

Jesus' Last Words to Israel, Part 1

Scripture: Matthew 23:34-36

Code: 2364

Open your Bible with me to Matthew Chapter 23. And this morning we're going to continue in our look at this very, very provocative chapter, very important chapter. In Matthew 23, we are examining a sad and pathetic scene in Scripture. In fact, one of the very saddest of all scenes. Because it is the pronouncement of doom on the nation of Israel. They stand in imminent judgment. They are condemned in this chapter because they have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. They have rejected in rejecting Him, God Himself and His word.

And the ones who led the nation in their rejection were false spiritual leaders called scribes and Pharisees. And so this chapter comes forth predominantly as a vengeful attack and cursing of the false spiritual leaders of Israel. For centuries, the Jews had awaited for the arrival of their Messiah. The hope and the heart of the Jew was that the day would come when the Messiah would arrive and establish His kingdom and blessedness for every Jew would come with that kingdom.

And as the centuries went on every Jewish mother would have wished herself to be the mother of that Messiah. Every Jewish man would have wished himself to rise in that kingdom of Messiah to a place of prominence and honor and service. It was the great and abiding hope and anticipation in the heart of every Jew. And yet when the Messiah came instead of believing, instead of receiving, they rejected, they hated, they despised Him, and ultimately they had Him executed.

And along with Him they sought to kill all those who represented Him. It is a sad and tragic twist in the history of Israel called out by God's love, called out by God's grace given promises and covenants and hope and yet when all of that is to come to fruition and the arrival of the Messiah, they have gone so far the other direction that rather than believe they execute their own Messiah. And so this Chapter pronounces judgment. This is the climax of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to Israel. He has come to them. He has preached to them. He has articulated the gospel to them. He has given the opportunity to repent and to believe in Him and they have not.

In fact, their rejection now is final. There's really little more to be said and this is a confirmation of the fact that Israel has finally rejected Jesus Christ. Now that rejection is led by the scribes and the Pharisees. The false spiritual leaders who had captured the hearts and minds of the people and turned them away from Jesus Christ. It is also the last sermon Jesus ever preached publicly. It is His final public statement. And it is not a warm inviting and loving statement. It is just the opposite. It is a statement of damnation and cursing against these false spiritual leaders who have lead the people

astray.

Now you'll remember that the first 12 verses are a warning to the people to stay away from these leaders. There is some hope in that, because when Jesus is crucified and rises from the dead and ascends back into heaven, there will be preachers of the gospel who will go through Jerusalem and the land of Israel. The message of salvation will still be preached and if the people will listen to those preachers and not the scribes and the Pharisees, there is still hope for individuals, if not, for the whole nation.

In other words, while this is a damnation of the nation as it were, there is still hope for individual Jews if they will turn their ears away from these false spiritual leaders and listen to the true apostles of the Messiah. So the first 12 verses constitute a warning that the people should not listen to the false spiritual leaders. Then beginning in verse 13 and running through verse 33, the warning turns to a cursing. And Jesus, who has been talking to the great mob gathered in the temple court at the Passover on Wednesday of passion week, He has been talking to this great crowd and warning them, now turns to the Pharisees and the scribes who are standing with the crowd and face to face confronts them with a series of seven curses called woes.

This is a very bold, very confrontive, very dramatic act. Jesus confronts them and curses them in front of the whole crowd. Pulls no punches, holds back nothing. We've looked at that condemnation. We've gone through those seven woes, seven curses. Let me just remind you of the elements of our Lord's curse. First He cursed the false spiritual leaders for exclusion, keeping people out of heaven. Secondly, He cursed them for perversion. Turning people in their influence into children of hell. Then He cursed them for subversion. That is undermining truth and substituting for it a system of lies. Then He cursed them for inversion. That is the reversing of all right moral perspectives. Putting justice and mercy and faith low on the list and ritual high on the list. Inverting the divine order.

Then He cursed them for extortion. For cleaning the outside of their act, but stealing and robbing from the people at every chance they had. Then He cursed them for deception. Appearing to be models of virtue, but actually being contaminating graves where people were defiled as if they touched the grave of a dead person. And finally he cursed them for pretension. Pretending to be pious and holy and better than all of those who preceded them when, in fact, they weren't better at all. They were the same and if anything, they were worse.

So these self-righteous, legalistic, hypocritical haters of the righteous thirsted not for righteousness, but for the blood of the righteous and Jesus condemns them. And the sad fact is that they were the spiritual leaders of Israel whom the people followed and had great guilt for having led those people astray. Now in climaxing this section to these false leaders our Lord says in verse 32, "fill up then the measure of your fathers." Now, I want to go a little more into detail as to what this means. Fill up then, the measure of your fathers. Fill up is a term used often in Scripture in connection with sin and

judgment and wrath.

Very frequently in the Scripture the image of a cup being filled to the brim is used in connection with God's divine wrath. The book of Revelation talks about the cup of God's wrath or the cup of His fury. Isaiah talked about it. Jeremiah talked about it. Hosea talks about it. It is even indicated in Matthew later on when Jesus, in the garden, says "let this cup pass from me," and sees it as the cup of divine judgment, the cup of fury. The picture is that judgment and wrath and sin are like that which fills up a cup. Sometimes in Scripture it is the cup of sin. Sometimes it's the cup of wrath. Sometimes it's the cup of judgment. And we shouldn't be distressed by that because they're all related. Sin brings the wrath of God, which brings His divine judgment. So you fill up a cup of sin, you could be said to be filling up a cup of wrath. You fill up a cup of wrath. You could be said to be filling up a cup of judgment.

It's as if God allows only so much and then the cup is filled up and judgment strikes. God has reached His limit. Sin has reached its limit and the cup is poured out, as it were, in judgment. And so our Lord, in a command, amazingly says to them fill it up, finish it off, do the rest of the evil that has to be done. It's amazing to think that the Lord Jesus Christ as pure and holy as He is as God could command anyone to do evil. But He does, in effect, say fill it up. It is a similar thing to the fact that He said to Judas in John 13:27, "What thou doest, do," what, "quickly." Go do it. Go do it.

It isn't that Jesus desired that evil be done. It is only that since evil was to be done Jesus said get it over with. Get it over with. And that is the essence of what He's saying when He commands them to fill it up. Get it over with. Finish it off. You are going to top off the accumulated cup of sin of the nation Israel, of the people whom God revealed His truth to. You're going to fill it up. Get it over with. Get it done. That judgment may come. Now notice what He calls this cup. He calls it the measure of your fathers; the measure of your fathers.

Fill it up, the same cup your fathers were filling. It's as if the history of Israel has been a history of filling up a cup with sin. Filling up a cup of sin is filling up a cup of wrath is filling up a cup of inevitable judgment, and they've been doing that. Successive generations of the Jewish nation, successive generations of Israel have been sinning and sinning and sinning and sinning and sinning and just filling and filling and filling the cup until finally judgment comes.

It's accumulative thing that He speaks of. The wickedness of each succeeding generation contributes them to the final result. And the Lord is saying the limit of Israel's evil is almost reached. God's tolerance has its limits. You have it back in Genesis where God says in Chapter 6, "my Spirit will not always strive with men." And what does He do? He destroys the whole world in a flood leaving only eight souls. And what God was saying is it's full. The cup of man's wickedness is filled up. That's it. There's no more room for anything else. And He comes in judgment.

You have in the book of Revelation. In the great terrors of the tribulation and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in final judgment when He destroys the wicked of all the earth and the final judgment is held and souls are sent into hell forever, that too is called the filling up of the cup of wrath. In other words, God takes no more sin in the cup. That's it. And there's a limit to what God will allow. There is only so much wickedness before judgment comes. And that is true in this case in the nation Israel.

And so He says to these scribes and Pharisees finish off the cup that judgment may come. They are working by the way with the same murderous sins of their fathers. Back in verse 30, they said if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. We wouldn't have killed the prophets like our fathers did. We wouldn't have slaughtered the righteous like our fathers did. And Jesus says, "wherefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are the sons of them who killed the prophets." Why? Because He looked into their hearts and they were plotting His death.

They would have given anything to kill Him on the spot. And He says to them, who are you kidding, you are the sons of your fathers who killed the prophets for you yourself would kill this prophet who is the supreme of all prophets, the Messiah. You're not fooling anybody. You may claim that you're better than your fathers, but you're not. You are doing nothing more than filling up the same cup full of murderous sins which your fathers filled up. Terrible climax to the history of Israel. It's not only the history of Israel. It sweeps even further back than that. Ever since there have been righteous men, there have been killers of righteous men. Righteous men act as a rebuke to any society. And when that society is given the latitude to do it, it will kill righteous men. Some of you saw last night that the society of John Huss did it to him.

And they will always do it, because a righteous man is a rebuke to a society and if that society has latitude for the execution of righteous men, that society will do it unless that society has turned to God. And so He says you are simply filling up what began a long time ago with your fathers. He characterizes them in verse 33 then. He says, "you snakes," ophis, just the general word for snakes. You brute of ekidna. Very interesting word, ekidna. It means a small poisonous snake. "You snakes," He says generally. "You brute of poisonous snakes." And they are very small little snake that live down in the desert area of Israel that looked like a stick. They would be sitting somewhere still. They would look like a small twig or a broken branch or a small stick and maybe in gathering sticks for a fire, you would collect one in your hands and the next thing you knew those teeth would plunge their way into your arm or your hand they would not be able to be torn loose. Such has happened to the apostle Paul in the book of Acts. And God spared him miraculously.

This is a poisoned snake that is impossible to detect in some situations, deceitful and deadly. This is what He calls them. "You deadly poisonous snakes," but we shouldn't be surprised that He called them that because that's exactly what John the Baptist called them back in Chapter 3 of Matthew

when he said "Oh you brude of vipers, you snakes." They came out to him and he said the same thing. Here we are several years later and they're no different. The ministry of John the Baptist had no effect on them and the ministry of Jesus Christ had no positive effect on them, only hardened them all the more and they are the same poisonous, deadly, deceitful snakes they were when He first arrived.

By the way, the word ekidnah has to do with this poisonous snake, and in fact, the word became such a connotation for evil, for subtle wickedness, that ekidna eventually in classic Greek mythology became the name of a monster that was half snake and half woman. So the ekidna was known as a wicked, subtle, poisonous, deadly, deceitful creature. There was no compliment to be called an ekidna. And when Jesus called them that, everyone knew what He was saying.

So the Chapter begins with a warning, followed with a cursing. And the cursing is climaxed as He says to them fill it up. Fill the cup that your fathers started filling with their murderous acts against the righteous. You go ahead and fill it up you deceitful, deadly, poisonous snakes. And then He says in verse 33, "How can you escape the damnation of Gehenna?" Gehenna is the word that is the symbol of hell, the constantly burning trash pile and dump in the valley of Hinnom out of the city of Jerusalem, which became the identifying symbol for eternal hell. How can you escape it? And the answer is, they can't. No way.

By the way, this fits the imagery. Hell is seen as fire. And in a field in those days that was cut to stubble, the farmer would go back to that field and burn the stubble off. And also in that period of time in that place as even today as in California, they were used to brush fires. And when a brush fire would come across the land or when a farmer would burn the stubble in his field, these little snakes, these ekidna would come up out of their holes and they would swiggle as fast as they could racing ahead of the first to escape it, but they never were fast enough to escape the fire. And that's as it should be. That's what John meant when he said to them the first time they came, "you snakes scurrying, do you think you'll escape the wrath to come?" And the same thing here. "You vipers, do you think you'll escape the damnation of hell? Do you think you can outrun the fire of God?" Not a chance, not a chance.

So this is a severe condemnation. Absolutely said, absolutely tragic that this people called by God, that these leaders given responsibility to take God's holy word and God's covenant and truth and dispense it to the people instead of doing that and being blessed in time and eternity and perverted that and perverted themselves and perverted the people to the point where even holding in their hands the true word of God and the true law of God they were nothing more than snakes who deceived and poisoned the nation of people and could never themselves escape the damnation of hell.

He is not talking about criminals here. He is not talking about the worst of men in society. He's talking about their spiritual leaders. So that's how He climaxes the curses against them. Now the Chapter closes with two brief sections, really three I guess. And I want us to look at these three final points today and next time. First, we'll say eminent condemnation and the intimate, compassion, and then insured conversion. This is the climax of His sermon.

His first point was a warning to the crowd against these leaders. His second was a cursing of the leaders themselves, and now comes a word of condemnation. And the condemnation is eminent, having given all these curses and all these warnings; He says, there's a judgment coming and it's coming fast. Notice verse 34. "Wherefore," or therefore, or literally because of this, because of this, because of who you are, a brute of poisonous deceivers, hypocrites, blind fools, blind guides, sons of hell, because of who you are, because of what you've done, because you've rejected the truth of God, rejected the righteous spokesman of God, rejected even the Son of God, because of that "I," that's emphatic in the Greek, Christ is the one who is sending, "I am sending unto you." Stop there for a minute.

This is the consequence. I'm sending unto you. Because of this, because you fill up the cup of iniquity, I am sending unto you and you'd think He'd say judgment, wrath, vengeance. But look what He says, "prophets and wise men and scribes." Well, why does He say that? What is He talking about? Well, those are all Jewish terms. Those are titles that would be consistent with Jewish vocabulary; prophets, wise men, scribes. Why is He sending more messengers? Prophets would be preachers. Wise men would be teachers. Scribes would be writers. I'm sending your preachers and teachers and writers. He's saying I'm not through. You may have made a final rejection, but I am not through with you.

Now listen very carefully to this, because this is a very difficult thing to understand. But the Lord says, I am sending you these people, not so that you might have another chance to believe. But that you might have continued chances to reject so that you will pile upon yourself a greater weight of guilt which deserves a severer judgment. It's a fearful thought, but that's what He's saying. "Because when I send you these prophets and these wise men and these scribes some of them you will kill and crucify and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute them from city to city so that upon you will come all the righteous blood." I'm going to stop at that point. Do you see the point?

It's a heavy passage. And He's saying, I want you who are so guilty to be more guilty yet and to bear the full weight of your sin. And the reason He talks about prophets, wise men, and scribes is because of the unique Jewishness of Matthew's gospel and He uses Jewish terms and titles and it gives us that solidarity with the Old Testament murderers and persecutors of the righteous. But the point is simple. I'm going to send you these people and I know what you're going to do. You're not going to believe them as a nation as a whole, you leaders. You're not going to believe it. Oh there would be a

few who would, yes.

There would be some who would be converted, yes. There were 3,000 on the day of Pentecost weren't there? And many, many thousand more after that. But as a whole, you leaders and as a whole this nation will not receive them, but rather will kill them and persecute them and therefore, you will pile more guilt upon your head and be worthy of greater judgment. Listen friends, that's God talking in the person of Jesus Christ. God is a God of judgment and vengeance and we must not forget that.

The purpose of sending the preachers is not for grace, it's for judgment. And may I suggest this to you, that when you hear the message of Jesus Christ and you hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is a message unto salvation or it is a message unto judgment. And the more you hear it the more it comes to you as a message of grace and the more you reject it, the more it piles upon you the guilt of judgment. For the more you have, the more you're responsible for. To whom much is given, what? Much is required. Better off only to have heard once than to have heard a multiplicity of times and continue to reject, you just pile on greater guilt. And ultimately that's what the Lord is saying here.

Look at 2 Corinthians Chapter 2, verse 14. In 2 Corinthians 2:14, he says "Thanks be unto God." And this is a most unusual passage for which to be thankful by the way. But he says, "Thanks be unto God who always causes us to triumph in Christ and makes manifest the smell of His knowledge by us in every place." Now I want you to listen to this. Paul says I'm thankful that no matter I do, no matter where I preach, no matter what the response is, we triumph. Every time a preacher preaches the gospel he's victorious. Every time the word goes forth it accomplishes the purpose to which it was sent and listen to me, the purpose is not always salvation. The purpose sometimes is compounded guilt. Do you understand that?

The purpose sometimes is to bring the grace of salvation to the heart and God is glorified through His grace. The purpose other times is to compound guilt to bring judgment and God is equally glorified through His judgment, because God is as much a God of judgment as He is a God of grace. I don't know that we have understood that properly. And so verse 15 says, "For," here's why we can thank God that we always triumph, "For we are unto God a sweet taste of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish." Why? You say you mean it's a sweet taste in God's mouth when people perish? It's a sweet smell to God when people perish? It's hard for us to understand that. But God is as much revealed in His glory in the devastation of judgment as He is in the expression of grace and salvation.

God is not lopsided. He's not all love and grace and kindness and mercy. He's a God of holiness and a God of justice and a God of judgment and a God of wrath and a God of vengeance against evil. And if men choose that, He will be glorified in their condemnation as much as He is glorified in the conversion of those who believe. God will be glorified either way. And so it is a sweet smell to them

that are saved and them that perish. To the ones who are saved, it is a smell, says verse 16, "of life unto life." To the ones who perish, it is a smell of death unto death.

What a statement. What a statement. So He says we don't corrupt the word of God in verse 17. We don't alter the message. We give it as straight as it can be given and we know that we triumphed every time we give it, because God is glorified when some believe He's glorified in His great grace, when some reject His glorified in His holy judgment against their rejection and their sin. Do you see the point? And God has to be glorified as much in this end as He is in this end, else He is not revealing Himself fully as God.

Perhaps Revelation 22:11 might help. In Revelation 22:11, at the conclusion of all that God could possibly say at the last Chapter in the Bible, the message is all given. This is the last word, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. He that is righteous, let him be righteous still. He that is holy, let him be holy still." In other words, as it is at the end so it'll be forever. And if you are unjust and filthy, then let it be so forever. God will be glorified even in that act of judgment against your ungodliness. If you are righteous and godly, let it be that forever. God will be glorified through that as well.

Go back to Romans Chapter 9 for a moment. I want to show you two other verses. We studied these recently. And here the apostle Paul in Romans 9 is saying God has a right to do what He wants. And he says in verse 21, "If God is the potter and He desires to make a vessel unto dishonor, that's His privilege." The potter can do that. He can make one vessel to honor and another unto dishonor. That's the potter's choice. And so he says and it's an interesting way he says it, it's almost like verse 22 is so "What if God willing to show His wrath and make His power implied against sin known endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." What that verse is saying is look, if God wants to display his wrath and his power against sin on vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, so what. Doesn't He have a right to do that? He's God. He's God.

And on the other hand, He will show the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy as well. God has to be seen in His wholeness and God is as much glorified in His wrath against ungodliness as He is in His grace towards those who believe. Now you can go back to Matthew Chapter 23. So God will send preachers and God will send teachers and God's going to send writers. Jesus says you're going to have them all. But it isn't that you may be saved. It is that you will kill them and you will scourge and you will persecute them and as a result of that, you will bring on yourselves the filling up of the cup of wrath and the blood of all the righteous. And then God will judge you with severity.

And this way, the religious leaders would fill up the accumulated guilt from the history of the death of the righteous. Now notice in verse 34, He says, "some of them you will kill and crucify." Kill probably refers to the Jewish method. Crucify to the Roman method. Kill, stone them. Crucify, the Roman method of nailing them to a cross and certainly they did that. They crucified Jesus using the Romans

as the executioners. They stoned Stephen did they not, and many others. Many others we don't know we could count them all. History doesn't reveal all of them to us. And then the ones they didn't kill they brought very near to death. Scourging, they did that to Paul didn't they?

How many times was he beaten with rods and whips by the Jews? And who else beyond Paul suffered the same thing? And the ones they didn't scourge, they pursued from city to city to city to city. We see that with the apostle Paul. The pursuing, the chasing them everywhere. They pursued Christians to punish them, to persecute them at Antioch, Pisidian, at Iconium, at Lystra, at Thessalonica, at Berea, at Corinth, at Jerusalem, at Caesarea. It was a way of life for the early church, always running from the persecution of these false spiritual leaders of Israel who sought to stamp out the gospel of Christ.

So the final answer of the religious leaders of Israel which represents the mass of people is we reject Jesus Christ. And we refuse His message. And He says, all right, fill it up. Fill it up. And just to be sure you do, I'm going to send more preachers and more teachers and more writers and you're going to fill it up by killing them and the ones you can't kill you're going to persecute. And then you're going to fill that cup up so much that upon you verse 35 says, "is going to come all the righteous blood shed on the earth." The whole thing is going to come apart. The dam is going to take only so much and it's going to break on you. The cup of wrath will be filled.

The word hopos, hopos, the beginning of verse 35. Hopos means purpose, "for the purpose that upon you may come the righteous blood shed." God's purpose is to let this generation fill up the final act of atrocity against the righteous by massacring the Savior Himself and His followers and then God's judgment will pour itself out. It isn't that God wills that men be lost. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It is, however, that when men reject the Lord Jesus Christ and refuse to come to Him, it is when they do that, they bring upon themselves an outpouring of God's wrath. And listen carefully to me, the longer they have rejected and the more information they have that they have rejected and the more lessons given them from which they have not learned the greater the guilt. Do you understand that?

So that the people in Jesus' time have greater guilt than anyone that ever lived before them. You say well their forefathers had the law of God. Yes, but they had the law of God and the Messiah. They had the teaching of the Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist and Jesus and His apostles. And not only that, they should have learned of God's judgment on past apostates and past murderers of the righteous. They should have learned from them not to do that. So they had accumulated revelation and they had accumulated lessons from history, all of which they rejected. Therefore, their accumulative guilt is surpassing that of any generation prior to them.

And so it all breaks on their heads. How can one generation be held responsible for all the righteous blood? Because of its constant rejection of full light, constant rejection of all the lessons of history. I

mean, we can see it in this covenant people clearly. I hope we can see it as clearly in our own nation, because we are in the very process right now of filling up the cup of God's wrath. And we've been doing it steadily and this generation alive today is more guilty of doing it than any in the past, because we have the accumulated testimony of God's truth in this culture and we also have the accumulated lessons of why we should not act against a holy God. And the more we accumulate that data, the more guilty we become and when it breaks, it'll break on the generation that finally fills the cup to the brim. That's where they were.

And one generation which duplicates the sins of past generations and rejects the lessons of past history and rejects the revelation of God that it has, brings upon itself a more profound judgment. So judgment is cumulative. And He says this to them, verse 35, this is a fascinating verse. "It's going to break on you all the righteous blood," that is all the blood shed when righteous people were killed. When they persecuted righteous people and took their life, which, of course, is the greatest indicator of the rejection of God's truth. I mean, when you kill the righteous, you've gone the limit, right? That's the worst you can do.

So all of the worst of your evil manifested in the killing of righteous people, shedding their blood, it's all going to come to fill the cup and break on you. "And you're going to be suffering the just punishment of all that blood from righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah's son of Barachiah whom you slew between the temple and the altar." From A to Z, from the beginning of the Old Testament, Genesis Chapter 4, the first murder of a righteous man, who killed who? Cain killed. Why did he kill Abel? Because he couldn't stand a righteous man, right? He couldn't stand him.

I said it earlier and I'll say it again, if a society has the latitude to kill righteous people, it'll do it, because it can't tolerate that. And Cain could not tolerate the purity of Abel, so he murdered him. And that was the first murder of a righteous man. And he sweeps them all the way through their history, because they were out of the loins of the Adamic family. All the way through to the conclusion of the Old Testament era and the last Old Testament martyr, Zechariah, son of Barachiah. And they murdered him between the temple and the altar. Now there's a lot of discussion about who this last guy is. We don't have any problem with Abel. We know who he was.

But they say Zechariah, son of Barachiah, seems to be a mistake because if you go back to 2 Chronicles, don't do it now just write it down somewhere, if you go back to 2 Chronicles 24, I think it's around verse 20-22 or 23, 2 Chronicles 24, you will find there a man named Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. And Zechariah the son of Jehoiada was alive during the time of King Joash. That's about 800 B.C. That's a long time before the end of the Old Testament era. Now this guy, Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, was stoned to death in the temple court. He was stoned to death by his countrymen, the Jews in the temple court. The reason was because Joash the king told them to stone him to death because he didn't like the fact that he was rebuking idolatry.

So there's another illustration. Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, around 800 B.C. spoken against the idolatry of Israel. The king didn't like it, so he told the people to stone him to death. They stoned him to death in the temple. So many people have said well, you see, that's who Jesus has in mind. Zechariah, son of Barachiah. Only Jesus muffed up his father's name. And it's really Zechariah, son of Jehoiada. And critics want to use this passage to indicate to us that not only can we not always trust the Bible, but we can't even always trust Jesus who may be prone to error from time to time.

Is that the case? I think not. You say who is Zechariah, son of Barachiah? Well, if this Barachiah was nobody, if this was a name pulled out of the air, if we didn't know Zechariah, son of Barachiah, well, maybe would say or a little more prone to say that he made a mistake. But there is in the Bible a Zechariah, son of Barachiah. Do you know who it is? It's the Zechariah that wrote the prophecy Zechariah. And in case you're startled by that, there are 27 Zechariahs in the Bible. And if there were 27 Zechariahs named in the Bible, God only knows how many thousands of Zechariahs there must have been.

So it shouldn't be too startling to us that in 800 B.C. Zechariah, son of Jehoiada was murdered for being righteous and later on another man who happened to have the same name, Zechariah, son of Barachiah, was also murdered for righteousness. When Jesus says in this passage that all through history you've been killing the righteous. If Zechariah is a common name, why does that bother us? I mean, they continually killed the messengers of God. Jesus pointed that out in the parable, you remember, about the man who sent back his servants to the vineyard and they kept killing his servants? Sure, this is a way of life for them. They probably killed a lot of Zechariahs.

So we aren't startled by that. I believe this to be Zechariah the son of Barachiah, none other than the prophet Zechariah. Who lived, by the way, way down to the end of the Old Testament era in 580 to 570, right at the end of the era. And what He is saying the first martyr of righteous in that Old Testament era Abel and the last martyr of righteous in that Old Testament era was Zechariah, son of Barachiah. We didn't know this until Jesus said it, but they killed him between the temple and the altar. It seemed to be that in the temple was a familiar place for them to murder people.

Don't be shocked, they tried to kill Paul there. Read Acts 21. That may have been a place where they killed a lot of righteous people, because that's where the focus came clear you see. You have unrighteous people running the place and you have a righteous person who confronts them. That would be the place where they might kill. Think of the life of Christ. How many times did He go into the temple when they would have wanted to kill Him if they could have. So we're not surprised by that. So I don't believe Jesus made a mistake. I don't believe He could.

Now, I'm not going to second-guess Him. I believe this takes us from Abel to Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, and Jesus is telling us that He too died a martyr like so many others because He spoke

the truth of God. You slew him. Would you notice that when He says, "whom you slew," some of them would have said wait a minute we weren't there. We didn't do that, but He sees the nation as one guilty nation. Cumulatively filling up the cup through many generations and the guilt of rejection and rebellion is increased by that accumulation of previous warnings that accumulation of previous messages and preachings from the prophets and writings from the scribes. They had so much information, they had so much knowledge, they were filling up the same cup to its brim.

So the bloody flow of murdered martyrs from Abel to Zechariah, He says you're guilty of it all. And I see you as one with your whole nation. You are guilty as guilty as Cain. You are guilty as guilty as those who slew Zechariah and everybody in between those two. You've accumulated all that guilt. What's going to happen? Verse 36, we'll stop with this verse. "Truly I say to you all these things shall come upon this generation." All these things. All what things? All this guilt. All this guilt for righteous blood is going to break on your heads.

It's like in Revelation 17 when John sees the vision of the final world false church, you know the harlot and mystery Babylon, the great prostitute, the false religious system of the tribulation time? And John says "She was drunk with the blood of all the martyrs. It's as if that false system too accumulates the guilt of all the slaying of the righteous there. So he says you're guilty of it all and because you are guilty of it all, the guilt is going to come down on top of you. It's all going to break on you. This generation. What's He mean? I think He meant the people right there. This generation. This Jewish group of people. This nation at this time and this place in history, you fill the cup up when you killed the Savior and His apostles. You've filled it up, that's it.

And God says, through Christ it's going to break on you. And it did by the way, it did. The Lord was crucified as we shall see a few days later. And it wasn't but a few years after that in 70 A.D. that the judgment of God came and that judgment physically that came in 70 A.D. against the nation Israel was only a symbol of the eternal damnation that came against those Christ rejecters. Oh there was some who believed in the midst, but as a whole, the nation rejected. And that judgment that fell on them in 70 A.D. is still being meted out against them and will be until the day comes when they turn and see the Messiah for who He is and we'll get into that next week.

But the judgment came and 70 A.D. and it was a holocaust to end all holocausts. It is called by Luke, in Chapter 21:22, "the days of vengeance." If Christ was crucified in 33 A.D. in 66 A.D. the revolution broke out against Rome. They took as much as they could take of Roman oppression. The Zealots had been running around. Zealots were a political party that were aggressively anti-Roman. They went around with daggers in their cloaks and they would stab Roman soldiers. They were the terrorists of the time. If there were bombs, they would have been the ones setting the off. But they ran around assassinating and fomenting problems and came out of the hills in little raids and so forth, the Zealots. And finally and around 66 A.D. the thing flourished and broke into open revolt. In fact, it was about May of 66. And Rome struck back and they started a bloody battle in Galilee and started

slaughtering the Jews in the north in Galilee. And finally Titus came down to the city of Jerusalem with an army in excess of 80,000 men.

By the way, Josephus, the great Jewish historian was there and has written the full record of it so we know what happened. And Josephus fills in all kinds of information for us. The 80,000 men came in, they got all around the city, the Jews laughed at them, mocked them, refused to surrender and the siege broke out and the war broke out. It's beyond description. Absolutely beyond description to tell what happened. The Romans who were outside the city had the Jews captive in the city. Any Jew outside was immediately killed. In fact, they put crosses up all around the city so Jews could look out of the city and see crucified Jews everywhere. When they caught a Jew, they crucified him outside the city.

They built a mound outside the city so that the Jews could not escape and that's a very common Roman technique. In fact, you were with us in Masada earlier at the end of last year, we stood on the top of Masada, we could see the Roman mound that was put around that so that it would be a place that soldiers could entrench themselves and people could not escape in living the city. They denuded all the hillsides of the trees to make war machines and they had these create siege machines that would catapult 600 pound boulders over the walls and crush the buildings and the people inside. They built battering rams. They built weapons out of the woods and...out of the wood, and what the Jews did was set all that on fire. And so every time the Jews burned that up they took more trees and built more weapons.

And so for months they were stripping the forest as they built the sheaves and the Jews burned them up because they were made of wood. And inside the city there was all kinds of problems going on. In fact, there was even an eternal revolution among the Jews and they were killing each other. The Romans sealed off the city eventually and starvation and famine began to work its terrible work. And unbearable stench began to rise from which in the city because of the death. And they threw out at least 100,000 bodies according to Josephus, they threw 100,000 bodies out over the wall just to get rid of the decay and the stink. And so the outer part of Jerusalem was just covered with dead bodies decaying. It's an unbelievable thing.

Finally, the temple was destroyed fire and in August of 70 A.D. the Roman soldiers went into the temple location and lifted their own banners in the very holy place and sacrificed to their false Gods. Caesar then ordered that the whole city of Jerusalem be raised to the ground and it was completely leveled. All that was left was a small part of the western wall. There were, according to Josephus, 1,100,000 dead Jews, 100,000 Jews or 97,000 I guess he says were taken into prison as prisoners. Out of one city gate, they hauled over 115,000 corpses of Jews, out of one city gate. They obliterated them.

God said the cup is full, that's it. God's spirit does not always strive with man. And so the word of judgment was imminent condemnation and it came and it came fast. That's how God feels about sin. That's how God feels about the rejection of His truth and His Son. That's not the end of the story. There's hope in the last three verses, but that's for next time. Let's bow in prayer.

Oh Father what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of an angry God, as the writer of Hebrews has said. Lord God, may we learn the lesson. May we not be those who go on compounding the sins of the past. May no one here be ignorant of the revelation of grace and of the history of judgment. May everyone of us be drawn to the Savior, who alone can save from sin the Christ, the Lord Jesus, and believe in Him, confessing Him as Lord. Lord we know that this is not that which is Your desire for You are not pleased in the death of the wicked. You have no pleasure in that. Though it reveals Your great glory and holy justice, You have no pleasure in it. You are not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Lord we pray today that everyone here would come to repent us. Turn from sin to Christ. Father, we pray that You would do your work in every heart for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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