

Episode #910 Matthew 23 Part 5-Lament Over Jerusalem

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord was expressing His final, definitive condemnation of the wicked scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem. He sends them prophets, wise men, and scribes, and they will kill and crucify some and scourge and chase out others. All the righteous blood shed on the land will come on them because of this, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah. We know who Abel is, but who is this Zechariah?

III. Final Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees. Matthew 23:33-36.

A. Verse 35. The Greeks cannot end a word with an “h,” so they would say Zecharias. This name means “Remembered of Jehovah.” The Hebrew Barachiah means “Jehovah Blesses” or speaks well of. Who is this?

1. Some have mistakenly associated this with Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who was killed by the treacherous King Joash of Judah. Yet this man’s father was not Barachiah. This cannot be the “Zechariah the son of Baruch” that Josephus said died this way, for that was at least a quarter century after this. The prophet Zechariah, who wrote the book of Zechariah, is said to be the “son of Berechiah.” This may reveal how he died, though we have no other record of it. Yet from the Lord’s actual words here it seems He is speaking of something quite recent, and of which these men had taken a part. Otherwise, His accusation of them would lose much of its punch. If this was a man they actually killed, His point that they are just like their persecuting fathers is supported. Thus this was someone they knew and had murdered, though we do not know him.

2. “Temple” here is *naos*, between the holy place and the altar.

B. Verse 36. “Assuredly” is *amen*. “Generation” is the Greek *genea*, meaning that generation of wicked religious leaders, and not all people of that age living at that time. They were “generated” by picking up the hypocritical and God-despising attitudes of their fathers.

IV. The Lament Over Jerusalem. Matthew 23:37-39.

A. Verse 37. The scribes and Pharisees He has been condemning are particularly these Jerusalem scribes and Pharisees, heads of government, or the “Jerusalem mafia.” All too often it was the rulers of Jerusalem who were responsible for killing prophets. “Those who are sent” is *apostello*, sent with authority or commissioned. These people He refers to God had commissioned as His spokesmen to them, but they had killed them. “I wanted” is the Greek *thelo*, I willed or desired to. “Gather together” is *episyngo* or assembled, as in a synagogue. “You were not willing” is *ouk ethelesate*, from *thelo*, so they did not will or wish or desire it. The tender care God wanted to give His people was rejected by their stubborn and wicked hearts. The same is true of many today. Note that God represents Himself as the hen with her chicks. God is the ultimate of both the masculine and feminine characteristics.

B. Verse 38. “Desolate” is or empty, uninhabited. The word is often translated “wilderness.” The reference, of course, is to the soon-coming (within forty years) destruction of Jerusalem. This is a very important passage in view of the fact that it

speaks of the earthly house that was going to pieces and just about to pass out of existence at the time Paul wrote II Corinthians 5. The time would come when Jerusalem as a city would die by inches and the temple would be completely destroyed, and nothing would be left but what today is called the wailing wall, and that would remain because it was underground. After the destruction the Roman General Titus was, we are told by tradition, able to drive a plow over the smoking ruins of that city and not have to turn his chariot to avoid the rubble it was so leveled to the ground.

- C. Verse 39. “Not” is the Greek *ou me*, you shall by no means see Me. “Blessed” is *eulogeo*, spoken well of. This is quoted from Psalm 118:26, and is the same thing that the crowds said as He was coming into Jerusalem. Yet it was the crowds coming to the feast, not the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who said this. The time will come in the premillennial kingdom when Jerusalem will say this as well. Only then will they see Him again.
- D. Thus ends this great confrontation with the religious leaders. He silenced them and took them to task. They had been shown for what they were, yet their hearts were so wicked that this affected them not at all. All they did was go out and try to figure out how to murder Him. Yet the Lord was in many ways driving them toward that: these rebellious men would do what such men must do, and He must die at their hands.

V. Conclusion: The wicked religious leaders had probably actually put to death someone named Zechariah between the temple and the altar. The blood shed on the land would all come on the heads of that generation of wicked leaders. Then, the Lord lamented over Jerusalem. God did not wish to bring calamity on her, but to save her, and yet they would not have Him! Their house will be left desolate, and they would not see Him again until their hearts are changed to welcome Him. We look forward to that day, and what a day it will be!