

December 2nd and 3rd 2025

Triumphant Tuesday and

Wisdom Wednesday Bible Study

Rosie Seals - **The Gospel of Matthew — Introduction**

Throughout Jesus' ministry, Jesus consistently had conflicts with two groups of religious leaders: the **Pharisees** and the **Sadducees**. The Pharisees, a religious group known for strict obedience to the Law of Moses and the man-made traditions that had been added over time—they believed in resurrection of the dead, (**Acts 23:6-8**). The **Sadducees**: a smaller but powerful group made up largely of wealthy priests and high-ranking leaders connected to the Temple. They rejected the resurrection of the dead (**Matt 22:23-33; Acts 4:1-2; 23:8**) and the traditions of the Pharisees. These two groups had different views on both religion and politics.

As we examine Matthew chapter 23, we encounter what can be described as a verbal whipping directed at the Pharisees through Jesus' powerful Woes. Yet these words were never meant to stop with them alone; they compel us to examine our own lives and ask whether any of these truths are reflected in us, or whether we are deceiving ourselves into believing we are living the holy lives Christ intended.

This chapter will be presented from the NIV translation in five sections: (**listed below**)

Verses **1-3** * Jesus' Warning

Verses **4-7** * The Weight of Empty Religion

Verses **8-12** * Humble Leadership

Verses **13-36** * From Behold to Woe

Verses **37-39** * The Savior's Sorrow for Jerusalem

Here, in the first three verses, Christ calls His followers to discernment — to live in obedience to God's Word, not merely to follow human tradition.

Jesus' Warning 1-3

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ² "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. ³ So you must be careful to do

everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.

Let's begin with this – the Pharisees had assumed an authority not their own. The scribes and the Pharisees seated themselves in Moses' seat.

To “sit in Moses' seat” meant to occupy the position of interpreting and applying the Law of God—this is a sacred responsibility established by God Himself

God personally appointed Moses to be His representative and teacher:

Moses was to **“teach them His decrees and show them how to live.”** (*Exodus 18:19-20*)

God gave Moses the Law for the people's **instruction.** (*Exodus 24:12*)

Moses declared that **“the Lord commanded me to teach you His decrees and laws.”** (*Deut. 4:1, 5 14*)

Moses established that the priests should continue reading and teaching the Law publicly. (*Deut. 31:9-13*)

Moses' authority came directly from God, and those who later taught the Law, such as the scribes and Pharisees, were viewed as successors to that teaching office.

Yet, when Jesus came, He revealed that He was greater than Moses—not abolishing the Law but fulfilling it completely.

Jesus declared, **“I have not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it.”** (*Matt 5:17-18*)

Jesus taught **“as one who had authority,”** unlike the teachers of the law. (*Matt 7:28-29*)

He gave a **new commandment of love**, fulfilling the heart of the Law. (*John 13:34-35*)

He deepened the Law's meaning, moving it from external obedience to internal purity. (*Matt 5:21-22, 27-28*)

Jesus was **“worthy of greater honor than Moses,”** for He became the mediator of a better covenant—the New Covenant of grace. (*Hebrews 3:1-3; 8:6*)

God Himself confirmed Jesus as His final and ultimate Teacher: **“This is My beloved Son... listen to Him.”** (*Matt 17:1-5*)

As far the Pharisees, the people were to obey whatever the Pharisees taught from the Word. But they weren't to obey the traditions and the man-made rules of the Pharisees. The Pharisees occupied positions once held by Moses, but they fail to live according to Moses' example. As

stated in the MSG translation, **Matt 23:3...They talk a good line, but they don't live it. They don't take it into their hearts and live it out in their behavior.**

Now, believers no longer look to the seat of Moses but to the throne of Christ, who teaches us by His Spirit and writes His law upon our hearts (**Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 10:16**). In Moses, we received God's Word, in Jesus, we received the Living Word. In Moses, God spoke to His people, because of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Holy Spirit became possible to dwell within us.

The Weight of Empty Religion 4-7

4 They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.⁵ "Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries^[a] wide and the tassels on their garments long; ⁶ they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷ they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others.

To the Pharisees, ministry meant handing down laws to the people and adding to their burdens; legalistic religion always seeks to make burdens heavier. They were hypocritical religious dictators, not spiritual leaders. (**per commentary Warren Wiersbe**)

Jesus exposes the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees — their obsession with rules and outward obedience instead of mercy, justice, and humility. They added human traditions to God's commandments, creating spiritual burdens too heavy for ordinary people to carry.

Let's ask ourselves three questions:

#1 Do we make faith a burden instead of a blessing?

Jesus warns that the scribes and Pharisees "tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders." Their religion is focused on rules, rituals, and human expectations rather than relationship, mercy, and grace.

Faith was meant to bring people closer to God, not weigh them down with guilt and obligation. When we focus more on outward performance than on inward transformation, we turn faith into a burden rather than the blessing God intended.

Jesus came to lift those burdens and restore the joy of walking with God:

***"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (Matt 11:28-30 NIV)**

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free... do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1 NIV)

True faith isn't about carrying heavy loads of legalism or judgment — it's about finding freedom, peace, and rest in Christ.

When we serve God out of love instead of obligation, faith becomes a blessing that refreshes rather than a weight that oppresses.

#2 Do we seek God's approval or man's applause?

Jesus reveals that the Pharisees did “everything... for people to see.” They enlarged their phylacteries, lengthened their tassels, and loved places of honor and public greetings. Their service was not for God's glory, but for human recognition.

When faith becomes a stage instead of an altar, we begin to seek applause from people rather than approval from God.

True righteousness is seen by God even when no one else notices.

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.” Matt 6:1 NIV)

“For they loved human praise more than praise from God.” (John 12:43 NIV)

Apostle Paul stated in **Galatians 1:10 (NIV)** — ***“If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”***

The applause of man fades quickly, but the approval of God lasts forever. A heart that seeks God's pleasure above man's praise reflects true discipleship. **and**

#3 Do we serve to be seen, or serve because we've been saved?

The Pharisees' service was motivated by pride, not love.

But genuine service flows from a redeemed heart, one that remembers what Christ has done. We serve others because we've been saved, not to earn favor or admiration.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” (Philippians 2:3-4 NIV) Our motivation for serving others is humility and love-not admiration or recognition.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” (Colossians 3:23-24 NIV) True service focuses on pleasing God, not people. Our reward comes from Him alone.

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matt 5:16 NIV) Our service should direct glory to God, not to ourselves. We serve so that He is seen, through us.

The Phylacteries that were worn by the Pharisees were small leather boxes containing scriptures; (**Exodus 13th** chapter and **6th** and **11th** chap. of **Deuteronomy**)

They were worn on the forehead and arm during prayer as a reminder to keep God's law in both mind and action. (**Deuteronomy 6:8 and Exodus 13:9**)

The Pharisees made their phylacteries larger and more noticeable, turning a symbol of devotion into a display of pride.

I've included an image of what this might have looked like, visualizing the small boxes as being larger.

An image of the tassels was included. God commanded His people to wear **tassels** on their garments as reminders to obey His commandments. (**Numbers 15:38-39**)

The Pharisees lengthened these tassels to show off their holiness rather than humbly remembering God's Word.

Images below:

Phylacteries

Matthew 23





They made a spectacle of faith instead of living faith from the heart. Serving to be seen feeds the ego; serving because we've been saved reflects Christ. True service is doing your best for God, even when no one is watching.

“Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them.” (Matthew 6:1)

We should view every role, every gift, and every success as an opportunity to glorify God, not elevate self. Jesus calls His followers to a higher standard — not to *perform* righteousness, but to *practice* it; not to be seen, but to serve.

Humble Leadership 8-12

8 “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. **9** And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. **10** Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. **11** The greatest among you will be your servant. **12** For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

There are some leaders who loved to be called by exalted names that elevate them above others, you might even be corrected by some, if their titles aren't mentioned; they're forgetting that true greatness in God's Kingdom is found in humility and service, not in titles or positions. There is only one true Teacher-Christ Himself, the Messiah, as stated in **verse 10**.

Jesus warns His followers not to seek titles, status, or recognition, as the Pharisees did, but to embrace a posture of servant-hearted humility. True greatness in God's kingdom is not found in being over others but in serving others faithfully. Jesus redefines leadership.

The question becomes: **How do we remain humble while serving in leadership roles?**

#1 Recognize God as the Source of all authority.

*Leadership is stewardship, not ownership. A steward is someone entrusted with managing something that belongs to someone else. Leaders in God's kingdom are entrusted with responsibility; not given possession. Everything a leader has—position, influence, wisdom, or authority—it all belongs to God, and must be used to serve God's purpose and God's people.

“This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. (1 Cor 4:1-2)

“Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought but rather think of yourself with sober judgment.” (Romans 12:3)

Leadership is not about power or control, but about faithfully managing what God has placed in your care-people, resources, and influence-in a way that honors Him. A godly leader will one day give an account not for how much they ruled, but how well they served.

#2 Lead as a servant, not as a superior.

* To lead as a servant means to follow the example of Jesus, who demonstrated that true leadership is not about being above others, but about being beneath others in service. It's leadership that lifts, not lords over; and leadership that serves, not seeks status.

Jesus redefined leadership when He said

“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them... Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42-45)

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:14-15)

A servant-leader uses authority to build others up, not to elevate self. They guide with compassion, listen with patience, and lead by example. Their question is not “*How can others serve me?*” but “*How can I serve God through serving others?*”

#3 Keep your focus on pleasing God, not people.

*In keeping our focus on pleasing God, not people, it means that our decisions, actions, and service are guided by God's approval, not by the desire for human applause or acceptance. People opinions can change from day to day, but God's truth and His standard never change. When we live to please people, we might find ourselves in some form of compromise to gain someone's approval. But when we live to please God, we stand firm in faith-even when it costs us popularity or recognition. Jesus warns us of this danger in **verse 5**, where the Pharisees performed religious acts “to be seen by men”. Their motives were centered on appearance, not obedience.

God calls His followers to a higher standard in Him-to serve sincerely, from the heart, knowing that He alone is our ultimate audience.

Galatians 1:10 (TPT) states, “I'm obviously not trying to flatter you or water down my message to be popular with men, but my supreme passion is to please God. For if all I attempt to do is please people, I would fail to be a true servant of Christ.

When we seek to please God first, our motives become pure, our service becomes joyful, and our leadership becomes faithful. **and**

#4 Remember the promise of humility.

*Meaning to keep in mind that God sees, honors, and rewards those who choose the path of meekness and surrender. Humility is not weakness - It's the quiet confidence that God is in control, and that we don't need to exalt ourselves, because in His perfect time, He will do the exalting. As Jesus stated in **verse 12**; **"For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.**

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:6)

The promise of humility is not about earthly promotion, but spiritual elevation-a life filled with grace, peace and God' favor. Those who trust God's timing will never be overlooked.

In my reviewing of these passages of scripture, I found that Jesus reveals the true spirit of godly leadership-one rooted not in pride or position, but in servanthood and sincerity. The posture of true greatness in the kingdom is a heart that serves, a spirit that yields, and a life that reflects the One who came "not to be served, but to serve."

13-36

This is a series of **"Woes"** that reveal the deep grief of a righteous Savior over hardened hearts. Jesus exposes their hypocrisy, not to condemn without cause, but to awaken repentance. Each **woe** exposes a specific area of spiritual decay.

In **chapter 20** of Matthews, **Sister Willie** did an awesome job of drawing our attention to the word **Behold**-this word calls for us to **stop, listen** and **observe**. **"Behold"** is a spotlight, calling us to notice what God is doing. **Behold** draws our eyes toward God's truth.

So now, in **chapter 23**, we're drawn to the word **Woe** – it expresses **grief, warning,** and **judgment** over hypocrisy and spiritual blindness. It's not only a word of condemnation but also for compassion- compassion of a Savior whose heart breaks for those refusing His truth. **Woe** is an alarm-calling us to awaken from spiritual complacency, to see our sin, and to return to God before it's too late. **Woe** warns our hearts away from sin.

From Behold to Woe 13-36

13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

- The Pharisees hindered others from entering God’s kingdom by their traditions and spiritual pride. Instead of guiding souls to God, they stood as obstacles, guarding power. **Romans 14:13 (NIV)** — *“Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.”*

When humility governs the heart, ministry becomes a bridge of grace, not a barrier of rules.

Verse 14 was omitted in many translations because modern Bible translations are based on the earliest and most reliable Greek manuscripts of the NT. In the older manuscripts, it’s believed that this verse was likely added later by scribes who copied it from **Mark 12:40** and **Luke 20:47**, *“They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely”*.

14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you swallow up widows’ houses, and to cover it up you make long prayers; therefore, you will receive the greater condemnation. (AMP)

> This verse reveals that the Pharisees used religion for personal gain by exploiting the vulnerable. Through deceit and manipulation, they took advantage of those they were called to protect; they did so by offering long and showy prayers to maintain a false image of holiness. Their outward prayers were a cover for their inward greed. God’s Word warns that He defends the widow and the oppressed. **James 1:27 (NLT)** – *“Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.”*

Jesus’ rebuke exposes a religious pretense that uses spirituality for personal gain. Their prayers sounded righteous, but their hearts were unrighteous. Their actions betrayed the very law they claimed to uphold—justice, mercy, and compassion.

This woe is a reminder that God sees beyond our words and titles; He weighs the motives of the heart. To misuse spiritual authority for personal benefit brings not reward, but greater condemnation.

God calls us to a faith that serves others in sincerity, compassion, and truth.

15 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.”

In these verses, Jesus grieves over the religious zeal of the Pharisees and scribes — a zeal that looks righteous outwardly but is corrupted inwardly. They *“travel over land and sea”* — a phrase emphasizing great effort and determination — to win a single convert. Yet, their passion is misguided. Instead of drawing people toward God’s truth, they draw them into the same hypocrisy and spiritual blindness they themselves live under.

They appear devoted, but their devotion leads others away from truth rather than toward it.

Their converts adopt the same external religiosity without internal transformation — becoming, as Jesus says, **“twice as much a child of hell.”**

“Woe” laments those who refused to behold (stop, listen, and observe) — those who saw but did not perceive, meaning – those who witness God’s truth, heard His Word and even saw His works, yet failed to understand or receive it in their heart, they were spiritually blind. They had knowledge without revelation, sight without understanding, and religion without relationship. Those who taught but did not live truth, meaning – they taught truth intellectually, but didn’t live truth spiritually. Their words were right, but their ways were wrong.

Paul said of Israel in **Romans 10:2**, **“For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.”**

This warning isn’t just for the Pharisees — it’s for us, too.

It reminds us that spiritual knowledge means little without spiritual obedience.

God desires not just that we hear His Word, but that we live it.

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22)

16-22

16 “Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ **17** You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? **18** You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ **19** You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? **20** Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. **21** And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. **22** And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

- This woe reminds us that spiritual blindness can affect anyone who loses sight of the presence of God in worship, in His service, or in life period. Believers are warned to keep their heart pure and their focus fixed on what is eternal, not what is temporary.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21) NIV

Jesus pronounces “Woe to blind guides, an outcry to those who were meant to lead others to God but instead led them into confusion. The religious leaders had lost sight of what was truly sacred. They saw the gold, the temple, and the altar-but failed to perceive the God who sanctified them – meaning, that it is God Himself who gives meaning and holiness to: the temple, because His presence dwells there; the altar, because it represents His covenant; and the sacrifices, because they are offered unto Him. Without God, those things are merely objects. With God’s presence, they become sacred instruments of worship.

Just as God’s presence made the temple, altar, and sacrifices holy, so today His Spirit makes our lives sacred. The Pharisees valued the gold of the temple more than the God who dwelled within it. They honored what was seen but ignored the unseen presence that gave it meaning.

We must be careful not to make the same mistake — valuing our outward acts of worship, our service, and our success more than the God who sanctifies our hearts. Holiness does not come from the things we do or possess; it comes from the One who dwells within us.

So today, let us behold His presence and guard against the woe of spiritual blindness. For where God dwells, holiness abides.

23-24

23 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. **24** You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

- The tithing was noteworthy, but hypocritical because it served to sooth the guilt of the Pharisees neglect of the weightier matters of the law which was justice, mercy and faith. The Pharisees carefully measured out tithes but ignored compassion and righteousness (**Micah 6:8**). God desires hearts of mercy, not a religious show (**Hosea 6:6** and **Matt 9:13**). Their religion looked to be on point, but it lacked love. Now, in their strictness, the Pharisees would strain their wine to avoid swallowing a tiny, unclean insect (**Leviticus 11:20-23**). Yet they “swallowed a camel” meaning, they tolerated far greater sins like greed, pride, and injustice; in other words: They were careful about little rules but careless about weightier matters. This woe challenges us to examine our hearts: Do we focus on outward acts of religion while forgetting inner transformation? True obedience flows from a heart aligned with God’s character, not from outward rituals and/or traditions.

God is not moved by outward perfection, but by inward devotion. When our hearts are aligned with His—overflowing with justice, mercy, and faithfulness—our service becomes true worship, and our obedience becomes love in action.

25-26

25 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. **26** Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

- Jesus used the image of a cup and dish to illustrate the danger of surface-level religion — one that shines outwardly yet is tainted inwardly. He calls for true cleansing that begins within.

I remember when I was a child, Mama would ask me, “*Ree, have you cleaned your room?*” And I’d say, “*Yes, ma’am!*”—hoping she wouldn’t look under the bed.

Because while the room looked spotless on the surface, I had pushed all the mess out of sight. But one day... she looked under the bed. And what she found told the real story—it wasn’t cleaned.

That’s what Jesus was addressing in these verses. The Pharisees appeared righteous, respected, and disciplined. Their outward “cup” looked clean—they followed religious traditions, wore holy garments, and said the right words.

But Jesus looked deeper. He saw hearts full of greed, pride, and self-righteousness. They were careful to polish the outside, but they ignored the real issue—their hearts.

Jesus wasn’t saying the outside doesn’t matter—He was saying it must begin on the inside. Because when the heart is clean, the actions, words, and attitudes will follow.

It was like when Mama looked under my bed, God looks beneath the surface of our lives. He sees the hidden attitudes, the unconfessed sins, the places we’ve tried to hide away.

But His purpose isn’t to condemn—it’s to cleanse. When we invite Him to purify our hearts, He doesn’t just tidy things up—He transforms us from the inside out.

“The Lord does not look at people in the way that people do. People look at the face and body of a person. But the Lord sees what they are like inside.” (1 Samuel 16:7b)
Easy

Jesus wasn’t condemning the act of being orderly; He was exposing spiritual pretense—the kind that tries to hide sin behind a mask of religion. He calls us to start cleaning from the inside out—to allow God to cleanse our hearts so our actions reflect true holiness.

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit with me.”(Ps 51:10)
NIV

When God looks beneath the surface—under the bed, so to speak—He’s not trying to shame us; He’s trying to free us.

27 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. **28** In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

In Israel, before Passover, tombs were whitewashed so people could avoid touching them and becoming ceremonially unclean. The beautiful tombs are hiding the reality of death within.

Jesus wasn't fooled by performance or appearances—and He invites us to see our own hearts with the same honesty.

This woe is much the same as the previous one (**Matt 23:25-26**).

Jesus said that these religious leaders were like these whitewashed tombs; decay hidden beneath religious polish.

Sometimes we, too, polish the outside: We know the right words to say. We smile even when burdened. We serve while carrying hidden sin and we worship outwardly while our hearts are not even in it.

God hates pretense; **“I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me.” (Amos 5:21)**

Jesus is not content with outward displays. He wants our hearts because He knows that true change always begins within.

Again, Jesus teaches that when the inside is transformed, the outside will naturally follow.

“If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” 2 Cor 5:17, NIV

29-36

29 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. **30** And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ **31** So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. **32** Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!**33** “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? **34** Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. **35** And so upon you will come all

the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶ Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.

It is here within these verses that Jesus exposes a deep spiritual danger—not just for the current teachers of the law and Pharisees, but for every generation of believers that comes after. Yes, these spiritual dangers are relevant today.

There's the danger of outward religion without an obedient heart—now the Pharisees looked holy, they honored the prophets, they kept the rituals and they even had religious status; but their hearts resisted the very message God sent through His prophets; and in doing this, there lies the danger: You can admire spiritual things outwardly while resisting God inwardly. Jesus exposes that we respect God's Word "intellectually", we honor spiritual traditions, we speak religious language and we even look righteous to others...yet still reject the voice of God calling us to obedience and transformation. ***"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."*** 2 Tim 3:5, TPT, ***"They may pretend to have a respect for God, but in reality, they want nothing to do with God's power. Stay away from people like these!"*** (Matt 15:8)

Another danger to be aware of, the danger of believing ***"I would never do that"***, verse 30 stated, ***"and you say, 'if we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'"*** This attitude indicates spiritual pride—the belief that we are morally superior and incapable of the sins of others. Pride blinds us, hardens our hearts, prevents repentance and it can make us unteachable. ***"So beware if you think it could never happen to you, lest your pride becomes your downfall. (1 Cor 10:12)***

There's the danger of ignoring God's correction—the Pharisees honored the prophets' tomb—they prefer celebrating truth from the past rather than obeying truth in the present. God was correcting them through Jesus—yet they resisted, argued, and plotted. The spiritual danger here is—hearing God's truth without responding to it. ***We have seen what the Bible says: 'You must listen when you hear God speak today. Do not refuse to obey him. Do not be like God's people many years ago, when they turned against God.'*** (Hebrews 3:15)

We have the danger of continuing a legacy of rejecting God's messengers, yes, legacy, verse 32, ***"Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!"*** Rejecting truth becomes a cycle—unless we break it. This spiritual danger is refusing God's messenger because we dislike His message. ***"Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."*** (Luke 10:16)

The legacy continues onto religion without repentance leading to judgment (verses 33-36). The spiritual danger is thinking we can honor God externally without submitting internally and avoid consequences. Jesus referenced two murders in verse 35, first, the death of Abel: **Genesis 4:8** records the moment when Cain lures his brother Abel into a field and kills him, becoming the first murderer in Scripture. This act grows out of Cain's unchecked anger, jealousy, and resentment after God accepted Abel's offering but not his. God had

warned Cain earlier that sin was **“crouching at the door,” urging him to rule over it (Genesis 4:7)**—but Cain refused correction.

This was unrestrained sin-anger left unresolved turns destructive, a tragic result of jealousy—rather than turning to God for change, Cain attacked the innocent; sin not only separates humanity from God but from one another.

Genesis 4:8 reveals how sin, when not confronted, leads from inward resentment to outward violence.

Second, the death of Zechariah: **2 Chronicles 24:20-22**, empowered by God, Zechariah publicly confronts the people and the king, declaring that they have abandoned the Lord and therefore the Lord cannot bless them in their rebellion.

Instead of receiving the warning, King Joash turns against the very family that once saved his life. He orders Zechariah to be stoned to death in the courtyard of the temple. This act reveals Joash’s deep spiritual decline and betrayal. As Zechariah dies, he cries out, **“May the Lord see this and call you to account!” (2 Chronicles 24:22)**

Here in **2 Chronicles**, this was a rejection of God’s correction: the people reject the prophetic voice meant to restore them; there was also a spiritual decline—Joash’s heart turns from humility to pride, from gratitude to violence; however, Zechariah’s final words affirm that God sees injustice and will repay accordingly. This passage showed how far Joash had drifted from God and the severe consequences of rejecting God’s warning and persecuting His messenger.

The **“Woe”** statements of Jesus were never meant to crush believers but to call us into a deeper self-examination. They urge us to ask questions such as:

Do my words honor God while my heart resists Him? Do I embrace Scripture but resist the Spirit’s conviction? Do I avoid truths that disturb my comfort? Am I quick to justify myself rather than humble myself?

The Pharisees knew the law well, but they lacked the humility that makes truth take root.

Jesus’ rebuke to the Pharisees shows us that the heart is the battleground. We must intentionally guard our heart.

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Proverbs 4:23(NIV)

Our hearts are shaped daily by what we: listen to, think about, absorb, and agree with.

“Keep creating in me a clean heart. Fill me with pure thoughts and holy desires, ready to please you.” (Psalms 51:10 TPT)

37-39

Jesus has spoken truth firmly, not out of anger alone, but out of a deep desire for Israel to return to God. And it is from *that* moment—from righteous rebuke—that His tone

shifts. What begins as a rebuke ends as a lament. Jesus now reveals His heart: a grieving Savior longing to gather His people, even as they continue to push Him away.

The Saviors' Sorrow for Jerusalem 37-39

37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. **38** Look, your house is left to you desolate. **39** For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'^[c]"

As stated previously, this section begins with a rebuke but ends as a lament-lament used here as a deep, sorrow-filled of grief rooted in love, spoken when someone's heart is breaking over what could have been or long for something to be. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you," Jerusalem became the place where many who spoke God's Word were rejected, persecuted, and killed.

There's a line of faithful servants whom God sent but the people resisted. To name a few. **Elijah**-threatened and discouraged (**1 Kings 19:1-10**), **Jeremiah**-beaten, publicly humiliated, and nearly killed (**Jeremiah 20:1-2; 38:4-6**) and **John the Baptist**- is imprisoned and executed (**Matt 14:1-12**). Each prophet was an invitation to return to God. Each message was a call back to life. And each rejection broke God's heart.

Jesus' lament isn't frustration-it's divine sorrow-its love wounded by repeated rejection-it's the heart of God mourning for the people He longs to save. You see how he states here..." how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." There's still some of us who are still pushing Him away. Jesus is the Savior who longs to gather, shelter, protect, and restore.

Jesus has continually reached out to us-through His prophets, through His Word, through His teachings, and ultimately by coming to earth Himself. He took on flesh and lived among us to show that holiness is possible, for He is holy. He stands as our perfect example.

When truth is rejected, desolation follows- "**Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (vs 38 KJV)** (stop, listen, observe). This is a prophetic announcement. This is a shift from lament to a verdict. Jesus has declared, the withdrawal of God's presence, there's a transition from "God's house" to "your house"-there's tragic consequences of rejecting the Messiah. Jesus is urging them/us to recognize the seriousness of rejecting God, recognize the emptiness that comes when His presence is removed and the spiritual consequences of being hard-hearted. To put it even simpler - Behold - Stop. Look. Pay close attention; something spiritually significant has just taken

place-your house is now empty and abandoned because you have rejected the One who came to save you.

“He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.” (John 1:11 NLT)

Where God isn't welcomed, the house becomes desolate. When Christ is rejected, God's presence withdraws. A house without Christ may look intact, but it's spiritually empty. What still looks faithful on the outside may already be desolate within. When routine replaces relationship -your spiritual life has shifted from living connected with God to going through the motions; when form replaces obedience -we do the right things but avoid doing what God has instructed us to do. Jesus does not force His presence where He's continually resisted, meaning doing our own version of holiness.

Yet, Jesus speaks hope within this warning: *“You will not see Me again until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’”*

Do an honest one question examination of self - Do I **welcome** Christ daily?

Resources

Bibles: NIV, TPT, MSG

Full Life Study Bible

Chronological Life Application Study Bible

David Guzik – Commentary

Warren Wiersbe – Commentary

<https://chatgpt.com>

Zondervan-Exegetical Commentary

Bible Background Commentary – New Testament