

Matthew 23:16-39

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[0 : 00] We're still in Matthew 23, but we should finish Matthew 23 today. Recall that we were partway through the Lord speaking what is known as the eight woes, and we got to woe number three.

And simply because you all had to get home at some point, we decided to do the rest of the woes this week. And it's worth pointing out that in Matthew 5, the first sermon that was given in this gospel was, it talked about nine blessings.

The Beatitudes and blessed is the one who's humble and so on. There's a list of nine of them. And this is, if you like, his last sermon. The first lesson of Matthew's gospel, and some people argue with the description of it as a sermon, but I think it deserves that description, is eight woes.

So he started with blessings. Do this and you'll be blessed. Do that and you'll be blessed. And now he's saying when it comes to the end of his life, because he's about two days away from being crucified at this point.

And he's saying woe to you because and giving eight reasons for these woes. And if you remember, also, we dealt with this word woe, which I'm not sure how to pronounce, but it looks as if it should be something like way.

[1 : 55] And it's it's an onomatopoeic word. It's a word that sounds like what it is. It's a it's a it's a it's an expression of extreme grief.

And so in expressing these woes, the Lord is not angry with them. He is grieved at losing them. And it's an expression of the deepest of grief. And so the word used sounds like you're in grief when you say it. And in the first three woes, just to remind us, the first woe was that being teachers and gatekeepers to the kingdom.

They didn't they not only didn't enter it themselves, but they prevented other people from entering the kingdom. And, you know, there are so many ministries today that still do that.

They distract you from what will really get you into the kingdom. They're not diligent about the doctrines they preach, but there's often a personal agenda to extract money from you.

[3 : 06] Or some ministers get into immorality because they're using their position and their the attractiveness, if you like, of being able to articulate things to do immoral things.

So it's still the case that those who are supposed to be the gatekeepers to the kingdom are actually taking people to the very gate and not letting them in because they're distracting them with wrong teaching.

The second one was they were praying on vulnerable widows. And if you remember, I said that the Jesuits used to do this. They were renowned for doing it where they would.

And the widow, usually a wealthy widow would be left with property and they would try to get the property off that widow because, well, you know, your husband would have wanted you to give it to the church.

That kind of deceit. And so once again, instead of instead of being godly and saying to the widow, this this stuff that your husband left you is for you, for you to get rental income from or for you to sell or to do whatever you want with to provide for you.

[4 : 23] And they were actually taking the provision away from the widows, which is an awful thing to do. And then the third one was that they traveled far and wide to obtain proselytes that had a good reputation.

Usually it meant lots of wealth. So instead of looking after their local flock, they would try and increase their flock by traveling far and wide and finding wealthy, influential people and drawing them in.

And so that was the Lord was saying, whoa, if you do that now, like last week, all the applications for our lives are contained in what we're about to study. Normally we do the application at the end. But as we go through, very simply, don't do these things. The Lord is not pleased if you do these things. And the fact that so many so-called Christian ministers do these things even today means you can be born again and still be like this. You get born again so that you can have victory over sin. But you have to put on Christ and you have to determine to be Christ-like. It's a matter of choice, that part of it.

[5 : 35] He gives you the ability to, but it's up to you to choose to do it. So choose not to do the things that God hates. So let's read from verse 16.

Where we get, whoa, number four. And well, number four relates to corrupt religious practices. So it says this. You, woe to you blind guides. Oh, no, that's the wrong one. Verse 15. No, it is verse 16.

Sorry. Woe to you blind guides who say, whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing. But whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated. You fools and blind men, which is more important, the gold of the temple that sanctified the gold? And whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing. But whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated. You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering?

[6 : 47] Therefore, whoever swears by the altar swears both by the altar and everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears both by the temple and by him who dwells within it.

And whoever swears by heaven swears by both the throne of God and by him who sits upon it. Now, the New Testament teaching on this is don't swear oaths.

Just be honest. You think about what an oath does and you often come across it in the world. Somebody wants to borrow some money from you and you say, well, when am I likely to get it back?

Oh, I'll pay you back on Friday. I swear on my mother's life, I'll pay you back on Friday. And you think, well, you probably just think, well, he obviously really means it. But in reality, what he's done is instead of just telling the truth, he's tried to embellish the truth that he's telling.

And there's no need or there should be no need for embellishment. You just tell the truth. But when it comes to oaths. What this is doing is what the Pharisees were doing was they were teaching.

[8 : 06] That. If you swear an oath and if you nuance it, you don't have to follow through with it. So if I swear by the temple.

That's not the same as swearing by the gold things in the temple. And therefore, if I swear by the temple, I can get myself off the hook. Or if I swear by the altar.

It's just a it's just a thing, isn't it? The altar. But if I swear. By the offering on the altar, that's a bigger deal. So it was a false nuance. What they were doing is they were saying to these Jews who must have read in Numbers 30 and verse 2.

If a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

So God says if you swear an oath, you carry it through. So the Jews were teaching people. Well, yes, when you swear some oaths, you have to carry it through.

[9 : 16] But if you nuance it and swear it in a slightly different kind of a way, you can let yourself off the hook. And what this does, of course, is it reduces, it dilutes the power of the oath.

Why would the Lord be so exercised about this? Because it's annoying and it's not very nice and it's a bit dishonest.

But why would he say, woe to you because you do this? This is keeping you out of heaven. Why? Well, the thing is, we all depend upon an oath for our salvation.

If you remember, and by the way, you can find the same principle in Ecclesiastes 5 and verses 5 and 6, says very much the same and basically says, better not to swear an oath than to swear an oath and fail to keep it.

But in Hebrews, turn to Hebrews with me, Hebrews chapter 7. Now, Hebrews 7 verses 20 and 21 is a quotation from Psalm 110.

[10 : 26] So the writer to the Hebrews is quoting the Old Testament. And in verse 20 and 21, says this, And inasmuch as it was not without an oath.

So what was not without an oath? Well, let's go back a little bit. And to get all of this, you'd have to go back to verse 11. But to pray see that, he's describing Jesus as he's a priest.

This is verse 17. You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. For on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness. For the law made nothing perfect. On the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope through which we draw near to God. So we've got this better hope to consider. Inasmuch as it was not without an oath.

So the better hope that we have is based upon an oath. Now, if an oath can be diluted or nuanced so that you don't have to carry it through, then our salvation itself becomes tenuous.

[11:37] Like, yeah, but did he really mean it? Was that one of those nuanced oaths that you don't really have to pay attention to? Of course not. And he goes on to say, So he's referring to Levitical priests.

They became priests without an oath. But he, Jesus, with an oath. Through the one who said, in Psalm 110, The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. So God based our whole salvation on an oath. And these men are diluting oaths.

So, well, you can swear it like this and you won't have to carry it through. Well, the Lord himself does not want the oath diluted. He wants us to be able to place our trust in the Lord Jesus because of an oath.

And so they should have been teaching their people that the oath was absolutely sacrosanct. You don't break it on any account.

[12:51] So it was a ridiculous nuance anyway. If you swear by the temple, you're not obligated. But if you swear by the gold, then you are.

I mean, they were materialistic bunch. They preferred things that were made of gold. But everything about the temple, the temple itself, the gold that's in it, the altar that's in it, the offerings that are made in it are all dedicated to God.

So if you swear based on any of them, it's binding. And your word is binding. Now, in the New Testament, what we read is let your yes be yes and your no be no.

So this particular woe, I guess what you'd say it was, it was using craftiness to get around being honest.

And what the Lord makes clear is that these semantic nuances don't make any difference to the seriousness of the oath in God's eyes. If you go on to the next, go back to Matthew 23.

[14:05] So we've had all this. He's really laying into them about the way that they use oaths. And then he goes on in verse 23, kind of returns to a previous theme where things are very showy.

And you remember the criticism of all the way down the line is on the surface, it all looks great, but underneath you are found wanting. You don't have a right heart. And so this next one in verse 23, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness. But these are the things you should have done without neglecting others.

You blind guides who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. Strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. It's not every day you have to unpack that in a Bible study.

So what is really happening here? You swear you tithe, this is woe number five. You tithe mint and dill.

[15:15] Now it's arguable, although I can't prove it to you conclusively, that the tithe of mint and dill that they did wasn't even required by the law. Now if you were a farmer and growing lots of mint and dill, then you would pay a tithe of that.

But these guys were priests, and so they didn't do any of that stuff. So they were making a show of tithing their mint and their dill that they had in their herb cupboard, you know, their food cupboard at home.

And it's very showy, you know, I haven't got much, but I'm going to tithe my mint and my dill. It's not the same as making a tithe of a crop, which is what the tithing laws were about.

Now you could argue that either way. But what they're doing is they're parading their tithe of mint and dill so that people will think well of them.

I think it's what we would call virtue signaling. These days, you know, it's a common phrase now. Look at me, I'm holy and I'm tithing.

[16:24] I hope you're tithing. I'm tithing my mint and my dill. Yeah, but I've got 25 acres of barley and I've got to tithe that. Do you see the slight inequality there, inequity?

So they're doing the showy bit. But it says, I mean, they're being meticulous over these minutiae, things that are easy and mechanical.

But the thing that they're missing, if we read it again, it says, you have neglected the weightier provisions of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness.

Now, justice and mercy and faithfulness require relationship. They require me to love you. To show you mercy.

And faithfulness in friendship and faithfulness in marriages and so on and so on. You may recall the woman caught in adultery.

[17:31] And he said, well, if you're let he who is without the same sin cast the stone. And nobody could be found without the same sin.

So adultery, in other words, unfaithfulness was common among them. And he's saying you neglect these things which really matter.

And then he comes to this really crazy statement. You strain out a gnat and yet you swallow a camel. And it's if you imagine you've got a drink.

And in your drink, there's a gnat swimming around and you kind of strain it out before you drink it, wouldn't you? But if you didn't, you probably wouldn't even notice the gnat. You'd swallow it down and somebody says, you realize there was a gnat in your drink.

And you go, oh, no, didn't know. What he's saying of these guys is that they are meticulous about the stupidest little things, about making sure they get them out.

[18:34] And yet if there was a camel in their drink, they drink it down. Now, obviously, that's a ridiculous metaphor. But what it says is these things are so obvious and so big and so huge.

And you're just riding roughshod over them. You're paying them no attention. The gnats don't matter. The camels do. I guess if you want an application here, don't virtue signal.

And give your effort to the things that really matter, which is one another. Which is the impoverished that come to you for help. Your neighbors who need you to do stuff, whatever that stuff is.

Part of our witness is that we are a loving community. The Bible tells us that people will look upon our fellowship. And because of the love that they see in our fellowship, they will believe that the Father sent Jesus.

So there's something of... There's something of... I'm not... I have to be careful how I say this.

There's something of what we do that preaches the gospel by our actions.

[19:44] Now, some people take that to extremes and they don't bother to preach the real gospel. They only do actions. That's not what I'm saying. They should receive the word. But they should also receive the love and the mercy and the faithfulness from us.

That demonstrates what we're talking about. And it's one of those areas where God has put the ability to do those things in our hearts. But it's a matter of choice whether we actually do them or not.

So these so-called teachers were actively teaching strategic ways of avoiding godly relational behaviour while still appearing to be righteous.

I might... I'll do this so that you can see that I'm righteous, but I'm not going to come and dig your garden or I'm not going to come and feed your family or cook you a meal or whatever it is that you need.

Again, it's virtue signaling to be avoided. If I could have that slide up. Do we as churches do this?

[20:46] And I just thought I'd put this up for the sake of interest. That is the average church budget taken from 2009. Now, when you look at the 38% on salaries and wages, you could put that up to 50% if you include the building, 58% if you include utilities.

Missions, 5%. Even domestic missions, which is the local stuff, 5%.

Oh, but the church is righteous. Now, I'm not... A lot of this we get trapped into. Our biggest monthly expense is this building. Because you've got to meet somewhere and nobody's giving it to you for free yet.

Yet. But 5% on insurance. But it's interesting, isn't it, that the largest proportion of our income we spend on ourselves.

I think... I haven't discussed this with Joe, but I think he would agree with me that our aim is to get to the point where that is not the case anymore. That we can bless people who need blessing and even people outside the church who need blessing.

[22 : 04] The scout movement that meets in this hall, for example, sometimes need blessing and so on. But... Okay, I'll finish with the slide. Thanks. There is a degree to which we need to look at ourselves and say, are we just doing the showy bit?

Or are we really exercising the compassion, the mercy, the faithfulness to people out there who haven't yet had the gospel? Faithfulness to one another when they're in need and so on.

I have to say, for this church, pastorally, I have to give you all a pat on the back. Because you look after each other really well. But it's something to constantly review, I would say.

Very easy thing to fall away from. So, they're so blind, they would strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. You've got to be really blind to try and swallow a camel, haven't you?

What it was, if you think about it, there's another way to look at this. And that is, they were consumed with the letter of the law and have completely overlooked the spirit of the law.

[23 : 16] They were legalistic. Have you done your tithe? Have you made a garment with mismatched cloths? Are you sticking to all the dietary laws?

And because they were under the law, they should have been doing those things. But what it says is this. If you go to 2 Corinthians chapter 3, and we're just going to read verses 4 to 6, which says this, And these Jews were focused on, on tithing mint and dill, whilst the people, and excuse the way I'll put this, but the people could actually go to hell.

Whereas the spirit of the law, and if you think about the first and second commandments that Jesus said were the most important, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, that's not the letter of the law, that's the spirit of the law, and it doesn't come because somebody wrote it down or made you a tick list.

It comes from inside the human heart, that my heart cries out for you, to make it, to get there, or to get over whatever it is that's beset you.

And they had lost the spirit of the law, and were worried about the fine detail. Did you walk more than a thousand yards on the Sabbath day, or whatever, you know, things that were equivalent to straining out the gnat, and they were ignoring the other stuff.

[25 : 23] So, back to Matthew, woe number six. And this really, to me, rams it home, and it's what we're all prone to do. We don't want to be seen to be, necessarily, like we really are, because we might be a little bit ashamed of what we're really like.

But it says, verse 25, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside may become clean also. And so this is a washing up analogy, and if you imagine doing the washing up, and taking each dish that's full of one day old detritus, and it's filthy, and if you eat that, you're going to be ill, and you simply wipe around the outside and put the dish in the cupboard.

And we wouldn't do that, would we? But what he's saying is, you're like these dishes, and you're filthy on the inside, but you keep the outside nice and clean. So everybody looks at the outside and thinks, what a holy man.

But if they could see into your heart, they'd be horrified. And of course, when you eat from those dishes, you do become ill. So these Pharisees are being painted as those who are serving up stuff that is rancid.

[26 : 59] And it's not a good look at all. Any righteousness, Hebrews tells us that no man comes to Christ, and no man comes to salvation through the works of the law.

It's the heart. When you're born again and your heart is changed, you become saved. So righteousness, just as a result of human effort to put on a show, is a lie.

It's fake. It doesn't reflect a changed heart. And there are those of, there are those among us, I make that as a wider statement, hopefully, there are those among the church of God who can lead you to believe they are amazing saints.

And all the time, under the surface, there is something rancid, something that is often abusive, often trying to exact money from people.

There's a selfish motive involved, which is not godly, but the outside of the dish looks great. And I'm sure we've all experienced that from time to time.

[28 : 21] And they were told, first clean the inside, in brackets, of the person. Because the person, the analogy is between the dish and the person. First clean the inside, then the outside will just become clean on its own.

A bit like that when you wash up, while you're doing the inside and solution it about, the outside just gets cleaned without any effort, doesn't it? But he's saying, you need to stop looking at the outside. You need to look at the inside and clean the inside. When you look at the true fruits of righteousness, so this is the human soul that has been cleaned from the inside.

Turn with me to Galatians 5. And you have the contrast of the unchanged heart and the changed heart.

So if we start with verse 16. But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

[29 : 26] This is tantamount to saying, clean the inside of the dish. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

But if you're led by the Spirit, you are not under law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things the like of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Dirty on the inside. All of that description. But the fruit of the Spirit, so this is clean on the inside, is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. So, the changed heart produces the right kind of priorities from the inside out.

The inside is clean, the outside begins to look clean. But notice also that every one of these fruits of the Spirit is relationship-based.

[30 : 49] You can't love on your own. You need people to love. You can be joyful on your own, and you can have peace on your own, but it's much more beneficial if we share it, isn't it?

Kindness is something you express to others. Goodness is something you express to others. Faithfulness is something you express to others. Gentleness is also something you express to others.

Self-control is something you exercise in the presence of others. So, the New Testament, if you like, is confirming what Matthew has said here, what Jesus has said here, is we need to clean the inside of the dish.

Woe number seven, back to Matthew. And to me, this is the biggest kind of smack on the back of the hand that the Lord could have given them.

But what I'm, before I say this, what I'm really taken with here is the Lord cared so much for the people who were going to kill him within a couple of days. That he bothered to take the time to do this in the hope that they would change.

[32 : 03] And I believe some of them did. If we read about Nicodemus, for example, who went to the Lord by night and the Lord said, you can't enter the kingdom of heaven unless you're born again.

If you read church history, the fruit of that man's life is that he did change. So, by saying all of this, he wasn't saying to anyone, you can't make it. What he's saying is, you need to change, you need to repent.

So, the eighth woe says, woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you're like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they're full of dead men's bones.

So you too, outwardly, appear righteous to men, but inwardly, you're full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. That's woe number seven, not number eight.

A tomb is a place where you put a corpse. doesn't matter what you make it look like, it will only ever be a place to store a corpse.

[33 : 10] And what he's saying is, that's you. You look pretty on the outside, but actually, you're dead inside. You're full of dead men's bones. You're a place where your corpse is already laid to rest, even though you're still walking about.

What an indictment. Now, he's telling them they have no good destiny eternally, isn't he? He's saying, you're dead.

But of course, God is the God of resurrection. So there's still always hope that if we become repentant, we can be restored to new life. And we've had baptisms recently that major on the fact that people don't have to stay dead in their sins.

So moving on to the final woe. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous and say, if we'd been alive in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in the shedding of the blood of the prophets.

So you testify against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

[34 : 32] So he's not being diplomatic here. And they're saying, well, if we'd been alive in those days, we would never have killed them. We would have honoured them.

They're about to kill the son of God. So they have this delusion about their own righteousness. They're about to kill because Jesus in the Old Testament was referred to as a prophet like Moses. So amongst other things, Jesus was a prophet. And not only they're going to continue to kill the prophets, but they're going to continue to kill the greatest prophet that ever walked the face of the earth, the son of God himself.

such irony and such incongruity. Oh, we wouldn't have done that. But you're going to do it in two days time. And so what he's saying to them is, you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets by your own admission.

And actually, you may as well carry on and do what they did because your heart is filthy anyway. And not only that, he says, you are going to carry on.

[35 : 44] You are actually of the same ilk. You are of the same, you've descended from people and you're emulating what they did. And he says, you brood of vipers.

Now, a viper is a deadly little snake. And so when he says you brood of vipers, he's calling them a family of deadly snakes, little snakes.

Well, the little snake is the child of a big snake. And snakes in the Jewish culture were, they were always linked with Satan.

They were considered to be, because of Genesis chapter 3, the serpent in the garden, they were always considered to be evil things, snakes. And they were always associated with Satan.

And so what he was calling them when he said you brood of vipers was a load of deadly sons of snakes or sons of Satan. Again, he's not pulling his punches here.

[36 : 53] And they called a brood of vipers three times in Matthew's gospel. John the Baptist called them a brood of vipers in chapter 3 and verse 7 when he said you brood of vipers who told you to avoid the judgment to come or something like that in chapter 3.

Jesus affirmed it in his ministry in chapter 12 and verse 34 which is the point at which they committed the sin that would not be forgiven. And now we have it for a third time.

Now when anything is in scripture three times, you pay particular heed to it. So he was in very strong terms calling them out for the most heinous of evil and doing so prophetically because he knew that they were going to kill him in a couple of days' time.

But it actually goes further than that. Because then he goes on to say in verse 34 therefore behold I am sending you prophets and 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.

So there's a prophetic element to this and not only have you done it and not only are you about to do it but everyone I send you going forward you're going to do it to them too. Which is why all by one of the apostles were martyred and so many of the old church fathers were martyred because they were persecuted for their faith.

[38 : 32] They were put to death for their faith and initially by Jews. The Gentile church did burgeon but for the first probably best part of 100 years it was predominantly Jews who were persecuting the Christians who were taken around the gospel.

so he's selling he's yet again I'm going to send you these prophets and scribes and wise men and you're going to treat them exactly the same scourging them crucifying them.

A little passing note there's often a little bit of argy bargy where people say oh the Jews they killed Jesus. We all killed Jesus and it's an important point.

You see killing Jesus because at that time the Jews were not allowed to administer capital punishment for themselves because they were under the Jewish hand. You could only sentence someone to death if you had the sanction of the Romans. So whatever the Jews did to Jesus needed the sanction of the Romans.

[39 : 40] So this was a collaboration between Jew and Gentile that killed Jesus. But the truth is he died because of our sin. And so we all put Jesus to the cross in some way.

Our sin has contributed to it even though this is now after the event. And when we sin he still says Father forgive them for they do not know what they do.

So praise God for that. But if you hear people say oh well you know the Jews killed Jesus. It's tenuous that. They had a hand in it for sure. And what he says as we read towards the end here he says verse 36 truly I say to you all these things will come upon this generation.

The word is genia and it means the existing generation at the time. It's not one of those that refers to coming generations. He said all these things. It's not exclusive to that generation but he's saying this generation is going to experience this.

And of course 40 years later thereabouts probably 37 years later Israel was burned. There was mass slaughter and those that were not killed were scattered all over the earth.

[41 : 07] There was a massive outpouring of God's judgment because they killed and muttered many of the servants of God.

So then we come to these last three verses. How much time have I got left? Oh, I'll take my time then. And you know this onomatopoeic word that we talked about earlier which I think is we are. He then in a similar tone says Jerusalem Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who are said to her how often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were unwilling.

There's a heartache in this that we mustn't miss. In the book of Ezekiel we learn that God takes no pleasure from the death of the wicked.

So when he has to administer harsh judgment it's not because he enjoys it it's because he is a righteous and just God. But he's saying oh Jerusalem Jerusalem it's it's heartfelt and what he what he says here I really wanted to gather you together now he knows everything from before the event he knows everything so he knew that they would reject him but that didn't make him any less sorry that they did.

[42 : 44] Sometimes we have this sort of thing in our families where you hope that one of your kids will do something. Been through this a little bit recently in my own family.

You hope that one of your kids will do something and they don't. It doesn't mean you don't love them but it puts them in a situation from which it's very difficult to then extricate them.

And he's saying this about these Jews. I just wanted to gather you. I just wanted to take you to myself but you would not listen.

What does he say? You were unwilling. And because you were unwilling and you see this is the beauty of salvation and also in one sense the most horrendous thing about salvation is you get all the benefits of it if you're willing and you get none of the benefits of it if you're not.

So it all hinges on the willingness. And he's saying you were unwilling and because you were unwilling, verse 38, behold your house is being left to you desolate.

[43 : 57] Now I believe the house there, certainly what the Jews would have considered their house was the temple because that's where God lived and they looked upon the temple as the house of God.

But they'd also say they'd own it and they'd say but this is our place, the temple, it's our house. So it's kind of under joint ownership in their eyes. but your house is being left to you desolate just because you were unwilling.

Now I wonder how many would have gone oh well, he's crucified, he's gone, temple's still there, we've got nothing to worry about. Wind forward 37 years and it's raised to the ground, there's a prophecy that says not one stone would be left upon another and what actually happened when it was set on fire is that all the gold in the temple melted and ran down between the stones and they then picked over the site to get the gold out from between the stones and so eventually there were not any two stones left stuck to each other because the gold was mingled in with the mortar so they had to break the bricks apart to get the gold out and so that prophecy was fulfilled absolutely minutely and the house was left desolate it was a ruin and this last verse is so full of hope and if

I had another hour I would go on to talk about the future of Israel which everybody's arguing over at the moment and saying the most heinous things accusing them of the most dreadful things which are not true they are not indulging in genocide they're not trying to starve out the guards in fact if they can get their hands on any of the guards that are injured they're actually treating them they're actually trying to be compassionate they're actually warning in advance of attacks so that civilians can get out of the way they're doing everything they can to fight a war in a way that as far as I can see no war has ever been fought before you don't normally get a military opponent that tells you everything it's going to do before it does it so that you can get your civilians out of the way of course the guards and Hamas anyway is actually hiding behind those civilians that the Jews are trying not to get but he says in this last verse for you will for I say to you from now on you will not see me until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the

Lord a famous little Hebrew line which means that he's coming again and it's not over even though they're scattered even though the city's been obliterated and the temple's been razed to the ground and they're all over the globe he is coming again and so Israel is not finished and they are still God's people and at the moment the world is treating them like a pariah when in fact they should be looking out for them praying for them protecting them and as a government Keir Starmer's recent stuff tells us that we're on the wrong side so the last verse you want to consider is Zechariah 12 and verse 10 which tells us that there is yet a time it hasn't happened yet in human history but it's about to happen at some point in the future where the

[47 : 45] Jews will see their Messiah again and they will mourn what they've done it says they will look upon me so this is the Lord speaking through Zechariah they look upon me whom they have pierced and weep as for an only son they'll realize what they've done and they will be bereft and they will welcome him back and it's prophesied in Zechariah 12 10 it's not over yet and there's a lot still to come father thank you so much for this word I do pray that you will keep us in a right perspective that you will teach us well and you will provide for us to learn well what the scripture has to say and to live by it and not compromise it I was so sad recently when I've exchanged messages on the internet with people who have just basically thrown their bibles away and have made up their own version of events and Lord it's all here for us to find and I thank you that it's here for us to find and I pray Lord that you would keep us in the truth your word is truth in Jesus name amen you