

Matthew 23:29-36 Woe to Those Who Kill the Prophets

Introduction This is the eighth and final woe Jesus pronounced on the scribes and Pharisees. It is also the most severe.

I. The woe on the scribes and Pharisees.

- A. It began in those very familiar word, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,” verse 29. (Then he gives the reason, “because.”)
- B. He mentions building the tombs of the prophets.
 - 1. Remember that they dug artificial caves.
 - 2. Then they built stone walls, walk, steps, and paved areas.
- C. Jesus also mentions that they garnished the sepulchres of the righteous.
 - 1. The word, garnish, means to decorate, to adorn.
 - 2. This was by means of elaborate carvings in the stone walls and beautiful monumental slabs installed in the walls.
- D. All of this was to pay tribute to the prophets and other righteous men who had become national heroes in Israel.
- E. Jesus does not condemn the practice of decorating the graves of the dead but the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees.
- F. By their deeds and their words they said, “If we had lived back yonder, we would not have killed the prophets,” verse 30.
- G. Jesus said in effect, “Yes you would. You are their children and like your parents,” verse 31. (“Don't you know you are like them?”)
- H. In verse 32 Jesus said, “Fill up the measure of your fathers.”
(You follow their example and do every bit as bad as they have done.)
- I. In verse 33 the word, serpent, is not used to insult but to describe.
(You Devilish, Satanic creatures.)
- J. He also raises a vital question, “How can ye escape the damnation of hell?”
- K. In verse 34 Jesus said that He would put them to the test.
 - 1. He would send prophets, wise men, and scribes to them. (His disciples.)
 - 2. The scribes and Pharisees would not pass the test. (Nor would most others in Israel.)
- L. For that reason God would severely punish the whole nation.
(Jerusalem would fall in 70 A.D.), verse 35.
- M. The destruction of Jerusalem would come in their lifetime, verse 36.

II. Lessons for the people of our day.

- A. There is a lesson for the saved as well as the unsaved.
 - 1. Many a preacher has been killed by those who are saved.
 - 2. Not literally killed with a knife or gun, but killed with the tongue.
(They cut his throat and stab him in the back with their tongues.)
 - 3. They do not stone him with stones, but they beat him to death with their lips.
 - 4. They kill his ministry with their criticism.
 - 5. It is just as dangerous to kill a man's ministry as it is to kill a man.
- B. Like the scribes and Pharisees we all have the tendency to say, “We would not have killed the prophets; we would not have crucified the Christ.”
 - 1. But the nature which we inherited from fallen Adam is just as depraved as theirs was.
 - 2. Under the same circumstances we would have done the same.
 - 3. Is it not a thousand wonders that any of us can escape the damnation of hell?
(Only by the grace of God.)

- C. It may become tempting, especially for the unsaved, to persecute the righteous.
(Preacher, deacon, Sunday School teacher, Christian on the job or in the home.)
1. This may be an effort to justify self for rejecting the gospel.
 2. But it is dangerous, dangerous business. (God takes it personal.)

Conclusion: Confess that you are a sinner and turn to Christ so that you will escape the torments of hell.

Teaches about:

1. The depravity of man.
2. The sinfulness even of the saved man.
3. The great urgency of being saved.

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