

WOE! (PART 3)
MATTHEW 23.13-39

6. WOE TO THE UNCLEAN HOLY ONES (25-26)

Seems to be dealing with laws from Lev 11 in previous woe and this one. Subject: clean and unclean animals; dead animals coming in contact with various items such as clothes, pots, dishes, etc.

Laws always dealt with how people of God were to live. Scribes and Pharisees (S & P) were unclean vessels and needed to be dealt with appropriately; i.e. either destroyed or cleansed in some way.

Food in unclean vessels is unclean and would make eater unclean. Note: they are preparing for Passover the week Jesus is saying this. As leaders they are the providers of the "bread and wine" (plate and cup). The meal has become an unholy feast (cf. Ps 69.22).

Full of robbery and self-indulgence: this is their hypocrisy, e.g., in devouring widows' houses while making pretentious prayers.

"Inside & outside" - not internal purity vs. external rites, but partial purity vs. complete purity (cf. v. 26)

God instituted and required many external rites. Would have been disobedience not to do them. Those rites are not complete in themselves. Always pointed to and encouraged to live consistently with those rites in every area of life.

Deals w/ hypocrisy. Outside they are performing all of these rites making a show of faithfulness, but inwardly, in their "secret life" they are living inconsistently with that profession.

Purity is not simply achieved through external rituals or going through the motions. That is not Law-keeping. Cf. Dt 6; cp. Isa 1.

7. WOE TO THE PURIFIED DEAD (27-28)

"Full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" - They are people eaters, like their father, the devil. They even use their show of faithfulness as the means of devouring people.

"White-washed" - practice of marking tombs so that people could avoid them and thus contract uncleanness; for when you touched an unclean body, the uncleanness spread to you.

The whiteness/purity of the S & P was nothing but a sign of a marked grave. They are to be avoided b/c they pass on uncleanness.

Can all of this be true of the people of God today? Yes. Ritualism ... in both liturgical & "non-liturgical" churches.

Nothing wrong with rituals in themselves. It is inconsistency between the rest of life and the ritual that constitutes hypocrisy.

Can't go through the motions of self-sacrifice and then ruthlessly eat people up (e.g. treat them like dirt, fits of anger, condescending attitudes, gossip).

When we do this we spread our uncleanness to those around us (cf. 1Cor 5, a little leaven leavens the whole lump).

Our worship practices are only accepted by God when our whole lives are lived by faith, which is just another way of saying that our lives must be consistent with our professions in worship.

8. WOE TO THE SELF-JUSTIFYING MURDERERS (29-36)

They and their fathers had eaten the prophets, but they build and decorate their tombs to honor them saying they would not have participated in the blood of the prophets with their fathers.

How does their statement witness against them? 1) "our fathers" - they are physical descendants, but their covenantal/faithfulness paternity should have been renounced. Cp. being children of Abraham by having the faith of Abraham (Rom 4).

2) The S & P don't obey the prophets b/c they don't follow Jesus who came to fulfill the Law and the prophets (Mt 5.17-20).

Instead of suffering with the prophets and now with Jesus, *the* Prophet, they stay in fellowship with their fathers. In another interesting twist, it is true that they have no fellowship in the blood of the prophets; i.e. they are not in the line of the prophets.

“Fill up the measure of their fathers.” Like filling up a cup. Cf. Gen 15 and the sin of the Amorites not being yet “full.”

History from the time of Adam to Christ was a history of filling up cups/bowls with blood. Blood of OC which took up all of those sins could never take away sins. Just kept filling up until the perfect sacrifice came (cf. Heb).

Blood is either poured out on Christ and all in him or the people outside of Christ at that generation.

“all of the righteous blood ... this generation.” Blood on the ground cries out for vengeance and calls the blood avenger (cf. Gen 4).

Abel to Zechariah = the whole of recorded Scriptural history from Gen to 2Chr (the last book in Hebrew Scriptures).

All of that blood will be called to account on *this generation*. Is that fair? What did they have to do with these murders? What about Ezekiel 18?

1) God is gracious and longsuffering, not punishing all of the sins of generation within that generation.

2) Sin matures in cultures from generation to generation if left unchecked (while God is being longsuffering). When the cup gets full, it is that generation that suffers.

Not each individual suffering for things he hasn't done, but a culture that has matured in sin suffering as a culture/society.

Note the language of Abel to Zech and how Zech was slain. Between altar and Temple is the great sea and in Solomon's temple the water chariots. Water is to flow from the Temple to the world (cf. Ezek; Rev).

Blood of murder is flowing from the Temple, corrupting the world, bringing death. Wickedness has matured as it did from Cain to the days of Noah.

Center of woe: snakes, children of vipers; of their father, the devil (cf. Jn 8.44).

Jesus will give them another chance by sending prophets, wise men, and scribes. This will happen in the book of Acts.

Prophets = those who stand in the counsel of God, hear his word, and proclaim it to others.

Wise men = kings. They are those who execute justice after having determined what justice is.

Scribes = interpret Scripture rightly and will lead people to the truth which is found in Jesus.

They will act like *their fathers* and kill them.

What does the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees teach us to avoid? Falling in love with dead people but can't live with those around us; finding identity more in blood heritage than in faithfulness to the covenant.

II. THE LAMENT (37-39)

They act in behalf of God killing his prophets, but they are acting against him.

Hen - wings in Scripture; Gen 1.2 - the Spirit hovers/broods over creation; Ex 19.4 - God delivers on eagles' wings (cf. also Dt 32.11); come under God's wing = to be married to him; happens in the Tab/Temple (Ps 91).

House = Temple. Desolate = empty. Jesus will leave in 24.1.

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Not necessarily acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah but recognition of it. Quote from Ps 118 which is the recognition of the son of David.

His blessedness has to do with what the Father declares about him more than their positive response to him. He *is* blessed by the Father (attested in resurrection and destruction of Jerusalem) whether they believe it or not.