

## Jesus Warned the Pharisees of Seven Woes – Part 2

In our last topic, we saw that we want help our physical and spiritual children understand the warnings that Jesus gave to the scribes and Pharisees because of their unbelief and rejection. In this topic, we will see that Jesus continued to warn the scribes and Pharisees about the consequences of unbelief and rejection.

Jesus spoke the final “woes” to the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew 23:27-30 says, ““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. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 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.””” Here, we see that these woes again reminded the scribes and Pharisees that they were hypocrites.

We see that Jesus described the Pharisees by saying that they were like “whitewashed tombs”. Numbers 19:16 says, ““Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.”” In this verse, we see that God told Israel that anyone who touched a grave would be unclean for seven days. The people usually tried to avoid touching graves in order to avoid being unclean. Numbers 19:17-19 told what such a person had to do to become clean again. Those verses say, ““And for an unclean *person* they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. A clean person shall take hyssop and dip *it* in the water, sprinkle *it* on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave. The clean *person* shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean.”” In order to prevent accidentally touching a grave and becoming unclean, the people would paint the graves with whitewash.

Jesus used those “whitewashed tombs” to describe the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees. They would do everything possible to make the graves and themselves look beautiful on the outside. Jesus said that the whitewashed graves were beautiful on the outside, but on the inside they were full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. In the same way, the scribes and Pharisees tried to appear righteous on the outside. However, in their hearts, they were full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. The final “woe” was closely related. Jesus said that the scribes and Pharisees had built beautiful tombs for the Old Testament prophets. They made beautiful monuments for the righteous. Many of these prophets and righteous people had been killed by their ancestors because their fathers did not want to repent of their sins and the prophets were warning them about judgment for those sins. The scribes and Pharisees said that they built these beautiful tombs and monuments to show that they were not like their fathers. They said that they certainly would not

have killed the prophets if they would have been alive.

Jesus went on to describe what the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees were really like. Matthew 23:31-36 says, “Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ *guilt*. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? 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, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.” Jesus said that the fancy whitewashed tombs and monuments were actually witnesses of the fact that the scribes and Pharisees were the descendants of the men who murdered the prophets.

John 11:47 and 53 show what was actually going on in the hearts of these very men. Verse 47 says, “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, “What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.” Then, verse 53 adds, “Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.” These statements and this plot, in the book of John, were spoken and planned right after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead several weeks earlier. These verses show that these very men were just as guilty as their fathers, because they were, at that very moment, planning the death of Jesus. They asked Pilate to crucify Jesus just a few days later. That is why Jesus went on to describe what these men were like and what their judgment would be. Jesus said that they were like snakes and a generation of poisonous vipers. Just as Satan had spoken through the snake to deceive Eve, these men were carrying out the work of Satan, by their plot to put Jesus to death. They would not escape but would experience the same future judgment as Satan.

Jesus then went on to prophesy what the scribes and Pharisees would do to the disciples that Jesus would send to them in the coming years. Jesus used three words to describe the various kinds of ministry that His followers would have. Some would be “prophets”. This would include the New Testament writers, as well as some who spoke before the New Testament was complete. 2 Peter 1:19-21 says, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” The word translated “wise” speaks of wise or skilled teachers. The word “scribes” spoke of those who could both make copies of the Scriptures and also answer difficult questions from the Word of God. These verses show how Jesus developed His followers into godly leaders.

Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees of the Jews would kill, would crucify, would scourge and would persecute His followers from city to city. The New Testament certainly records some of this persecution of the followers of Christ. Jesus said this would bring judgment on these men and they would be held accountable for their own evil deeds, as well as those who killed throughout the Old Testament. Abel was the first to be killed. Genesis 4:8-9 says, “Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel

his brother and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where *is* Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?’” Zechariah 1:1 says, “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...” Here, we see that Zechariah was the son of Berechiah and was the last of the Old Testament prophets to be killed. Jesus said that judgment for the blood of all of these men would come on that generation because of what they would do to His followers. Jerusalem was completely destroyed only forty years later.

In Matthew 23:37-39, we read, “‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 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! See! Your house is left to you desolate; 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!’”” Even though Jesus had just warned the scribes and Pharisees about their coming judgment, we see the great love that Jesus had for the people of Jerusalem who would experience that judgment. That love included the scribes and Pharisees, as well as the rest of the people of the city. Jesus made it clear why that judgment would come. The people of Jerusalem had killed many Old Testament prophets. They had stoned to death some of those who God sent to warn them. Jesus still loved the people, even though He saw their great sin and rebellion. That is why Jesus expressed His great sorrow here.

Jesus said that many times He wanted to gather the people of Jerusalem together. He said His concern was like that of a mother chicken who would gather her chicks under her wings to protect the chicks from death. Many mother chickens have died in an attempt to protect their young chicks from wild birds, wild animals or dangers from severe storms or other things that would have destroyed them. Jesus then explained the reason why Jerusalem would be destroyed. Jesus said that the people were not willing to let Jesus show His mercy because of their evil hearts. In contrast, the king of Nineveh said, in Jonah 3:9-10, “‘Who can tell *if* God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?’ Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” The people of Nineveh listened to the Word of God spoken through Jonah and repented. The religious leaders refused to listen to Jesus and, in fact, condemned Him to death that very week. Jesus said those Jews would see Him no more.

Jesus said that the temple would be left desolate. It was totally destroyed just forty years later. At the same time, Jesus gave a message of hope for those who will repent and turn to Jesus in the future. Jesus said this destruction would last until the people said, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” Romans 11:26-27 gives us a wonderful promise, for the Jews, that will be fulfilled in the future. Those verses say, “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the great love that God will show to the Jews in the future. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this promise.