

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, 35so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 “Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

37“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent 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. 38“Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 39 “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!’”

This little section is a bridge between this final pronouncement of judgements on Israel, and the next big dialogue which is future things.

But it's little only in length. The words and prophecies spoken in these few verses have spanned 2000 years and are still in effect right down to this morning.

These ideas are foreign to us. We live in a bubble that makes these words seem as if they aren't for us. No one is persecuting us from city to city. No righteous blood is being spilled in America.

These words don't ring true to us. We don't feel the pressure. Why is that?

Let's suppose that in Europe and England in the 1500's righteous blood was being spilled. The Catholic church was chasing Tyndale all over France because he was translating the Bible from the original greek (as opposed to latin) into the common english language.

His famous quote was this; “I would to God that the plowman would sing a text of the Scripture at his plow and that the weaver would hum them to the tune of his shuttle.” He wanted the Bible to be on every common man's lips.

They killed him, but not before the job was done. The word of God in the language of the people, at first smuggled in, pages at a time, would cause a revolution that we are still enjoying the fruits of this morning.

The reformation. Protestantism. The Puritans. The great missionary movements, first from Britain and then from this nation, all were born out of the blood of men making the Bible available.

And this nation was also born from that. Our great experiment, the United States, was born of christian principles and ideals. And though imperfect, the influence of the Bible and it's principles born into our ideals brought about singular wealth and blessing and freedom that no nation previously has ever enjoyed or will enjoy again until Jesus comes in His kingdom.

I believe this nation was the pinnacle of what could be achieved and enjoyed by a people who based their integrities, their collective conscience, in the moral law of God.

The Law of God has built into it certain principles that are automatic in a way. Like principles built into this world that are constants. Gravity. Cause and effect that are constants. You can rely on gravity every time. You can overcome gravity temporarily in a lighter than air ship, but if the balloon pops, gravity instantly kicks in.

Moral law, and freedoms and blessing work the same way. It's built into the universe that honoring God and basing a culture in His moral law, the ten commandments, will bring freedom and wealth and blessing.

So, here we are, in our timeframe in history, and we're living at the very end of that insulated bubble of blessing.

We read Jesus words here and we look around us and say, no one's chasing us from city to city persecuting us. No one's shedding righteous blood here. We are insulated from all of that.

But things are changing at a pace that is spectacular. God and His law

have been summarily dismissed from our nation, our culture, our consciences. We are secular. The president has announced that we are NOT a christian nation, and he is entirely right.

And just within the last year or two, with the obergefeld decision in our courts, what we're seeing is that multi-national corporations are banding together to punish any remaining shred of decency based in this book.

States like North Carolina which struggled to have some last ditch effort to retain religious freedom in something as silly as which gender can go in which bathroom. We don't have to wait for the court any more. Punishment comes from the multi-national corporations.

Billions of dollars in lost wealth from sports enterprises and endorsements are leveraged to make the governments of entire states get in line with a secularism that is in direct opposition to the crystal clear statements of facts in this book.

Things as basic as God made them male and female. Binary genders. Sex ONLY between one man and one woman who are married to each other. No divorce unless one partner is continually unfaithful.

If you believe those things, get ready to be punished. And you won't have to wait for the supreme court. That takes too long. Giant money conglomerates will band together to punish us monetarily. State governments will buckle under the pressure of large monetary losses threatened.

Our way of life is changing quickly. The insulating bubble that was the United States is quickly vanishing from view.

And what's worse is that people who claim to be christians, will join forces with the side that's winning and join in the punishment. It all boils down to how you view this book. In a single sentence, do men have authority over the book, or does the book have authority over men.

That will be the battle lines, and old line denominations with names that used to mean something like Methodist, and Episcopal, have jettisoned

the authority and inerrancy of this book, and can get on board easily with the secular movement, and join in with those who are punishing the folks who are upholding the clear teachings of this book.

Brace yourselves. Get ready to be called things like radical and extremist. Get ready for people who claim to be christian to redefine the concept of love. They are going to tell us that unless we get in line with secularism, if we hold onto our book, we are haters.

I'm just trying to challenge your comfort zone a bit. To make you think about how fragile the freedoms and safety we have enjoyed, have become. The insulating membrane has become very thin. Perhaps it has vanished and we're just not seeing it yet because we live in a little tiny out of the way place where it doesn't matter. Yet.

I'm trying to set the stage for Jesus words in this passage before us this morning.

Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 5, verse 19. From the NAS; *We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

We may be in an insulated bubble, but the fact remains that we are not *of* this world. This world, this kosmos, the greek word for world systems, authorities to rule and reign, belongs to Satan as we speak.

If you are a christian, a believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit, you have been taken out of this world, and placed into the Kingdom of God. You are living under God's authority. Satan doesn't own you. You are no longer part of his world.

But that necessarily introduces a tension. God's people living in the midst of Satan's kingdom. I often use the current vernacular of 'enemy combatants.'

We are in the midst of a massive spiritual battle, God who is rightful owner of this world, and Satan who has temporarily usurped rule and holds sway over every man born into sin, dead to God.

Nobody teaches this, because we've been so comfortable in our little United States bubble that these truths are all but forgotten. But then you get to passages like this one this morning.

80 years ago, we would have come to this passage and concluded, this isn't written for us. This is for 1st century christians. We've got this all sorted out now. We're quite civilized. These problems have vanished.

Sorry to wake you up from that dream, but in 2016, people across the sea who hold onto any version of the word christian are in fact being chased from town to town and their blood is being let. Some are crucified. In 2016. And the insulating bubble you live in has grown very thin.

So let's look again at what Jesus says in these final words of Matthew chapter 23.

*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, 35so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 “Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.*

Now, if you're a careful scholar, you may look at the context and tell me, Jim, He's talking to jews. This is about the jewish nation and first century christians.

Go back to the first word. Therefore. And it takes you back to the final woe that Jesus pronounced to these scribes and pharisees, these rulers and religious leaders in Israel. Let's look at it.

*29“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of **our fathers**, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31“So*

*you testify against yourselves, that **you are sons** of those who murdered the prophets. 32“Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 33“You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?*

You'll see there that He engages them in a little family discussion. And the "therefore" in vs. 34 goes back to this discussion of who is meant by the term father here.

*They say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’*

And Jesus says, indeed, you are direct descendents of your father's who stoned the prophets. You have inherited the family resemblance of your fathers. You are indeed their sons.

But bear with me for a minute as we take this idea of family resemblance a bit deeper. I want you to listen carefully to a conversation with these same men that Jesus has that is recorded for us in John chapter 8. Because it is the key to who Jesus is referring to in the word *Therefore*. Listen as Jesus talks about family and family traits they have inherited;

*23And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. 24“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” 25So they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, “What have I been saying to you from the beginning? 26“I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.” 27They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. 28So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. 29 “And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” 30As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.*

39They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. 40"But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. 41"You are doing the deeds of **your father**." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." 42Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 44"**You are of your father the devil**, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45"But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. 46"Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? 47"He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

In the final woe that we looked at last week, Jesus tells them, go, carry out the deeds of your father. And what He's talking about is that these men are in Satan's kingdom. Satan's army. Their father is the devil. Their family traits are the same as Jesus descriptions of Satan. And that cosmos, that world system will always, always be in direct conflict with anyone who belongs to God.

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, 35so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36"Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Jesus says, therefore, since you are in Satan's evil family, I'm going to send you righteous prophets and wise men and scribes, and as per what is normative for your family, your father, you're going to murder them.

Now, He is talking to Israel, as we'll see in the next verses, but the family trait is universal. Righteous blood will continually be shed from this time until now. It's like the Geico commercial. If your father is Satan, it's what you do. If you are born into a family of vipers, you will act like: what? Vipers. Deadly poisonous stealthy snakes. That is your family. You will bear the family traits. Vipers are vipers and have more vipers.

Notice that Jesus goes beyond the nation of Israel in His description. Any righteous blood is in jeopardy. Abel was the second human born and the first human born slew him. Because Abel was righteous and Cain belonged to Satan. And that's how it rolls. Righteousness always exposes wickedness. And wickedness seethes with hatred of the righteous ones.

Have I made your skin crawl yet. I mean, look around you. We're massively outnumbered. We're a little over 1% of Tonopah represented here in this body. Not good numbers. But we've got something else besides numbers working for us.

Luke 21 which is the parallel to Matthew 24 which we'll begin, Lord willing, next week says these words in vs 17 - 18 *and you will be hated by all because of My name. 18 "Yet not a hair of your head will perish.*

Sovereign God is in control of His enemy combatants that He has left in this world. Not one hair from your head will perish, without His permission. We may be outnumbered, but we've got them out powered. We belong to God.

We want to look at some important words in our passage this morning but first, I want to again consider the words immediately preceding the "therefore". Jesus says to this family that bears every resemblance to it's lineage, the devil, these words.

*31 "So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 "Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 33 "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?*

Fill up. Fill up then, the measure . . of the guilt . . of your fathers.

The idea of filling up the cup, filling something that has a top edge that limits the contents by overflowing. This is a metaphor used often in the Bible.

Sometimes it's used in a positive sense. Like Ephesians 5:18. Be being kept filled with the Holy Spirit. Or David in Psalm 23. My cup runneth over.

But the meaning is the same in a negative sense. Fill up the cup of evil until it is full and spills over. There is in that image the sense that God has limits that can be reached, and when the cup is filled and it runs over, judgement will overflow like a tidal wave that no one sees coming until it has swept in and covered them.

2 Chronicles, in the Jewish bible that was in use during the time that Jesus walked the earth, was the final book. We have all of the prophets and end with Malachi in our bibles. But in their canon, 2 Chronicles was the last book. Let me read you the chilling language, the final words in their final book. 2 Chron. 36

*15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; 16 but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.*

Is there an echo in the room? Does that not sound exactly like what Jesus just said? And the parallels do not stop there. Ezekiel has a vision. The Glory of the Lord exits the temple. The glory hovers over the portico for a time. Then the glory of the Lord moves over to the mount of Olives opposite the temple. And then the glory departs.

Evil cup filled up. No remedy. God departs. Judgement follows.

In view of current headlines, I have to ask. Did this God die? Where is He? How is it that we have mocked God in this culture and we don't yet see the response. Hold that thought.

Remember His compassion. His patience, even when the cup is overflowing. They murdered His son and it was still 33 more years before Rome flooded into Israel like a tidal wave killing over a million jews.

*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,*

Our first inclination is always to look at a prophecy like this, and clearly this is prophetic, and say, OK who is He talking about and when did this happen.

And the thing I need to try to help you with is that many many prophecies get fulfilled over and over and over. Like the picture of the successive mountain ranges. We see the mountain tops but not the valleys in between. Like telescope sections that are collapsed together but then they extend and extend.

So, we could look at this and say, this is clearly talking about the apostles and the first century christians after them. And it is. We see 2 modes of death. Kill and crucify. Stephen was stoned. That's how jews did it. But Peter was crucified. That's how the Romans did it. Paul was scourged over and over. In the synagogues and then he would shake the dust off his feet, when he recovered from that, and go to the gentiles. City after city.

You say, well, is that the fulfillment of the prophecy. Yes, but, no. If the prophecy is for the generation of people who are in the family of Satan, it gets fulfilled over and over and over, until the Lord comes a second time in final judgement.

Listen to Matthew 10. The instruction to the disciples when Jesus sends them out on trial mission; *22You will be hated by everyone on account*

*of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.*  
*23 When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next. Truly I tell you, you will not reach all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.*

Was that prophecy fulfilled in the time frame of them going out and coming back, rejoicing!, rejoicing in spite of the mis-treatment, and reporting all that had happened. All of the miracles amidst the persecution. Yes. Did Jesus return? Not yet. And that prophecy like this one continues on until the final judgement.

As long as the family of Satan, men born into sin, continues, this continues. Like waves.

Notice something else startling before we leave this verse. Who is causing this. Does He say God will send, or My Father will send. The pronoun is I will send. And the other pronoun is YOU.

Jesus here, takes the position of sovereign God and declares: I am sending.

And the result is that the other pronoun is You. You are guilty of righteous blood. All of it, from Abel to Zechariah.

The generation born in sin and rebellion in Satan's Cosmos is guilty of the blood of the righteous. All of it for as long as they spill it until Jesus returns and deposes Satan and judges all evil.

I want you to see something else important in these few words that span the ages of Satan's control.

Prophets and wise men and scribes that are sent into the midst of this cosmos, this planet ruled by Satan, are sent by Jesus as a sovereign act in order, in order for the generations to fill up their wickedness.

*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,*

*35 So that.* Do you see those words in the beginning of vs. 35. God

sends His righteous ones to prophecy and preach and warn and argue for the truth. And part of the sovereign reason for that is judgement on the ones who will scoff and scourge and mistreat and murder them.

*35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*

Anytime we begin to try to understand God and His sovereign acts, we're on dangerous turf. There's quicksand here because our brains aren't wired to understand fully everything that God does.

So, God sends righteous people so that wicked people can torment them and kill them so that the wicked people can fill up the cup of their judgement.

Yes. That's what Jesus just said. God is glorified in wrath and judgement as well as mercy and love. Every attribute of God is glorious. Even wrath and judgement.

He sends the righteous to warn the wicked, and when the wicked use free will to spurn the mercy of gracious forgiveness of God, because they love their sin more than God, the resulting wrath and judgement from that full cup of wickedness; glorifies God.

Paul, to the Corinthians says, it's like a win - win for God. We triumph either way. 2 Cor. 2:14 *But thanks be to God, who always leads us triumphantly in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. 15 For we are to God the sweet aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one, we are an odor of death and demise; to the other, a fragrance that brings life.*

Before we leave vs. 35 I want to speak briefly to some controversy Jesus created in His choice of words.

Abel we know. The second human born into Satan's realm murdered by the firstborn because Abel's righteous life exposed Cain's rebellion. But

who is Zechariah?

Very quickly, there are no perfect matches. Zechariah that was slain in the temple in 2 Chron. 24 is the son of Jehoiadah, not Berechiah. So did Jesus make a boo boo??

Default answer. Of course not. So who is this Zechariah son of Berechiah. Some say it's the prophet who wrote the book by that name. Others say it's a Zechariah son of Baruch that Josephus mentions who is a contemporary during Jesus time.

Some say it was the 2 Chron. Zechariah but Jehoiadah was his grandfather and his father Berechiah's name was lost to us until Jesus filled in the blank here.

Again, default answer. Jesus does not err. Every word of this book is true, whether we have all the facts, or not. I'll go ahead and give you a third or fourth option that I believe is possible.

What if Zechariah, son of Berechiah is the final slaughter of righteous blood during the tribulation period just before Jesus feet touch the mount of Olives? Again, I refer you to the default answer. Every word of this book is correct, whether we have all the information to process it, or not.

*36 "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.*

This generation. The ones listening to these things. 33 years passed from the crucifixion until Rome marched into Israel and began a slaughter that desolated Jerusalem. They killed 1.1 million jews.

They built a seige ramp around Jerusalem and ultimately the jews threw 100,000 dead bodies over the wall before the Romans came in and leveled the city to the ground.

*37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!*

There is such pathos in the broken hearted double cry. Jerusalem! Jerusalem! It takes our minds to Davids broken hearted cry *The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"*

*37"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!*

I think it is one of the most moving verses in all of the Bible. It's the cry of a broken heart over a child gone wrong. A nation born to God, gone wrong.

*How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.*

The safety and comfort of the familial relationship we enjoy with God our Father in Jesus Christ. The people of God would have none of it.

We beat our heads against a doorpost trying to sort out the relationship between sovereignty and free will. This is a definitive verse. God is heartbroken because He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and He desires for all men to be saved, but free will is real.

God wants to gather his people under his wings like a hen gathers chicks in a storm for protection but the people refuse. *and you were unwilling*

*38"Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!*

If I was a powerful apologist trying to use prophecy to prove that the Bible is true, then this verse is one of the most powerful arguments in all of the Bible.

You can do the research and history is complete with information that hearkens back to this moment in time and the seven greek words that comprise this one statement.

How did one man, in seven words, set into motion the complete destruction and desolation of a people.

Murdered almost to extinction, but never extinct, the jews have been scattered all over the earth. Their homeland, their nation, their religion was decimated by the Romans. Completely. Wiped out.

Jerusalem was leveled to the ground. All we have from that time and day is a retaining wall that bordered the temple grounds. The wailing wall. Everything else was leveled. The city, the houses, the buildings, the temple, the wall, razed to the ground. Not one stone left upon another.

Their worship went out of existence with the temple. The survivors were scattered to the four winds and yet they have remained a distinct race. And everywhere they go, they are hated. Not wanted. Cast out. Murdered. Anihilated. But never completely destroyed.

Seven greek words caused that and it is impossible to argue the point.  
38“*Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!*”

Never in the history of the world has there been a people more desolated. There have been peoples crushed out of existence, but the jews remain.

39 “*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!’*”

Another prophecy. I alluded earlier to the parallel of the glory of the Lord departing the temple in Ezekiel 8 - 11. Here the same thing repeats itself. Jesus departs the temple. He is finished with Israel. He goes across the Kidron valley to the mount of Olives, just like the Glory did in Ezekiel, He is arrested and murdered, and after the resurrection, He departs.

God departs. There is no more terrifying description of desolation than that. God departs. Satan can do with them as he pleases. God has left the room.

We'll see a third parallel. The Glory in Ezekiel departs. Jesus departs the temple grounds here, and in Thessalonians, we see the church departing, and with it, and with it, the restraining effect of the Holy Spirit, departing.

Then, the tribulation comes. Look again at vs. 39. *“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!’”*

The jews were desolated, but pinch yourself in 2016. They're still here. And by God's sovereign promise they're back in their homeland, surrounded on all sides by people who hate them.

For 19 centuries this prophecy of Jesus seemed like it could not happen. Jesus departed, true to His word, and true to His word, He will return, and it will be jews who say *BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”*

Read about it in Zechariah 12 and 14. Jesus is going to return. To Jews. In Jerusalem. And their hearts are going to be tenderized. And finally, finally, they will rejoice and receive their messiah.

That prophecy is just as sure as the one about the desolation. And we believe the stage is set and the time is imminent.