

# Killing the prophets

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[ 0 : 01 ] So we're coming to the end now of our studies in this chapter, to the last part of it. As I've looked at this chapter, I've been struck on several occasions with the similarities, connections in some ways with the book of Malachi.

A couple of weeks ago I quoted that last few verses of Malachi where Malachi says, turn your hearts to the Lord or I will come and strike the land with a curse.

Just a little bit earlier in the book of Malachi we find this passage. See, I will send my messenger who will prepare the way before me.

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant whom you desire will come, says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. So we're reading the words in Matthew 23 of the words of that messenger of the covenant.

[ 1 : 20 ] And whom the teachers of the law claimed to desire. But were finding his coming much less comfortable than they had expected.

And as I said, this is Jesus' last public address. And it consists of basically of these six or possibly seven woes, depending on how you count them.

And we've looked at most of these now. And we're coming now to the last woe. In verses 29 to 31. Where Jesus talks about those who decorate the tombs of the righteous, of the prophets.

And yet are the sons of those who killed those very prophets. And with this last woe, Jesus starts to draw his discourse to a close.

And the threads of the argument are brought together into this final passage. A final condemnation. But also in a sense a final appeal. And the closing argument here is actually quite complex and interwoven.

[ 2 : 34 ] And I want to just pick out a few of these threads. Of what Jesus is saying in this final part of his sermon. But in order to do that.

We need to look at a few. Just sort out a few textual issues. Before we can dig in a few issues of the text. So I just want to do that briefly.

We'll look at some of the words. We'll look at the words for children. And we'll look at the words for teacher. But I suppose before we do that. We need to answer the obvious question.

Who is this Zechariah that Jesus accuses them of murdering in the temple? Because it's not entirely clear.

Zechariah was a very common Jewish name. Which one is he talking about? And I think the simple answer is we can't really be sure. I think the most likely possibility is he's talking about Zechariah the prophet.

[ 3 : 36 ] The minor prophet. Because his father was indeed called Berechiah. As you can see if you look in Zechariah chapter 1 verse 1. Zechariah was one of the last of the prophets.

Which would relate to verse 31. Where he says from, Jesus says from Abel to Zechariah. The main objection to the view that Zechariah the prophet.

There's no actual record. Of Zechariah being martyred. But of course, just because it's not recorded in the scripture. Doesn't necessarily mean it didn't happen. Maybe there was some other record at the time.

Which has now been lost. And I would probably go with the view myself. That the Zechariah here is Zechariah the prophet. But there have been another couple of suggestions.

Or various suggestions. In 2 Chronicles 24 verse 22. There is talk of another Zechariah. Who was indeed murdered in the temple courts.

[ 4 : 37 ] The problems with taking this as the Zechariah. First of all that his father was not called Berechiah. As you can, if you look at the passage you'll see.

And another objection has been raised to this. Is that this Zechariah was murdered. In the time of the kings. Before the exile.

And so when Jesus says from Abel to Zechariah. That might seem a bit strange. Although some people have pointed out. That in the Hebrew Bible. 2 Chronicles is actually the last book.

And so when he says from Abel to Zechariah. He could be talking not so much. In chronological terms. As throughout the span of the Old Testament. So that's another possibility.

And of course the third possibility. Is that he's referring to some very recent event. Some very recent murder at the time. Which was known both to his hearers. And to Jesus himself.

[ 5 : 38 ] But it has not otherwise been recorded in history. So we can't really be say with certain. Whom Zechariah was. Other than he stands for one of these people.

One of these righteous. Who have indeed been murdered. In the place where they should have been safe. And received in the temple itself. Whatever is the exact meaning of this Zechariah. The point is clear. That all that blood spilt under the old covenant. Was to come. And be visited on these hypocrites. Verse 35. And why particularly that is.

We'll see as we go through a bit. It's worth just pausing briefly. To look at some of the words. That are used for children here. Because we'll need to pick that up later.

In verses 15 and 31. Which just talks about sons or children. The word hui. I can't pronounce that. Huios. Is used. And that is just a general Greek term for a child.

[ 6 : 46 ] But in verse 33. When it talks about brood. The word is genema. Which carries the idea of the ancestry.

So brood is a fairly good translation. Genema is usually not exclusively applied to animals. And as he's talking about serpents here. He uses that form of it. So brood is a good translation.

But it slightly hides the fact. That in verse 36. When he talks about generation. This generation. There's the related word. Genia.

Which is. Almost the equivalent word. But applied to humans. It means those who have a common race. A common ancestry.

So it's just worth pointing that out. And more importantly perhaps. Because unfortunately. Our NIV translation. Is not particularly helpful here.

[ 7 : 46 ] We need to think briefly. About the words that are used for teachers. Actually the common. Everyday Greek word for a teacher.

Is didaskalos. And that's the word. That is usually used by Paul. But in fact. Is not used by Matthew at all. In this chapter. And as far as I could see. When I looked.

Is not actually used anywhere. By Matthew for a teacher. But in this passage. There are three other words. That are used. Which have the general meaning. Of a teacher.

But are rather more specific. And it's worth just looking at those. And so in verse 8. If you look. You'll see that there are two words used.

Rabbi and master. Or teacher. The word rabbi. Of course is. A word of Hebrew origin. It's just been sort of. Transliterated into the. The Greek here.

[ 8 : 40 ] And the actual Greek word. Kathagetes. Kathagetes. Actually means. More or less the same thing. The one that's used for master. Or teacher. And the one.

That word is used again. In verse 10. And the meaning of that. Is particularly. A spiritual leader. A master. A guru.

As we might say. And perhaps it's. In that sense. That Jesus says indeed. That we have only one. Teacher. There is only one.

Author. Of the teaching. And that is. The Christ himself. And so.

That is the word. That's used at the beginning. Of the passage. For a teacher. But. The word. That's translated. Teacher. In the repeated formula.

[ 9 : 35 ] Woe to you. Teachers of the law. That formula. That's repeated. In verses. 13. 15. 23. 25. 27. And 29. Is actually.

The word. Grammatas. And crucially. I think. This word. Is used again. In verse 34. Where Jesus says. That he's going to.

Send them. Teachers. And the word. Grammatas. Actually. Doesn't really.

Quite mean. A teacher. It's quite a hard word. To translate. The literal. Meaning of the word. Is a scribe. Or a secretary. Somebody. Whose job. It is to write.

Now. We perhaps. Don't think of scribes. Or secretaries. As being particularly. Important. But of course. In a. A world. Where. A lot of people. Were illiterate. The scribe.

[10:33] Or the secretary. The writer. Was an important person. And of course. You can't write. Unless you can also read. And you couldn't. Copy the works. Of the law. Unless you also. Read them.

So. The term. Had come to mean. A scholar. A pundit. An expert. And so. Some. Translations. Translated. Experts. Of the law. Teachers. Of the law. Something like that. Although. I say. The literal word. There is a scribe. But they were.

Experts. In the law. And so. In. For instance. In Matthew 2. Verse 5. You needn't look it up. But if you remember. When the. The magi. Came to Jerusalem. And asked. Where the. Baby was to be found. Who did Herod consult. He. He consulted. The scribes. And they looked in their. Books. And said. Yes. He's to be found. In Bethlehem. They were the experts.

[11:31] In the law. They were. If you like. The. Sort of. Google. Or Wikipedia. Of the day. If you wanted to know. Some information. About the law. You'd go along. To a scribe. And he'd find.

The right passage. For you. And. Tell you about it. And as I say. It's crucial. I think. That this word. Is used again. In verse 34.

It means. A scholar. Or a pundit. Or an expert. So having said that. Let's draw some of these. Threads together. And so I'd like to.

Divide the passage up. In this way. And look at it. In this way. First of all. We'll look at this question. Of parentage. And then. We'll look at this question.

Of judgment. Why Jesus says. That the guilt. Of all of the. All that blood. Spilt in the Old Testament. Would come on this current generation.

[12:28] And then. We'll look at those. Covenant messengers. Which Jesus. Tells us. He's sending. And then finally.

We'll move on. And look at the final appeal. And the. Final. Words. To Jerusalem. The city. That he says. Will be desolate. So let's look.

First of all. At this question. Of parentage. Because there's actually a lot. In this passage. About parentage. Parentage. The Pharisees claimed.

To be the children of Abraham. The heirs of the covenant. The heirs of Moses. And yet. Jesus describes them. As lawless.

In verse 28. He says. Yes. You decorate. The tombs of the prophets. That's what this woe is. You teach.

[13:29] Teachers of the law. And Pharisees. Hypocrites. You. Decorate the tombs. The prophets. But who's actually. Buried in these prophets. In these tombs.

It is indeed. Those prophets. Whom their ancestors. Had murdered. And they say. Well. If those prophets.

Were alive today. We wouldn't have done it. But of course. There's a very. Heavy irony here. In Jesus words. Because he's saying. That's exactly. That's exactly.

What you are going to do. By your own testimony. You're children. Of the prophet killers. That's whom your ancestry is. Those who.

Killed the prophets. And buried them. Was very happy to. Talk about them. In the past tense. But didn't actually want to do. What they say. And.

[14:29] Jesus has earlier. Described them. And repeats it again. In verse 33. As children of hell. And the word actually here. Is not the Greek word.

Hades. But again. The Hebrew word. Gehenna. Which is literally. The rubbish tip. It's the. The tip. The place where the. Refuse was burned. And. Jesus is saying. Your. Children of the rubbish tip. Only. Fit to be burned.

The place where nobody wants to go. Where the refuse is thrown. And then he describes them. Doesn't he. As.

A brood of vipers. As serpents. And that's worth. I think. Thinking about. For a minute. Because. We sort of think of that. And we think of. Of. Raiders of the lost ark.

[15:23] And the serpent pits. And. The viciousness of serpents. And so on. But. I think perhaps. He's actually saying. A little bit more than that. He describes them.

As children of snakes. The brood of snakes. And who in Hebrew thought. Is the. Father of snakes. The great.

Serpent. It's Satan himself. Isn't it. And what was that prophecy. In Genesis 3.

That the. Seed of the serpent. Would bite the heel. Of the seed. Of Eve. Children of Eve. And now Jesus.

Perhaps is saying. That time has come. When indeed. The. Children of the serpent. Will indeed. Bite.

[16:20] The heel. Of the one. Whom God has sent. The. Son of Eve. The one whom. The second Adam. Who was God.

Has sent to the fight. And now the time has come. For the seed of the serpent. To do their worst. To make that bite. Everything up to then.

As it were. All this. Killing of the prophets. In the old covenant. Was just skirmishing. Now it's time. For the crucial battle. The crucial time.

The crucial confrontation. And so Jesus. Goes on to talk to them. About. Their blood guilt. This is the time.

Of critical judgment. Jesus says. You inherited. The sins of your fathers. You are their. True descendants. And who's going to save you. From the scrap heap.

[17:22] Malachi's curse. To. Bring. A curse. On the land. If they would not repent. Was about. To come to fruition. And yet.

It's also true. As the scripture says. That a person. Dies. For their own sin. And so. They are given. One more chance. At grace.

Before there is the. Crowning rebellion. They're about to kill. That very messenger. Of the covenant. Whom they. Claim to desire. But even that.

Isn't quite the end of it. You might remember. That. Even as it was. Being crucified. In Luke 23. 34. Jesus prayed.

That the father. Would forgive them. For they didn't know. What they were doing. Even then. There was still. One last chance. Of grace. And perhaps.

[18:21] They had to wait. For that generation. To die. There was. As it were. Perhaps. One more generation. A sort of transitional time. About 40 years. A bit less than 40 years.

Between the crucifixion. And the final desolation. Of the city. In Jerusalem. A final. Transitional time. Of grace. And a few of them. Like Saul. Who became the apostle. Paul. Would indeed. Grab. That final. Chance. As it were.

Describe himself. As the worst of sinners. But most of them. Wouldn't. Most of them. Would not do that. And so. How would that be. Worked. Out. So who's going to make.

This final call. To repentance. Who is it. Well. We have this fascinating. Verse 34. And the more I look at this verse.

[19:17] The more fascinating. I find it. Because Jesus. Is sending the messengers. And they are sent.

The word is. Apostello. From which we get. The word apostles. The word. Interestingly. Is in the present tense. The verb. Is in the present tense.

That I'm going to send you. But I am sending you. And yet. It does seem. That they are sent. Perhaps. With the sending.

Refers. Perhaps. After Jesus departure. The threat. That they would die. And be crucified. And. Otherwise. Be. Maltreated. Thrown out of the synagogues. Followed. The. Death. And crucifixion. Of their master. The rejection. Of their master.

[20:14] Of Jesus himself. So who is Jesus. Talking about here. Well he. Surely. Can be talking about. Nobody. But the apostles. And evangelists. Who took out.

The gospel of Jesus. Death and resurrection. Yet. The intriguing thing. In this verse 34. Is that they're described. In old testament. Old covenant. Terms.

We talk about. Apostles. And evangelists. And. Pastor teachers. As the new testament. Generally does. But in this case. And as far as I can think. Uniquely in this case.

They're given. Their equivalent. Old covenant. Titles. And so it's worth looking. At who these people will be. And what their role is to be.

Because these were the messengers. Of the old covenant. And. They are. They are threefold. Told there are prophets.

[ 21 : 12 ] And sages. Wise men. And scribes. We just think. Don't we. Don't we know about prophets. And we think there are lots of prophets. In the. Old testament.

Which of course there are. But. We forget perhaps. That. The importance of the wise. And the scribes. We have a lot of the. Old testament. Was written not by prophets.

But by the sages. By. The teachers of wisdom. And it's brought to us. By the scribes. They were the ones who wrote it down.

And preserved it. After all. So what was the role. Of these messengers. Of the covenant. Well the role of the prophet.

Primarily. Was to call the people. To covenant obedience. They did of course. Predict the future.

But. Only that. Really. To remind the people.

[ 22 : 09 ] Of the need. To remain obedient. To the covenant. So we could take an example. Of that. When David. Committed adultery. Whose job was it.

To go and. Say to him. No you've. You've done wrong here. You've got to repent. It was the job of Nathan. The prophet. Wasn't it. I'm sure.

He found that fairly stressful. To put it mildly. He'd known Nathan. He'd known David. I'm sure. For many years. And they probably had.

A working relationship. But he had to come to David. And say look. You've been disobedient. He put it in terms of a parable. Didn't he. A story to.

To soften the blow. As it were. But that was Nathan's job. That was the prime job. Of the prophet. Was to call the people. Back to covenant obedience. But what was the role.

[ 23 : 04 ] Of the sage. The wise man. As one wise man. Described as listening to his words. Was like listening. To the words of God himself. That's one of David's.

Advisors. What was the role. Of the wise man. As a messenger. Of the covenant. Well let me read you. Just the opening verses. Of the book.

That is precisely about that. Which is. The book of Proverbs. And. This is the introduction. To the book of Proverbs. That explains. What the book is there for. And he says the following.

The Proverbs of Solomon. Son of David. King of Israel. And wise he recorded them. They're for attaining wisdom. And discipline. For understanding.

Words of insight. For acquiring. A disciplined. And prudent life. Doing what is right. And just. And fair. For giving prudence.

[ 24 : 03 ] To the simple. Knowledge. And discretion. To the young. Let the wise. Listen. And add to their learning. And let the discerning.

Get guidance. For understanding. Proverbs. And parables. The sayings. And riddles. Of the wise. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning. Of knowledge.

But fools. Despise wisdom. And discipline. The role of the sage. Was to bring people. To covenant. Understanding. Understanding. It wasn't just to be.

A blind obedience. As it were. You know. Just following the rules. Which in a sense. Is what the Pharisees. Were kind of doing. They were kind of trying. To follow the rules.

In a rather blind way. But the role of the sage. The wise man. Was to promote. Understanding. And remember. One of the ways. We looked at. Was it says. The one about.

[ 25 : 00 ] These oaths. You know. What you're saying. Simply doesn't make sense. You missed the point. You haven't understood it. And the wise man. Is there to bring.

Understanding. And wisdom. And the third. Messenger of the covenant. That Jesus gives here. Is the scribe. And the primary role.

Of the scribe. Was to record. And bring to the people. The covenant law. The words. Of the covenant. We mentioned.

A couple of weeks ago. This issue. Of the key of David. The one who. Has the key to knowledge.

And. The first person. Of whom that said. Was given the key of David.

Was Eliakim. A government official. And he appears. To have been a scribe. Or secretary. Another important scribe.

[ 25 : 59 ] Was Shaphan. The son of Azaliah. In the time. Of King Josiah. The best. Perhaps. Of all the. Old Testament kings. Josiah is described.

As such. There was. None. Who gave. His heart. More to the Lord. Than Josiah. But he'd been. Josiah. Had already been.

Reigning. For 18 years. When. In the temple. Was discovered. The scroll. Of the law. And whose job. Was it. To bring. That.

Message. To Josiah. To read it out. To him. And I'm sure. As he did it. Perhaps. To interpret it. That was the job. Of Shaphan.

Son of Azaliah. The scribe. And of course. Who is the most famous. I guess you'd say. Of all. The Old Testament. Scribes. The only one.

[ 26 : 53 ] That has an actual book. Named after him. And that is. Of course. Ezra. And he was the scribe. Who read the law. To the returning exiles.

When the people. Came back. To the land. From the land. Of exile. Ezra. Was the one. Who. Had studied.

All the law. Had kept. As it were. The memory. Of it alive. Had kept. The study. And presumably. Literally. Preserved. The scrolls. And writings. Taken them.

With him. Into exile. Made sure. They were kept. Safe. And copied. And then. Brought them back. And when he came. Back to the land. He was the one. Who read. All the words.

Of the law. Out to the people. Ezra. 7 verse 10. Says the following. Ezra. Had devoted. To the study. And observance.

[ 27 : 47 ] Of the law. Of the Lord. And to teaching. Its decrees. And laws. In Israel. As Malachi.

Makes clear. Jesus himself. Is the covenant. Messenger. The one. Who. Embodies. The. Whole of the covenant. And even.

In this passage. Here. We can see it. Can't we? We can see. How he fulfills. The role of the prophet. As he. Caused the people. To repentance. And obedience. We can see.

How he talks. About parables. And allusions. And even riddles. Which. Require thought. And a design. To elicit. Understanding. And here.

He reminds them. Of the law. And reminds them. The words of the law. And what the law. Is really about. Jesus. Is. Is. We talk about him. As being.

[ 28 : 45 ] Prophet. Priest. And king. But. We forget. Perhaps. That he is also. The wise man. And the scribe. Wisdom. And the scribe. The teacher. Of the law. But Jesus.

Is going to be. Taken away. From them. And so. He sends out. Other messengers. And I said. The New Testament. Preachers.

Never use. These. Categories. Of themselves. And I don't think. Perhaps. We need to worry. About saying. Who exactly. Is a. A prophet. Or scribe. Or whatever. But the gospel.

Message. Certainly. Involves. All these. Doesn't it? People. Must be called. To repentance. And obedience. In that sense.

We still need. Prophets. They must. Be provoked. To wisdom. And in that sense. We still need. Wise men. And that wisdom.

[ 29 : 44 ] Must be on the basis. Of the study. Of the word. Of the Lord. Because. It's the fear. Of the Lord. That's the beginning. Of wisdom. And so. We know. Need those. Who. Teach the word.

Who remind people. Of what. The word of God. Says. And so. I found it. Fascinating. That here. And I say. I think here. Uniquely.

But here. In this context. Jesus. Describes. The apostles. And evangelists. And teachers. In these Old Testament. Terms.

As prophet. And sage. And scribe. Because. If we claim. To teach the whole. Counsel of God. Then all these things.

Need to be present. We do need to. We mustn't neglect. Any of them. Because if we do. We actually. Distort. The covenant. And we're not true.

[ 30 : 39 ] Messengers of the covenant. But there is also. Of course. In this particular. Passage. There's a heavy. Irony here.

Because it's those. Who claim. To be the heirs. Of the prophets. And the wise men. And the scholars. Of the law. Whom Jesus. Is condemning here.

That's what he's saying. Isn't it. So you haven't done the job. You claim to sit. In the seat of Moses. But you haven't done it. So I'm going to send. New ones. And they had.

They had turned the law. Hadn't they. To be. Into externals. They. They. Neglected the fact. That it was about. Justice and mercy. And made it about.

Just external things. And so Jesus says. Okay. If that's what you think. The law is going to be about. Then you will be judged.

[ 31 : 37 ] By your actions. The very things. You're going to do now. Will show you. To be law breakers. To be covenant. Breakers. To be inheritors.

Of Malachi's curse. Those who claimed. To. Be desiring. The messenger of the covenant. But were not able to. Endure the day.

Of his coming. And so he says. They will be judged. By what they do. By the fact. That they indeed. Bite the heel.

Of the seed. Of Eve. That they will indeed. Kill Jesus himself. And kill. The prophets. And wise men. And scribes. Who come after him.

They will indeed. Be shown. To be. Not the children. Of Abraham. But the children. Of the snake. The children. Of the serpent. By the very fact.

[ 32 : 34 ] That they do. Their hypocrisy. What is hidden. What they were hiding. In their hearts. Would eventually. Find. Its way out. And be shown. In the things.

That they did. And the violence. Of their reaction. And so. We need.

As we think. About these things. We need to remind ourselves. That it is Jesus. Who is the. The pattern. Not the Pharisees. We shouldn't be going. About these things. What things. In the way. That the Pharisees.

And the. Those scribes did. They did have a certain. Learning those scribes. They did know. Where to find things. In the scriptures. But they were not. Faithful. Teachers of the law.

We need to have. A different. Heart. A different. Understanding. So. Jesus closes.

[ 33 : 29 ] This last. Public sermon. With this. Description. Of the desolation. Of Jerusalem. Actually.

In chapter 24. He gives the disciples. Some more. Instruction. About the coming. Judgment. On Jerusalem. But. That's. To the disciples.

His followers. The apostles. In public. These are his last. Words. This is where he. Finishes the sermon. As it were. And who is his appeal to.

It's not to Nineveh. It's not to Babylon. It's not to Sodom. Or Gomorrah. It's to Jerusalem.

Yerushalom. The city of peace. The citadel of the king. And you might compare. Jesus attitude. To that of Jonah.

[ 34 : 32 ] Because Jonah. Rather hoped. That Nineveh. Would not listen. To his words. And that the judgment. Of God. Would come upon the city. And yet.

Nineveh. Didn't kill its prophet. They listened. It's Jerusalem. That kills prophets. Those who should. Be welcoming. Welcoming them. Jesus said earlier. A prophet is not without honor. Except in his own country. And again. Jesus himself.

And Paul. And others say. Where else should a prophet die. But in Jerusalem. Actually. Paul didn't die in Jerusalem. He died in Rome. But. The thought was there. He was arrested in Jerusalem. It wasn't Nineveh.

That kills the prophets. But Jerusalem. The city of God. There's a longing here. Isn't there? We get this.

[ 35 : 31 ] Almost slightly comic image. Of the. The fussy hen. Trying to collect its chicks. Under its wings. Why is it doing that? To protect them.

From the predator. The fox. Or perhaps in this context. The snake. Who's out to get them. But the chicks won't come.

Their mother calls them. But they won't come. No. There's no danger. We're fine as we are. And so what happens. The nest is robbed.

And the city is desolate. As Jesus says in verse 38. And then he says. You will not hear from me again.

Until you say. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Which as I said. Is a quotation from Psalm 118. It's the song of the conquering king.

[ 36 : 31 ] The one who says. Open the gates. Because I have conquered. And when we hear those words. Our thoughts are drawn to the triumphal entry. And say.

Is this what. Jesus is talking about. When he came on the donkey. And the people did indeed say. But did indeed say. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

But check the chronology here. This. Speech takes place in Holy Week. That. Entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. Has already occurred.

When Jesus says that. It's in Matthew 21. I believe. Yeah. Matthew 21. Verse 9. So Jesus is not talking.

About that time. When they say. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. He's talking about another coming. And surely he can be only talking. About the time.

[ 37 : 27 ] When he returns to the new Jerusalem. As the conquering king. Where it tells us. In Revelation. He arrives not on a donkey. But on a war horse.

As the victor. There is no hope. For the old Jerusalem. That is heading for destruction. And only in the city of God.

Is hope to be found. And indeed. The city was destroyed. And I would say. On the basis of the. Prophecy of verse.

Of chapter 24. Christians who were still in Jerusalem. And fled the city at that time. Because. Jesus had. Prophesied that the city would be destroyed. But that was all done and dusted.

In AD 70. Wasn't it? So is this only of historical interest to us? Does it really matter now? We can look back at it and say.

[ 38 : 25 ] Well yeah. I can see how that worked out. For the. Pharisees. And those scribes. But that was. 2000 years ago nearly. Is it only of historical interest?

But if you do look into. Matthew 24. Matthew 24 verse 8. Jesus tells the disciples. That the destruction of the temple. In fact is just the beginning.

Of the birth pains. And while it was true. That during those. Particularly during those years. Before the destruction of the temple. Then the. The apostles and evangelists.

Were indeed. Arrested and. Killed. And put out of the synagogue. But. That's only was the foretaste.

Of judgment. Jesus has not yet. Come to that cry. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. There is still much struggle to endure.

[ 39 : 24 ] Before the final judgment comes. Perhaps. Pharisees themselves. May be long dead. But there are plenty of spiritual heirs. Aren't there?

There are many who claim. To sit in the seat. Not of Moses. But of Jesus. Who claim to be the master teacher. Only they pay little or no attention.

To his actual teaching. And there are plenty of those. Who try to make the gospel easier.

More palatable. Slightly different. You know. He doesn't worry about swearing by the temple.

You can swear by the gold of the temple. Just make. Make the. Words of God. Just mean something slightly different. To what they're supposed to mean. Easily done. Just to slant it a bit.

[ 40 : 24 ] They try to make the gospel. As I say. More palatable. Easier. For people to accept. But what they do. In fact. Is made impossible. They.

Simply. Make people. As Jesus said. Into. Sons of hell. Deceiving them. So that they're only fit. For the scrap heap. The result of their hypocrisy.

Is just the same. Isn't it? The hearers become disillusioned. And cynical. They reject the message. And they will not flee. To safety.

And so they become. Again. The prey of the serpent. The world changes. The world has. Moved on. Two thousand years.

We don't need scribes. In a sense. To copy. The scripture now. We have. Movable type. And the internet. And we can. Have access. To instant information.

[ 41 : 25 ] But although. The world changes. The gospel. Does not. And cannot. Be changed. Because that final cry. Is still not.

Is still not. Occurred. We're still not. Saying. Blessed is he. Who comes. In the name of the Lord. As the victor. The themes of the gospel. Remain the same. Justice.

Mercy. Faith. The justice of God. In wrath. Poured out of the sacrifice. On the sacrifice. We're thinking of that.

This morning. Weren't we? How many. Teachers would love. To do away with that. With. What was it? One person described it as. As that. That's cosmic child abuse. But to do that.

To try and make it more palatable. Is to destroy the gospel itself. The whole point of the gospel. Is that. God.

[ 42 : 22 ] Is angry with sin. God. Cannot look on sin. And so there has to be. A mechanism of grace. There has to be. An object of God's wrath.

God's justice. Has to be shown. To be right. You can't. Take that out of the gospel. It. If you do. It ceases to make sense. But not just.

Only justice. But also mercy. Mercy. Mercy for those. Who call on him. For. For salvation. How can justice and mercy.

Kiss one another. As another Old Testament prophet says. How can they exist. In the same place. But only through the death. Of the lamb. Mercy for those.

Who call on him. For rescue. Those who do hear the. Clucking of the mother hen. As it were. And say. Come. Quick. Flee. The serpent is at large.

[ 43 : 24 ] Come to me. For rest. And protection. They are the ones. Who find mercy. And what is it. Makes it all work.

It's faith. Isn't it. Faith is. If you like. The operating system. Of the kingdom. Faith. Is what makes it all work. Faith.

In. What. God has said. And believe. That he will do. That Jesus will do. What he has promised.

It couldn't work. Without faith. So we may call them. Different things. But we still need. The prophets. And sages. And scribes. Of the.

Messengers. Of the covenant. And they still need. To be faithful messengers. And not hypocrites. And fools. Because we're still. Awaiting. The return.

[ 44 : 22 ] Of the victor. When we shall say. Blessed is he. Who comes in the name. Of the Lord. So Jesus promises.

Us. Struggle. And it's still true. As it was then. That those who. Faithfully. Proclaim. The word of the Lord.

Will be subject to. Scorn. And sometimes. Worse than that. But. We can sing.

Nevertheless. Because we know. That the victor is coming. We can sing. Away with our sorrow.

And fear. So let's. Sing. Hymn number 966. It's great.