

BIBLE READING DAY 36, SUNDAY: APRIL 3

Jesus Denounces Sin

Matthew 23:1–39, 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; Luke 13:34-38, Luke 21:5-6)

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’s chair; therefore, do the things they tell you to do. But do not do as they do; for they say what men should do, but do not practice what they preach. They bind heavy burdens hard to bear and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves will not lift a finger to move them. They do all their works only to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and their tassels long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the front seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the marketplaces, and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’

“But as for you, my disciples, you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have but one teacher, and all of you are brothers. And do not call any man on earth ‘Father,’ for you have but one Father, who is in heaven. And you are not to be called ‘masters,’ for you have but one master, the Messiah. He who is greatest among you will be your servant, but whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites! For you shut the door of the kingdom of heaven against men. You do not enter yourselves, nor do you allow those who would enter to go in.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites! For you gobble up the houses of widows and, to cover up your wickedness, pray great long prayers in public. Therefore, you will receive even more condemnation.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites! For you travel all over the sea and the land to win a single convert, and after he is converted, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If a man swears by the temple, it is nothing; but if a man swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools! Which is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold? You also say, ‘If a man swears by the altar, it is nothing; but if a man swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind men! Which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? He who swears by the altar, swears by the altar and everything on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by the temple and by him who dwells in it. He who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by the one who sits on it.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites! You tithe mint, dill, and cumin, but you ignore the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and honesty. Certainly, you ought to tithe your produce, but that does not excuse you from the more important matters. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites! You carefully clean the outside of the cup and the dish and leave them full of plunder and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the dish, so that the outside may truly be clean.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs which are beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all sorts of corruption. So, it is with you; outwardly you appear to men to be righteous, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees—hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ Thus, you testify against yourselves that you are the sons

of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead and finish what your fathers began. You serpents, you sons of vipers! How will you escape condemnation to hell? Therefore, behold, I will send you prophets and wise men and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that all the righteous blood shed on earth may be on your hands, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. I tell you truly, judgment for all these things will fall on this generation.”

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! —killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings! But you refused. Behold, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’

Then Jesus went out, and as he was departing from the temple, his disciples came to him and began to call his attention to the buildings of the temple.

“You see all these buildings, do you not?” said Jesus. “I tell you truly, there will not be left here one stone upon another—not one stone that is not thrown down.”

A comparison of the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 (see Day 11) and the Woes of Matthew 23 reveals contrasting thoughts. The word “Blessed” can be translated as “*Happy are those...*” and the word “Woe” can be translated as “*What sorrow awaits...*” Whether in an ornate chapel or dark dungeon, we can worship God in sincerity. --Tim McKeown

THE CONTRASTS OF A BLESSED RELATIONSHIP AND BLASPHEMOUS RELIGION

1. **Matthew 5:3 to Matthew 23:13**--*The Blessed admit their shortcomings and are admitted into heaven; but Woe to those who aren't going to heaven and keep others out.*
2. **Matthew 5:4 to Matthew 23:14**--*The Happy receive comfort when they mourn; but Sorrow awaits those who cause others to mourn.*
3. **Matthew 5:5 to Matthew 23:15**--*The Blessed are humble and inherit the earth; but Woe to those who travel the earth to convert others to hell.*
4. **Matthew 5:6 to Matthew 23:16-22**--*The Happy desire righteousness and are satisfied; but Sorrow awaits those who are never filled by the world's goods, nor regard a righteous God and His sanctified representations.*
5. **Matthew 5:7 to Matthew 23:23-24**--*The Blessed give and receive mercy; but what Sorrow awaits those who neglect mercy, justice, and faith, and are merciless on lesser matters.*
6. **Matthew 5:8 to Matthew 23:25-26**--*The Blessed are those who are inwardly pure and shall see God; but Woe to those who are inwardly wicked, for they are blind and can't see anything.*
7. **Matthew 5:9 to Matthew 23:27-28**--*The Happy help others make peace with God and others will call them God's children; but what Sorrow awaits those who appear like God's children, but are inwardly dead and unclean, filled with hypocrisy and not at peace.*
8. **Matthew 5:10-12 to Matthew 23:29-36**--*An extended list of Blessedness for those who are persecuted for God, resulting in entering the kingdom of heaven; but an extended list of Woes awaits those who persecute others standing for God, resulting in their condemnation of hell.*

Approximate Timeline of Jesus's Public Ministry

EARLY LIFE	EARLY MINISTRY	FIRST PASS-OVER	SUMMER	FIRST BOOTHS	WINTER	SECOND PASS-OVER	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER	FINAL PASS-OVER
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DEVOTIONAL DAY 36 (SUNDAY APRIL 3)

“You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink!”

Based on Matthew 23:1–39, 24:1-2; Mark 13:1-2; Luke 13:34-38, 21:5-6

Even when the owner knows the horse needs water, the horse must be willing to drink. If not, he will suffer the results of thirst.

Jesus, in talking with the religious Jews, knew they had a great need. He also knew that they refused to accept His provision for their need. Why did they respond in that way? It was because of their unbelief. They didn’t lack Knowledge; they studied and taught their view of scripture carefully. They didn’t lack religious zeal; they were careful to tithe from the herbs in their garden! They didn’t lack a scriptural authority; Jesus said they sat in Moses’s seat. But they lacked faith to believe in the one who was the source of life.

Earlier Jesus’s disciples had shown Him the impressive temple that Herod had beautified. Jesus had responded with the prediction that not one stone of it would be left standing on another. In 70 AD Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and literally fulfilled Jesus words. This was the dire end of the religious Jews unwillingness to believe in the messiah. But the real tragedy went beyond the physical destruction. Jesus had said “...I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” The real tragedy was that they would have no more opportunity to SEE Jesus!

Just think of the importance of what we see. It’s been said that the longer a married couple are together, the more they begin to look like one another. In his letter of I John 3:2 the apostle is lead to write “it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” It seems from this that we take on the likeness of what we are able to see! Paul puts it like this in 2 Cor. 3:18 “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” What are you looking at?

We tend to be so myopic! When difficulties come and we can’t see a way out of them, where do we look? It’s easy to panic, throw up our hands, and walk off the stage of fellowship with God.

Could believers today hear the Lord saying “How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” The song says “Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.”

And what puts us in this state of mind? Unbelief! We need to examine our beliefs, our preconceived ideas, our reliance on self, and recognize that without Him, we can do nothing! But when we take the step of trust, we find that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us!

Lord, please deliver me from my “do it myself” attitude. I need to trust You more. I believe, help my unbelief!

--By Bill Woughter

WRITE DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS IN RESPONSE TO WHAT YOU HAVE READ:

WHAT DID GOD SAY TO ME?

PRAYER: WHAT DID I SAY TO GOD?

ACTS OF PRAYER: ADORATION, CONFESSION, THANKSGIVING, SUPPLICATION (How God Can Supply Needs

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