

February 16

Scriptures: Read Matthew 23

Key Verse: “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matthew 23:36)

Overview

This chapter has been entitled “The Seven Woes” by many commentators, because seven times Jesus pronounces woe on the Pharisees. There’s no need to expand on the various criticisms that He has of the Pharisees, because the main point of the seven woes is in verse 3, “do not do what they do for they do not practice what they preach.” Jesus’ criticisms are about doing righteous things to be seen by man. He also addresses the misplacement of authority in calling various Pharisees “Rabbi”, “Father”, or “Teacher”. Does this mean we’re wrong to be calling anybody “Teacher” or “Professor” or “Master” or “Father”? No. In the context, Jesus is essentially flattening the spiritual pride He sees in the Pharisees and the titles they assume for themselves. He talks about their zeal to win converts and yet their blindness as guides. He talks about their ability to teach the Law and yet their inability to perform it. He also talks about the fact that He is going to send prophets, wise men, and teachers, to try and steer the Pharisees in the right direction, but predicts they will be killed and crucified just like others before them.

It’s in this context that Jesus weeps over Jerusalem. He uses the powerful imagery of a barnyard hen clucking a warning as her little chicks rush to nestle under her wings for protection from some intruder. It’s a very pastoral, loving, and compassionate picture. When Jesus, however, was “clucking”, the chicks were not running. Because of their inattention, their temple was going to be left to them desolate. Then He says, “I am going to be gone too.” Which only adds to the desolation.

Israel won’t see Jesus again until they say, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord”. Here we have a reference to the end of days and the developing doctrine in the New Testament of the second coming of Jesus Christ and His triumphant reign as Messiah.

Prayer

We long with anticipation for Your soon return, Lord Jesus, but until then, may we weep for the lost with the same compassion with which You wept over Jerusalem, wanting to gather them as chicks.