

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

MATTHEW 22:15-23:39

In February 1994, Jacqueline Clinton, age 29, of Toledo, Ohio shot and killed her boyfriend. Miss Clinton said the shooting occurred as they were arguing over the Bible. *This was one lethal Bible study...* which is what we find in Matthew 22.

The Jewish religious leaders approach Jesus with a series of *biblical brain-teasers*. Their goal is to trip Him up and find a reason to accuse Him.

Their guns are loaded. Their intentions are criminal. Jesus had driven out their *marketeters* and *moneychangers* – now it's their time to exact some revenge.

Remember after Jesus cleansed the Temple, the Jewish leaders questioned His authority. Jesus replied with 3 parables which exposed the sin of the Jews...

Repentant sinners were closer to God's Kingdom than self-righteous Jews...

The Jews were the wicked men who tried to steal the vineyard from its owner...

These leaders were the guests invited to the wedding who refused to come...

The Jews had questioned Jesus' authority. In turn, He had discredited them.

But the chief priests were tough old birds. They were not going away without a fight. Between verses 14 and 15 they regroup. These men were scholars – experts in the Old

Testament – graduates of the best Yeshivas... To them Jesus was an uneducated country-bumpkin from Nazareth. It was time to put Him in His place.

They had no idea they were arguing the Bible with its author. Imagine, debating *theology* with the *Theos*. When you *match wits* with God - you end up the *dimwit*.

Verse 15 “Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians...” Talk about strange bedfellows - Pharisees and Herodians were the ultimate odd couple.

Here were two extremes... The Pharisees were Jewish loyalists. The Herodians were Roman collaborators. They're mortal enemies that team up against Jesus.

And though they didn't realize it - in *grilling* Jesus they were *fulfilling* Scripture.

The day Jesus made His entry into Jerusalem was the day the Jews selected a Passover lamb. In shouting Hosanna and hailing Jesus as their Messiah the crowd that lined the road down the Mount of Olives chose Jesus as their sacrifice.

But once a lamb was selected, the next five days were spent inspecting that lamb for any blemish or defect. Here, without realizing what they were doing, the Jewish leaders were placing their Passover lamb under examination.

And they said, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.

Their statement is true, but I hope you hear the *phony*

flattery. They're trying to butter-up Jesus – just before they stab Him with the butter-knife.

In verse 17 the quiz begins... **“Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”** This was a carefully formulated question.

Either way Jesus answered the Jewish leaders thought they had Him...

If He said, **“Yes, pay your taxes”** – the Jews could discredit Him as a traitor to Rome, even an idolater. The Roman Emperor claimed to be divine – and to pay him a tribute was to worship an idol. If Jesus said **“Yes”** the Pharisees had Him.

The Herodians were hoping Jesus would say, **“No, don't pay your taxes.”**

This was considered high-treason by the Romans. Rome was tolerant of various religious views - but when it came to political allegiances - Rome was unbending. Any hint of rebellion and Jesus would be arrested and executed.

“Yes” or **“No”**... either way He answered the Jews had Him trapped!

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.” So they brought Him a denarius.”

A denarius was a small silver coin the size of a dime. It weighed 3.8 grams.

Everyone in the empire had to pay a denarius to the Roman government to merely exist. It was an “existence tax”. Jesus holds up a denarius and asks...

"Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's."

On one side of the denarius was the bust of the Caesar with the inscription, "Tiberias Caesar, son of the divine Augustus." The other side read, "Pontifex Maximus" – or Latin for "Chief priest". This was offensive to the Jewish chief priests. There was no doubt the coin was dedicated to a pagan emperor.

But then Jesus utters an ingenious comeback. "And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." What a fabulous response. *A single sentence eludes a tricky question.*

In the ancient world coins were considered the property of the person whose image was on them. Therefore Jesus is saying, "If this coin belongs to Caesar, give it back to him. But in addition, give to God what belongs to God..."

And what bears the image of God? *Of course it's man Himself.*

In the beginning Adam and Eve, male and female, were made in the image of God. Thus, though our money might belong to Caesar, our lives belong to God.

In amazing brevity and conciseness, notice all Jesus' statement accomplishes...

First, it affirms God's sovereignty over Caesar. Government might have a demand on our money, but God has a claim on our entire lives. Caesar rules in one area of life, God governs our total existence. This silenced the Pharisees.

Yet, Jesus statement also quieted the Herodians. It affirmed that Caesar does have a place in God's plan. Though God is superior to Caesar, civil government is still valid. We have a dual-obligation to both *secular* and *sacred* authorities.

Later in Romans 13, Paul explains more fully the role of government in society.

He makes it clear that our obligation to God far outweighs our duty to Caesar - yet Jesus lays the foundation for Paul's thoughts here in this single statement.

Notice verse 22, "When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way." Jesus answered with a true stroke of genius.

Commentator Kent Hughes writes, "The statement by our Lord was not only astounding the instant it was uttered, but it is even today universally acclaimed to be the single most influential political statement ever made in the history of the world! It was decisive and determinative in shaping Western civilization."

Jesus took a trick question and turned it into a blueprint for civilization.

Round one goes to Jesus!

Verse 23 "The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him..." The Sadducees were the Jewish liberals.

They were naturalists - the rationalists. They refused to believe in the supernatural – which included the angels and the resurrection.

In addition, they only took seriously the Torah - or the five books of Moses. They refused to consider the rest of the Old Testament as inspired by God.

What's even worse was their pompous attitude. They were full of pride.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote, "The Sadducees are, even among themselves, rather crude in their behavior, and in their communication with their peers they are rude." They were a bunch of stuck-up, snobby, know-it-all rich kids.

And they said to Jesus, "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother."

This was the Law of the Levirate. It was taught in the Old Testament Law.

"Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

Remember, the Sadducees didn't even believe in the resurrection of the dead. *This is why they were sad-you-see... You knew I had to somehow get that in!*

The scenario they mention was a stock question used in their debates with the Pharisees – who did believe in the resurrection. The Sadducees wanted to point out the perplexities that might exist if you accepted the notion of

eternal life.

“Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.” Here is such an insightful point...

Every theological heresy is a weed that grows from one of two roots... either an ignorance of Scripture or a denial of the power of God... *ignorance or arrogance*.

Heretics deny Creation - and miracles - and Jesus’ virgin birth and resurrection because they deny God’s power. They want to refute the Trinity – and the need for blood atonement – and the return of Jesus - because they deny the Scriptures.

All heresy grows out an *ignorance of Scripture or a denial of God’s power*.

Jesus continues His answer in verse 30, “**For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.**”

Some married couples have a problem with this verse... *other couples see it as a relief... no marriage in heaven*. For most couples it probably changes from day to day. Here’s what married people need to know – despite how good a marriage is on earth – in heaven all relationships will be deeper and more satisfying.

In heaven, all earthly relationships are eclipsed by our relationship with God.

Marriage is only an illustration of Christ and His Bride. In heaven the illustration drops off. It peels away. The most intimate - and enjoyable - and fulfilling - and loving

relationship in heaven is the marriage between Christ and His Church.

We'll spend forever being romanced by the Savior. He'll dominate our interest.

Jesus continues in verse 31, **“But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying...”** Jesus could've turned to numerous passages in the Old Testament to offer proof for the resurrection - but remember the Sadducees only accepted the first 5 books - the books of Moses.

Thus Jesus quotes from Exodus 3:6 to prove His point...

The Almighty says to Moses, **“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”**

Remember, Moses lived 500 years after Abraham, yet God said to Moses, **“I *am* the God of Abraham...”** - not **“I was the God of Abraham.”** The present tense implied that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive! There is life after death!

Round two goes to Jesus.

“And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.” The Pharisees know three strikes and you're out - and they're facing a 0-2 count. It's time for them to step up to the plate!

“Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing

Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" At the time of Jesus, this was a hot theological question. The Jewish scribes had broken the Law down into 613 different commands - 248 positives or "dos" - and 365 negatives or "don'ts."

There was one prohibition for every day of the year. But here was their question... *out of these 613 commands which was most important?*

“Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment.”

This answer would not be debated. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 - part of the Great Jewish Shema. Every synagogue opened with the reading of this verse.

Even to this day this verse is placed in the phylacteries - the leather pouches the Jews wear on their hands and forehead. It's also in the mizuzah - or the small, elongated box they fastened onto the doorpost of orthodox Jewish homes.

This is the verse that guards their heads, their hands, and their homes.

Hey, the most important commandment for you and I is to love God with all we've got - heart, soul, and mind – with desire, and emotion, and intellect.

God doesn't want a mechanical relationship with His people. He doesn't want little robots shuffling around in rote obedience. He wants us to serve Him with passion and purpose. Is God your *supreme desire*?... the *object of your affections*?... the *center of your thoughts*? **Do you love God?**

No Jew would've debated that the greatest command was to love God – but what's so provocative about Jesus' answer is what He does next.

Not only does He answer the lawyer's question, Jesus gives him a second commandment. Jesus quotes Leviticus 19:18...
"And the second is like it (or literally, "linked to it...": 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Prior to this occasion, no rabbi had ever linked these two verses together.

No one had related *loving God* with *loving your neighbor*. Jesus is saying the whole intent of the Old Testament was to teach us to love God *and* each other.

This had to convict the Pharisees. They claimed to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind. They had such a zeal for the Law. They tried to comply in every area of life. Yet they were totally void and empty of any love for their brother.

Their so-called "love for God" made them self-righteous and judgmental.

Let's make sure there's no disconnect in our own thinking here... True love for God will always produce a love for one another. 1 John 4:20 tells us, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

Jesus is saying to us and the Pharisees... find a person who's selfish, and stuck-up, and always critical of others – and it's not just that they have no love for others... there's something wrong in their relationship with God.

Round three goes to Jesus!

Verse 41 **“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them...”**

Three strikes and your out... the Pharisees were speechless. Mark 12:34 tells us that at this point, **"no one dared question Him."** The Jewish establishment had debated the *written Word* with the *Living Word* and they got slammed-dunked.

But Jesus isn't through. In verse 41 He goes on the offensive.

He has a question... **saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"** They said to Him, **"The Son of David."** This was easy. 2 Samuel 7:12 had made it clear the Messiah would be a descendant of the Hebrew King, David.

“(Jesus) said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool?" "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"

This isn't a trick question like the questions the Jews had asked Jesus. His question cut to the core of their objections to His own Messianic claims.

Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 - considered by the Jews to be a

Messianic psalm.

Yet in the psalm, David calls the Messiah "**His Lord.**" David is King! The king has only one Lord – and that's God. So by referring to *his son* as *his Lord* was David implying that the Messiah was more than a mere man - but God?

The implication was yes. According to David, Messiah was both human and divine. He was a descendant and therefore human - but He was greater than a king and therefore God. According to Jewish reasoning, David's son was God.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul puts this together.

In 1:3-4 he declares, "**Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead...**"

Paul was one rabbi who saw how the human and divine merged in Jesus.

Verse 46, "**And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.**" Prior to this the Jews thought of the Messiah in strictly human terms. Jesus wanted to make them think. *Perhaps Messiah was greater than their understanding of Him? Maybe their expectations were wrong?*

Sadly, though they stopped questioning Jesus, they failed to question their own assumptions. On this day they try to *grill Him*. By Thursday they'll want to *kill Him*.

Chapter 23, "**Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His**

disciples..."

This was Jesus' last *public* sermon. For nearly four years He had preached mercy and grace at every turn. Now the Jewish leadership has officially rejected Him. In His last public sermon Jesus pronounces judgment and condemnation.

He'd tried to love the Jews into heaven - now He tries to scare them out of hell.

It reminds me of two men - both named "Richard." One was a businessman - the other a pastor. In a strange twist of fate, the businessman went on a trip to Florida about the same time the pastor died. When he arrived, he sent a letter to his wife - that was accidentally delivered to the wife of the deceased pastor.

The letter read: "Arrived safely, but the heat down here is terrific!"

This letter would've been appropriate for the hard-hearted Jews. I hope you realize stubbornness will send you to Hell. These Jews need to repent.

In Matthew 23 Jesus confronts the Jews - and pulls no punches. He lays it on the line one last time, hoping to jar them out of their rebellion and blindness.

He says, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." The NAS has a better translation, "The Scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses." They had assumed Moses' authority. The Jews were claiming to be the arbitrator of God's Law, yet they'd taken a seat that didn't belong to them.

“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.” They don’t practice what they preach. The Pharisees had no integrity. They preached, “Do as I say, not as I do.”

Verse 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 have *no authority, no integrity*, and perhaps even worse, *no sympathy*.

They like to impose unbiblical and extra-biblical opinions on others. They use legalism to control and manipulate. Strict interpretations provide them power over their people - and they lust for this power even if it crushes those under their care.

Whenever you enact a law or rule - you give power to one person over another. This is why the power-monger is always a legalist. He or she loves rules.

What a contrast to Jesus... Jesus said to His disciples, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Jesus was into removing heavy burdens not piling them on.

Rather than enslave folks, Jesus wanted to set them free. He wanted to make following God simpler and easier – not more complicated and burdensome.

Verse 5... “But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders

of their garments.

They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'"

The word "rabbi" means "my great one". It was the title given to a teacher.

The scribes and Pharisees loved these flattering titles. They lacked *authority, integrity, sympathy*, and *humility*. Their religion was an act to get attention.

From their religious paraphernalia - to the clothes they put on their bodies - to the titles they put in front of their names - it was all about gaining the spotlight!

"But you (Jesus now talks to His followers), do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren." Even those of us who teach, we're still disciples or learners. A teacher learns while he teaches others.

None of us have arrived. For a Christian there's no higher level than *learner*.

"Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." In light of this verse I've always wondered how Roman Catholics justify calling the priest, "father." I've had folks call me "father" – it gives me the creeps.

"And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ."

A mark of a true man or woman of God is to *avoid elevated titles*. "Reverend" is another title that gives me the creeps.

God alone is to be *revered* and *honored*.

“But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

A true servant of God will go to great effort to *avoid elevated titles* and *accept lowly tasks*. They won't use their position to *manipulate* - but to *minister*. Their reward is in heaven, so on earth they're constantly seeking the low road.

Verse 13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...”

Think back to Jesus' first public sermon and compare it with His last public sermon. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus bestowed *eight blessings*, or eight beatitudes - whereas, in His last public sermon, Jesus will issue *eight woes*, or warnings. And it's amazing how these blessings and woes parallel each other.

“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 Pharisees were a *barrier* to the Kingdom of heaven rather than a *bridge*. They liked being heaven's gatekeeper. They were proud. They felt heaven was only for “*their kind of people*.”

Ironically, they made heaven so strict not even they could enter in.

The Pharisees were “*proud in spirit*” – in contrast, remember the first beatitude. Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Here's Jesus' second "Woe" in verse 14, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses..." These Jews would rush to a woman who had just lost her husband, and tell her she could honor her husband's memory by making a donation to their ministry. Sounds like today's televangelists who take advantage of the poor and elderly - and play on the sympathies of the gullible.

"And for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation." Jesus' second beatitude reads, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." God wants sincerity and passion – not pretense.

Jesus continues in verse 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." The third beatitude reads, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Jesus encouraged a quiet strength that trusted God... In the end God will provide us our inheritance.

But the Pharisees were on a campaign to convert the earth and enforce their brand of legalism. Yet, instead of winning souls they were sending folks to Hell.

Here's the problem with legalism - once you think it's your duty to be good enough for God where do you stop? Life becomes an endless treadmill.

Here's the fourth woe, "Woe to you, blind guides... (Notice the oxymoron. A *blind guide* is useless. We have a *blind*

watch dog at home... same idea.)

Imagine, saving \$3000 to journey to Israel to tour the Holy Land. We exit the plane, and a guy with dark glasses, being pulled by a seeing-eye dog boards the bus and takes the seat behind the steering wheel. *No thanks! I'll abort the trip.*

The Pharisees were leading people - but they couldn't see the way to heaven.

These blind guides were saying, "Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it." "Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?"

And, 'Whoever swears by the altar (the Temple's sacrificial altar), it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.' "Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?"

Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it."

Here's what was going on... *the Pharisees loved to play little word games.*

They had a graduated system of oaths. Certain promises carried more weight than others. They had created a system where you could actually lie with immunity as long as you structured your oath properly. Semantics covered up their evil.

Swear by the Temple and keeping a promise was still optional - just as long as you didn't swear by the gold of the Temple. That's when it all became serious.

Contrast this with the fourth beatitude, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." In other words, blessed are those who *pray* and not just *play*. Take righteousness seriously. Hunger for the real thing...

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe 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." The Pharisees *majored on the minors and minored on the majors*.

They spent hours counting tiny grains of spice to make sure they gave God exactly 10% - yet in the really important matters - like how they treated people - they were oblivious to God's concerns. They ignored justice, mercy, and faith.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful (not the meticulous), for they shall obtain mercy." People are what matter to God.

And Jesus uses a funny picture to illustrate the Pharisees misplaced and shallow priorities - "Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"

Go to Israel and whenever you see a camel it's accompanied by a swarm of gnats. In ancient Israel both gnats and camels were considered unclean animals, and off-limits to eat. Neither gnats nor camels were on the menu in a

kosher deli.

Thus, the Pharisees went to great extremes to keep from swallowing a gnat – even by accident. They even wore face shields on their motorcycle helmets.

Hey, if you've ever ridden a bike you've accidentally swallowed a few gnats.

And if a Pharisee did swallow one of the little nuisances - he'd immediately try to gag himself, and cough up the gnat. So here's the picture Jesus paints...

A Pharisee covers his mouth - guarding against swallowing a tiny gnat – while at the same time he sits down to eat a whole camel. Both are unclean animals.

Obviously, he's missed the point. He's so caught up in trivial technicalities that he's ignoring the blatant sin in his life. As Jesus calls him, he's a **“blind guide.”**

“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.”

Once again, remember the sixth beatitude, **“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”** Jesus desires an *inward purity* not just an *outward purity*!

Verse 26, **“Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.”** The cleansing Jesus affects always flows from the inside out. It begins in my heart – then impacts the rest of my life.

Verse 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. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” Beautiful white tombs dotted the landscape all over Israel.

Since it was a violation of the Law of Moses to touch, or come in contact with anything that was dead - the Jews wanted to avoid even an accidental brush with a grave or tombstone – so all the tombs were marked with a coat of whitewash...

It was an ironic picture - white and clean on the outside, but dead and corrupt on the inside. Jesus warns us not to be like these whitewashed tombs.

In addition the Pharisee's fixation with avoiding the dead carried over into their relationships with the living. A Pharisee would have no contact with a Gentile.

In the Pharisee's mind the Gentile was dead to the things of God.

The Pharisees hated Gentiles. His self-righteousness was a cause of friction. **When you're trying to look good the tendency is to make other people look bad.**

A judgmental and divisive spirit sets in. What a contrast to the 7th beatitude, **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.”**

Here's the final woe... **“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.' The Pharisees admitted that often in their history their forefathers lined up on the wrong side of the ball.

They rejected *God's messengers* and persecuted *God's prophets*.

Yet these Pharisees had no clue they were doing it too.

Verse 32 "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."

The first of the OT martyrs was Abel – the last was the Prophet Zechariah. And in between thousands of prophets were killed by a hard-hearted Hebrew nation.

Yet all the martyrs were ultimately pointing in the same direction – to the Jewish Messiah and Savior of the world, Jesus. Thus, when the current Jewish generation rejected Jesus they were responsible for the blood of all the martyrs before them.

And note this *last woe* in light of the *last beatitude*! "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake..."

Blessed are the persecuted, but cursed are the persecutors. These Pharisees had the same violent and hostile streak as their predecessors who killed the prophets. In a few days they'll kill the Son of God.

Even as Jesus spoke in the Temple they were already plotting his death.

"Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation."

What made this moment so tragic and the need to repent so desperate is that God's wrath had reached the dew point. The moisture of rebellion had saturated the air – judgment had to fall. The current generation of Jews were about to experience the punishment due the rebellion of all their predecessors.

In a mere 40 years Rome will slaughter a million Jews and burn Jerusalem. And it was predicted by Jesus, "All these things will come upon this generation."

Verse 37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!" It's interesting, whenever Jesus repeated a name it was a sign His heart was broken. In Luke 22:31 he cried for Peter, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat."

In Luke 10:41-42 when Martha wanted Jesus to rebuke Mary, He said, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed."

Acts 9:4, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Here Jesus begins “**Jerusalem, Jerusalem**” – sorrow overwhelms His heart!

“**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!**”

Jesus flashes back... not only to the dozen or so trips He made to Jerusalem during His life on earth - but He reverts back to His pre-incarnate past - and the countless times He leaned over heaven's rail and looked *lovingly and longingly* upon His people Israel. It was a pity their repentance was never permanent.

What awful, tragic words, “**But you were not willing!**”

Israel's punishment was not God's fault. Judgment is never God's fault. Everyone who inhabits Hell is there because they've chosen to be there.

Verse 38 “**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!'**”

This was the same verse – *Psalms 118:26* - the crowds used to hail Jesus their Messiah just a few days earlier when He rode the donkey into Jerusalem.

Here Jesus tells them, they won't see Him again until they sing this song anew.

This is the refrain the Jews will sing when they receive Jesus at His second coming! That's what Jesus talks about in chapter 24... *the signs of His return*.