

Jesus and the Pharisees: (part twelve of a twelve series)

The Pharisees' rejection of Jesus is finalized in the aftermath of Lazarus' resurrection, as they begin plotting to put Christ to death. But that rejection becomes just as mutual and final on the part of their promised Messiah. Shortly after the raising of Lazarus, and prior to the Passover, Jesus pronounces a final judgment upon these religious leaders in particular, and on the nation as a whole. That indictment is recorded for us in Matthew 23:1-39; confirmed in Matthew 24:2.

Any previous criticisms issued by our Lord toward these ecclesiastical phonies are now compiled into one prolonged diatribe. He refers to them as hypocrites seven times and as spiritually and morally "blind" on five occasions. He also condemns them as fools, whitewashed tombs, full of hypocrisy and lawlessness, as well as serpents and a brood of vipers. Matthew 23, more than any other chapter in the Gospel accounts, reveals the combination of anger and grief which was in our Savior's heart, due to their unrepentant and hostile resistance (cf. Mark 3:5).

His anger is obvious in all the negative labels which Christ places upon these men. The grief is just as evident in the lament of our Savior which closes this chapter in Matthew 23:37-39 –

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. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! 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!'"

As Jesus leaves the Temple area, His disciples point out the various buildings, to which our Lord replies with a tone of solemn finality, in Matthew 24:2 –

"And He said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.'"

God's judgment would come upon the entire nation, in the form of the Roman army in AD70, due primarily to the hard-hearted opposition of the Pharisees toward their promised Messiah. So, when it comes to the Pharisees, I will add this final point of admonition in closing this study: "Don't be that guy! And don't follow that guy. You will most surely end up where you don't want to be. Instead, follow your Savior! And by the grace of God, follow Him fully, to the very best of your ability, every day, until Jesus comes again."