, that's a little ambiguous, it isn't a binding oath, so you can swear by the temple, but you can get out of that. *it is nothing; but Whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'*
- **In that day it was common practice to make vows or oaths to the LORD.** (*Deu 6:13*) *You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him and shall take oaths in His name.* Here we see Jesus condemning their practice of modifying the keeping of oaths, which was expected, by their clever changes to the basis on which the oath was based.
- **They were creating a loophole or an escape clause, by declaring a difference between swearing of oaths** by the temple and by the gold of the temple, or by an altar versus swearing by the sacrifice on the altar! In both cases only in the latter standard of swearing by the gold of the temple and the sacrifice on the altar required an obligation to perform it! This resulted in simply swearing by the more ambiguous standard, thereby eliminating the obligation to perform the oaths! The religious leaders were making things to be sin or not sin as it serves their purposes. They were even laying a much greater stress on that which concerns their own gain than on that which is for God's glory and the good of men's souls.
- **For oaths, such as "Corban,"** which would give them financial gain, they were binding! They would have those oaths made on the standard of the obligation to perform, without any escape clause!

Mat 23:17 ***Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?***

- **You fools, and blind,** which argue after so ridiculous a manner, which make use of such a thinly veiled fallacy and misconception. It is easy to see the foolishness in their practice. Everyone could see through it, including the blinding of the leaders with greed, to satisfy themselves, even as that comes against the people.
- **For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?** The temple was the seat of the divine majesty. It was built for Him to dwell in, and in which He took up His residence. It was dedicated to His service. In it was divine worship performed to Him. The temple was sanctified by the presence of God. The gold sanctified by the temple, being devoted to the service of it: whatever holiness it had, it had it from the temple. Therefore, the temple must be greater than the gold. It so foolish of them, to make oaths by the gold of the temple, and gifts dedicated to its service more binding and sacred than such as were by the temple itself.

Mat 23:18 *And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.'*

- **If you swear by the altar,** they said that is a little ambiguous. You don't have to keep that vow! You can break that. It's not a binding oath. But if you swear by the sacrifice that is on the altar, oh man, you've had it! You have to keep that one! So, going down the line with all these twisted and wrong interpretations.
- **But whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it,** under the penalty of perjury, if he does not make good his oath. He is bound to perform it. It is obligatory; whatever he swore should be a gift for the altar, he was indispensably obliged to bring it; for whatever he swore by "Corban", or the gift, could never be put to any other use! Notice how conveniently they use their twisted standard for their own benefit. A parent could then be told, I'm sorry the funds to help you in your old age have been sworn to the Lord by the gold on the temple, or by the sacrifice on the altar! That oath must be performed!

Mat 23:19 ***Fools and blind! Jesus repeating this for emphasis.*** This a clear case, that the altar sanctifies the gift, and not the gift the altar. Our Lord's question is, which is the greater? Anyone having the least share of common sense will easily see, that the altar must be the greater, indicating that these scribes and Pharisees must be wretchedly deceiving to give out, that an oath made by the altar was not binding, when one that was made by the gift.

Mat 23:20 ***Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it.***

Mat 23:21 ***He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.***

Mat 23:22 ***And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.***

- **Therefore he who swears by the altar.** Not that Christ allowed of swearing by the altar, or by the temple, or by heaven, or by any creature, animate or inanimate; for such swearing is elsewhere disapproved of by Him, and forbidden. But, if a person did swear by the altar, he ought to know, and consider that he not only swears by it, but by all the gifts, and offerings that are brought, and laid upon it,

- **In King Solomon's dedication of the temple, (1Ki 8:13)** *I have surely built You an exalted house, And a place for You to dwell in forever.*" We see it was for Him to dwell in. It was for Him, whom it was built, to whom it was dedicated; where He was worshipped, and where He vouchsafed to reside; taking up His dwelling between the cherubim upon the mercy seat, in the most holy place; from where He communed with men. He only, could be the proper witness of the truth, or falsehood, of what was sworn. Therefore, an oath, by the temple, ought to be looked upon as if made by God Himself, to be sacred and binding. You're swearing by God!
- **God Himself sits on the throne!** Therefore, swearing by anything that has any relation to God, is implicitly swearing by Him! It ought to be considered as binding, as if He was expressed in it; since an appeal cannot be made to lifeless things, nor indeed to any creature, but only to God, who searches our hearts and our minds.

Mat 23:23 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*

- **Now He speaks of giving their tithes.** They were so scrupulous in their tithing. One tenth of your crops was a tithe unto the Lord. You would bring in a tenth of your wheat, a tenth of your fruit, you would tithe it to the Lord. These fellows had their little spice gardens in the window boxes in the kitchen. They would tear off the mint leaves, nine for me, one for the Lord. They would count the little seeds of the spices; nine for me and one for the Lord. They were carefully tithing of their spices, measuring them out, tithing. Yet, they were cheating. They were unscrupulous in their dealings with others. They were unmerciful! Jesus said, You're emphasizing the wrong things. You ought to tithe, yes. But don't leave out being merciful, being fair, being honest, being true! What an exhortation for us.

Mat 23:24 *Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow (gulp down) a camel!*

- **When they would drink their wine, they would pour it through a cloth** because little gnats come, and they land on the cup, some getting caught and drowning in the wine. They would always strain out any little gnats, thinking it was unclean insect. But Jesus said, You strain out these little gnats, but you swallow, gulp down, camels. You are very exacting on stupid little things and then you just ignore the more important things of justice, mercy and all, which you just ignore! So, He gets after them.

Mat 23:25 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.*

- **This fifth woe pictures the Pharisees with their emphasis on the externals.** This is a picture of the average church today that is so busy making the outside of the cup and dish clean. They go through all the ceremonies. They want to have the best equipment. They talk nicely and piously on the outside, but inside they do not deal with sin. In many cases, they do not even like the word sin. But all of the external ceremonies cannot clean up their inner corruption. The Pharisees substituted ritual for reality, formality for faith, and liturgy, their religious practices, for God.

Mat 23:26 *Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

- **What's inside, Jesus said, is really more important than what is outside!** If it is clean on the inside, then it will work its way out. Get your heart right before God and your life will become right before God. Outward or external religion just will not do. God is interested in what's going on in your heart. Get your heart clean! Clean up within! The outside will follow. We are not to misunderstand Him. He is not saying that the outside should not be clean. But you give a wrong impression when the inside is dirty and the outside is not. The place to start is on the inside!

Mat 23:27 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.*

- **Under the law, if you would touch a dead body** or anything that was touched by a dead body, ceremonially you would be unclean and not be able to enter into the temple to worship until you went through the rites of purification. When the pilgrims were making their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in order to worship at the feast, if they would happen to touch one of these tombs on the way to Jerusalem, they get wiped out. You're unclean, you can't enter in and worship God. In order to make the tombs more visible, they would go out and whitewash the tombs, painting all of these tombs white, so you wouldn't accidentally lean against one, causing you to not be able to go into worship. These whitewashed tombs were beautiful on the outside, but inside of them there were decaying bodies and bones. Jesus said, that's the way with you, making yourself to look so beautiful, so spiritual, so nice, on the outside, but inside there's just putrefaction, uncleanness!

- **To me this is a most frightening figure of speech which our Lord used.** Both the cup and dish and the whitewashed tombs, all clean on the outside and dirty on the inside, picture the average church in our day. Too often this pictures the average churchgoer, all beautiful on the outside, but on the inside they are dead in trespasses and sins. They have a form of godliness, but they deny the power of it to make them new creations in Christ.

Mat 23:28 *Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

- **Oh, how He is denouncing the religious leaders, as they should be!** Their outward show and appearance of righteousness was only "unto men", not unto God. (**Rev 2:23b**) *I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.* They did not appear so to Him, who searches the mind and the heart, and knows what is in man, including their secret wickedness. Though they imposed upon, and deceived men, they could not deceive God; nor was their iniquity hid from Christ.
- **Inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness,** which was evident from their ambition and vain glory, which included their desiring the uppermost rooms at feasts; the chief places in the synagogue; greetings in the markets; titles of honor and splendor; their greediness; cruel oppression of the widows and fatherless, under a pretense of long prayers; neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, and practising extortion and excess. They were doing all these things, but we see here what Jesus thinks of these practices!

Mat 23:29 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,*

Mat 23:30 *and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'*

Mat 23:31 *"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.*

- **They put all kinds of adornment or ornamentation on them.** We are doing the same thing in our day. Great men of God, preachers, evangelists, missionaries, were denounced and ridiculed by their generations, but they are honored today. That was true of Spurgeon, Moody, Torrey, and many others. Our Lord surely did know human nature. It has not changed. "You build the tombs to commemorate the prophets after they are gone, and you adorn the monuments or graves of the righteous!"
- **What a ridiculous claim!** Notice that they are admitting that their "wonderful precious fathers", were guilty of rejecting and killing the prophets God had sent. Also, they are making this claim of self-righteousness when they were already plotting the murder of the Messiah. In just a few days hence, they will put Him on the cross!

Mat 23:32 *Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt.*

- **There were bounds and limits set how far they should proceed,** and no further; as yet they had not reached the end of their iniquity. Even though their fathers had gone great lengths in sin, their iniquity was not yet full, as was said of the Amorites, (**Gen 15:16**) *But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*" These their sons were to fill it up! They had shed the blood of many of the prophets, in fact there were none of them, whom they had not persecuted and abused, in one shape or another. But now, their children were about to fill the measure brimful, by crucifying the very Son of God, which they were at this time meditating and contriving! This, plus persecuting and slaying His apostles, would bring upon them the vengeance of God, until His measure is filled up."

Mat 23:33 *Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?*

- **Can you imagine stronger language than that?** By calling them a brood of vipers, He means that they are the offspring of snakes! This is devastating to that damnable doctrine of the universal brotherhood of man and the universal Fatherhood of God. If you have rejected Jesus Christ, the Father does not claim you. You are not His! The only way to become a child of God is to receive Christ. (**Joh 1:12**) *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:*
- **The Lord is speaking in harsh terms in these verses!** He is serving a rebuke, which is a little too strong for a great many of the liberal-minded people of this present hour. Jesus Christ was not just a love child. He came to earth to die for your sins because He loved you! But if you reject Him, He becomes your Judge.

Mat 23:34 *Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,*

- **Notice the tenses here.** Not only in the past have the prophets, wise men and scribes been persecuted, scourged, killed and crucified, but it also includes that it will continue and occur in the future!
- **As you read the book of Acts, you find out that that is exactly what happened** to the apostles. As they went out to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, they were killed. They were crucified. They were scourged in the synagogues. They were persecuted from city to city. Read Paul's description of the things that he endured at the hands of the Jews.

Mat 23:35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel (first person killed in the bible) to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah (Jehoiada and Berechiah have the very same meaning, the praise or blessing of Jehovah), whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Mat 23:36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

- **From Abel, (Gen 4:10-11)** And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. [11] So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand **to the blood of Zechariah refers to the first and last OT martyrs**, respectively.
- **Zechariah, son of Berechiah. (Zec 1:1, 4)** In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, [4] "Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds." ' But they did not hear nor heed Me," says the LORD. The OT does not record how this Zechariah died.
- **However, (2Ch 24:20-21)** Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God: 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He also has forsaken you.' [21] So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. This records the death of another Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. He was stoned in the court of the temple, exactly as Jesus describes here. There is some confusion in the father's names of the two Zechariahs. Some interpreters have suggested that the Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24 was actually a descendant grandson of Jehoiada and that his father's name was also Berechiah.
- **There is no difficulty if we simply take Jesus' words at face value, accepting His infallible testimony** that Zechariah the prophet was martyred between the temple and the altar in a way very similar to how the earlier Zechariah was killed. The point is that throughout their history, they had persecuted and killed the prophets that God had sent to them, incurring God's wrath on the shedding of innocent blood!
- **All these things will come upon this generation.** All the things which Christ had foretold should come to pass in the present age. You say, we're better than our fathers, we wouldn't do that. Jesus said, all the guilt of the whole thing is going to be on you.
- **Jesus said, I say unto you, all of these things, the guilt of all of these is going to come on this generation.** Why? As Stephen, when he was defending himself before the council, talked about all of the prophets that God had sent to them. He said, which of the prophets of God did you not persecute or kill? Just name me one prophet that you accepted. Name one that you didn't imprison, persecute or kill!
- **Stephen, then said, But you're worse than all of your fathers because you killed the One** they were all prophesying of, even Jesus Christ. (Act 7:52-53) *Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, [53] who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."* Upon this generation, the guilt of all of the righteous blood that has been shed by the wicked is going to come, **because they're the generation that is going to kill the Son of God!** In a couple of days, they do exactly that!
- **Peter also said on the Day of Pentecost, (Act 2:36)** "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ!"
- **This generation experienced the utter destruction of Jerusalem** and the burning of the temple in A.D. 70. Jesus' lament over Jerusalem and His removal of the blessing of God from the temple, was the judgment He is speaking about.

Lament over Jerusalem

Mat 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (great emotion in this repeating, like "Absalom, Absalom") **the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!**

- **Jesus ends this heated exchange!** This is His final discourse, His last public address, His final leaving of

the temple with these words! It's hard for us to know the depth of that statement!

- **He is predicting the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. What does He do next?** The One who made this strong denunciation will now weep over Jerusalem!
- **As wicked as they were, He still loved them!** He desired to do good for them; to protect them, as a mother hen thrusts out her feathers and the little chicks run in underneath and hide from danger. Even as they run underneath the wings and feel the warmth during the night, the closeness of the mother hen. Jesus said I would have gathered you. I would have protected you. I wanted that closeness with you. But you would not! ***But you were not willing!*** Man's failure to receive God's love, God's provision, always leads to disaster.

Mat 23:38 *See! Your house is left to you desolate;*

- **You have no more defense!** I'm not going to stand up for you any longer. You have forsaken God! God is going to forsake you! Your house, this house, this temple is going to be left desolate. The city of Jerusalem is going to be left desolate. How true, within forty years, 70 A.D., over one million Jews in Jerusalem were slain when the Roman troops came in and devastated the city!

Mat 23:39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'BLESSED is HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' " (Zec 12:9-10) *It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. [10] "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*

- **Jesus is going to die. But, He will rise again! He will ascend into heaven! He will wait** until the Jews begin to pray, Oh God, send our Messiah! **BLESSED is HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!** This is the last thing He says to the temple court!
- **We read in the book of Hebrews (Heb 2:8) YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.** "For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. God has put all things in subjection unto Jesus, but we do not yet see all things in subjection. But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor. He is sitting there, expecting, waiting, until God had made His enemies His footstool.
- **Help us, Lord, as we look at our world, in light of what You have told us in Your word!** Help us to come into that awareness, consciousness that Your second coming is at hand! The coming of the Lord draws near! Let our hearts be prepared for Your soon, second coming!
- **Are we ready? Is Israel ready?**

CLOSING SONG:

Mat 23:39 *for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'BLESSED is HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'* " (Psa 118:26a) *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! (Zec 12:10) "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*

BARUCH HABA (*Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the LORD*) - Paul Wilbur (4:06)

*Baruch haba b'shem Adonai Blessed is He who comes Baruch haba b'shem Adonai
Who comes in the name of the Lord Now arise, oh Lord Come to your resting place
You and the ark of your might Then we will rejoice As we're clothed with your righteousness
And celebrate our love (2X)*

*Baruch haba b'shem Adonai Blessed is He who comes Baruch haba b'shem Adonai
Who comes in the name of the Lord (2X)*

Who comes in the name of the Lord Come, come, come!

CLOSING PRAYER:

Assignment for next week: **Read Matthew Chapter 24, that great prophecy chapter of the end times!**