

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

*You Must be Born Again!*

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## *The Gospel of Matthew*

### *Blood on Their Hands*

*March 1, 2020*

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 23:29-39

**Scripture Reading:** 2 Chronicles  
24:1-22

Matthew 23:29-39 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, (30) saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ (31) Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

(32) Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. (33) You serpents, you brood

of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

(34) Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, (35) so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. (36) Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

(37) “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (38) See, 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.’”

## The Same DNA

We come now to the last woe Jesus pronounced against the religious rulers of that day. *For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous.* They make the claim that if God's prophets had come to them, they would not have done as their ancestors did – kill God's spokesmen.

Another gross hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees concerned their claims about the Old Testament prophets the Lord had sent to Jerusalem so often. They apparently built tombs and monuments to them – a kind of saint worship? *They acknowledged that the prophets were in fact sent to them by the Lord and that those prophets were righteous.* Perhaps Jerusalem had statues and monuments and stone tombs such as you might see in the capitals of other nations? They would have had pious inscriptions on them.

What did Jesus mean by this? -

'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' (31) Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

How is it that, as Jesus says, these hypocrites “witnessed against themselves” and thereby showed that in spite of their claim, they were exactly like those wicked ancestors?

Let me suggest several ways they did so:

- They acknowledged that those prophets spoke God's Word. That Word was a call to repentance, but these wicked ones (just like their ancestors) refused to repent and thereby rejected God's Word.
- They witness against their claim that they would not kill God's prophets *by killing God's prophets!* They had not heeded John the Baptist for instance, and he was put to death. But even more, they were already plotting to kill Jesus, the Landowner's Son!

And their evil generation would continue as we see in the rest of the New Testament. Their kind kept hating God's Word, kept persecuting and killing His Apostles and prophets, and are doing so even to this day.

They truly were sons of those murderers. Sons in the sense that not only were they physical descendants of them, but also that they shared the same spiritual DNA. They hated the

Word of the Lord, they hated the Lord, they were murderers of the righteous, just like their fathers no matter how many monuments they built to “honor” God’s prophets.

And think of this: the very fact that Jerusalem was filled with monuments of tombs of these prophets *demonstrates that Jerusalem kills the prophets*, just as Jesus says in verse 37. These aren’t just *monuments*. They are *tombs!!*

Look at vs 32-33 again:

(32) Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. (33) You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

This is exactly what they were doing – filling up the full measure of their fathers’ evil. This “filling up” indicates a final point at which God’s wrath against them would be full and spilled out upon them. And so it would be.

We also need to notice the severity of Jesus’ words to them. There are people who are serpents. Broods of vipers, sentenced to hell. People like this exist today. It is not “un-christian” do recognize this. God does not command us to pray for this kind.

Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many

of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

Matthew 12:34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Hebrews 10:26-29 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (28) Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. (29) How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

### Abel to Zechariah

Now, we need to know some background if we are going to understand what Jesus meant by this:

(34) Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues

and persecute from town to town, (35) so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. (36) Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

We already read the account of the murder of Zechariah *the son of Jehoiada*:

2 Chronicles 24:20-21 Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, “Thus says God, ‘Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.’” (21) But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD.

Now, the order of the Old Testament books is different in the Jewish OT than it is in our Bibles. *Chronicles* (1 & 2 are not divided) is the last book. So, as a result, many commentators conclude that Jesus, when He said “from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah...whom you murdered between the sanctuary and

the altar,” meant “the blood of all the prophets, from first to last.”

Now, it is true as we see in 2 Chronicles 24, that *Zechariah the son of Jehoiada* was indeed stoned in the court of the house of the Lord, which seems parallel to “between the sanctuary and the altar.” But there is one important difference which you have probably already seen: *the Zechariah in 2 Chronicles is the son of Jehoiada, while the Zechariah here in Matthew 23 was the son of Barachiah.*

That Zechariah is the minor prophet we know from the book that bears his name:

Zechariah 1:1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying,

The first Zechariah in 2 Chr 24 lived way, way back in the time of the kings while the second Zechariah lived during the time of the exile after the Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BC.

However this is explained, Jesus’ meaning is clear. He is telling the scribes and Pharisees that they bear the guilt of *all the murders* of God’s prophets because the hypocrites are of

the very same evil kingdom as their fathers and are doing the very same evil. And in fact they ALL trace their heritage back to the same evil “father”  
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John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Look at these verses again:

Matthew 23:34-36 Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, (35) so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. (36) Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Do you see the timeline?

Abel to Zechariah ←

→ Prophets sent by Jesus

Jesus is point BACK and AHEAD. He is laying the blood of the martyrs of the past AND those of the future *all on these hypocrites*. They are of their father the devil *and they are going to be held accountable on the Day of judgment for ALL the evil their kind have done down through the centuries*.

Even now, in our own day, these wicked ones are filling up the vial of the wrath of God reserved for them:

Matthew 23:32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.

This “filling up” of the full measure of God’s wrath is something the Bible speaks of frequently.

Revelation 16:1-11 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”

(2) So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

(3) The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

(4) The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood.

(5) And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. (6) For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” (7) And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”

(8) The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. (9) They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory. (10) The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish (11) and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

All of this relates directly to a question we often wonder about – *why doesn't God deal with the wicked now? What is He waiting for?* The answer is, He is waiting for their evil to fill up to the full the measure of His wrath to be poured out upon them.

Revelation 18:20-24 Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”

(21) Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more; (22) and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, (23) and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.

(24) And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”

Understand?

Revelation 6:9-11 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. (10) They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you

will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (11) Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Justice is coming. And when Christ comes, that wrath is going to be poured out upon ALL the wicked of ALL ages who were the children of the devil, who hated Christ and His people, and who murdered the innocent. A little longer. A little while longer, until the measure of their evil is full.

Now we saw a “now but not yet” picture of this wrath in 70 AD:

Matthew 23:37-39 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (38) See, 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.’”

The Romans of course destroyed Jerusalem and slaughtered the people, scattering the Jews to the ends of the

earth. This is a picture of the final judgment that is coming against all who have hated Christ and persecuted His people.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-10 Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. (5) This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— (6) since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, (7) and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels (8) in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, (10) when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

For Christ’s people in this present evil world, here is great encouragement to persevere in faith.

For those who reject Christ, there is sobering warning here. The bowl of His wrath is rising, rising, rising in its level and one day, when it is full, it is going to be poured out. All the wrath stored up from the murder of righteous Abel to the murder of the very last Christian to be martyred, that is the full measure of God's holy justice which all in Satan's kingdom will experience.

We will plan to look further next time at these last three verses, but let me end with these words from J.C. Ryle:

“It is good for us all to mark this lesson well. We are too apt to think that ‘bygones are bygones’ and that things which to us are past, and done, and old, will never be raked up again. But we forget that with God ‘one day is as a thousand years’ and that the events of a thousand years ago are as fresh in His sight as the events of this very hour.

God requires that which is past, and above all, God will require an account of the treatment of His saints. The blood of the primitive Christians shed by the Roman Emperors – the blood of the Vallenses and Albigenses, and the sufferers at the massacre of St. Bartholomew – the blood of the martyrs who were burned at the time of the Reformation, and of those who have been put to death by the

Inquisition – of those who have been put to death, all, all will be yet accounted for. It is an old saying that, the mill-stones of God's justice grind slowly, but they grind very fine. The world will yet see that there is a God that judges in the earth.

Let those who persecute God's people in the present day take heed what they are doing. Let them know that all who injure, or ridicule, or mock, or slander others on account of their faith, commit a great sin. Let them know that Christ takes notice of every one who persecutes his neighbor because he is better himself, or because he prays, reads his Bible, and thinks about his soul. He lives who said, ‘he that touches you touches the apple of my eye.’ The judgement day will prove that the King of kings will reckon with all who insult His servants.”