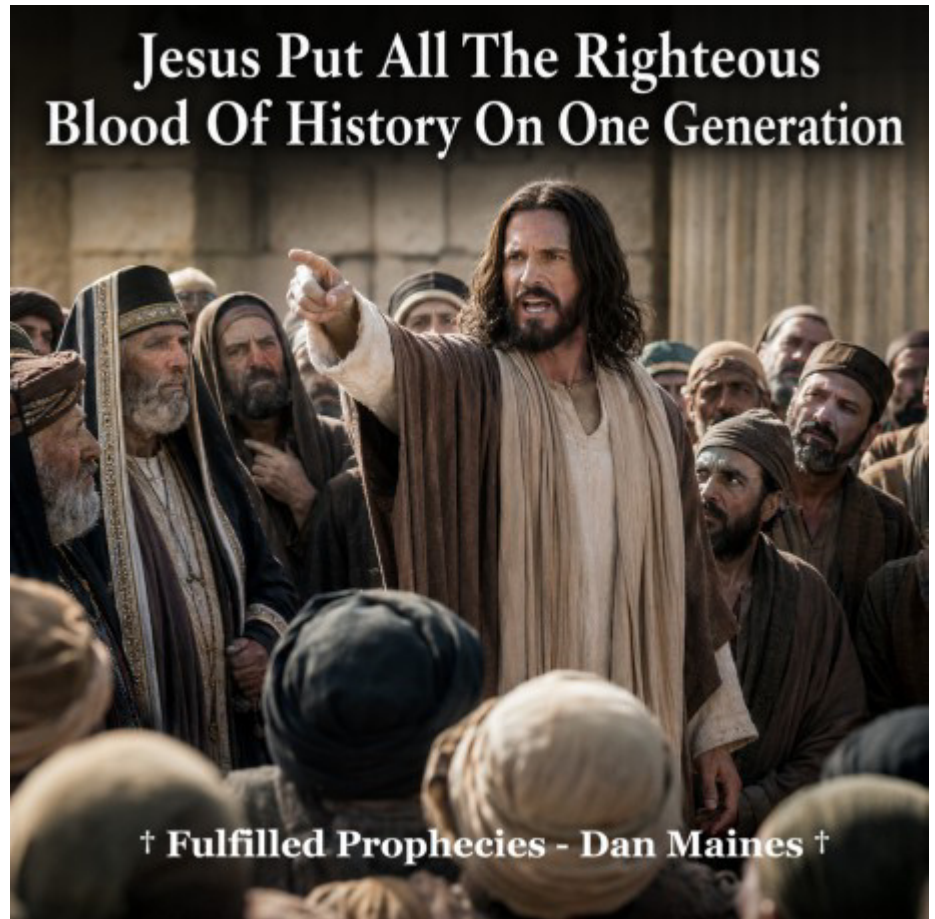


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Jesus Put All The Righteous Blood Of History On One Generation



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Matthew 23 contains one of the strongest time statements Jesus ever gave concerning judgment. Jesus didn't scatter the guilt He described across thousands of years of future history. He gathered the history of righteous bloodshed, from Abel onward, and announced that the reckoning would fall upon one specific generation.

† This matters because Jesus identified both the people being

judged and the generation that would experience the judgment. His words don't require us to guess when these things would happen. He said, All these things shall come upon this generation (Matthew 23:36).

† The setting is also critical. Jesus was speaking directly to the scribes and Pharisees, condemning the covenant leadership of Jerusalem immediately before announcing the coming desolation of their house (Matthew 23:37-38).

† Matthew 23 therefore gives us a powerful interpretive key for Matthew 24. Before Jesus ever said this generation shall not pass away in the Olivet Discourse, He had already identified that generation as the generation upon whom accumulated covenant judgment would fall (Matthew 23:36; 24:34).

Matthew 23:29-32

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs for the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, and you 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.' So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.

† Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of leaders who honored dead prophets while rejecting the One to whom the prophets pointed. They decorated the graves of righteous men while continuing the same covenant rebellion that had produced those graves (Matthew 23:29-32).

† The words fill up then the measure of your fathers are especially important. Jesus presented their generation as the generation that would bring the long history of covenant rebellion to its full measure (Matthew 23:32).

† This wasn't merely individual guilt. Jesus was describing a covenantal and historical reckoning. Their rejection of Christ and persecution of His messengers would demonstrate that they stood in continuity with those who had persecuted God's messengers before them (Matthew 23:30-32).

Matthew 23:33-36

You snakes, you offspring of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? "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 flog in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you will 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. Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

† Jesus couldn't have made the audience clearer. He repeatedly said you. I send to you. Some of them you shall kill. Some shall you scourge. Upon you may come all the righteous blood. All these things shall come upon this generation (Matthew 23:33-36).

† Abel reaches back to the earliest righteous martyr recorded in Scripture. Zechariah represents another righteous man murdered in connection with the sanctuary. Jesus gathered the history of righteous bloodshed into one sweeping indictment (Genesis 4:8-10; 2 Chronicles 24:20-22).

† The decisive statement is verse 36. Jesus didn't say all these things would come upon a generation living thousands of years later. He said this generation. The people standing before Him were being warned about a judgment approaching their own covenant world (Matthew 23:36).

† This is why Matthew 23 is so important for understanding biblical prophecy. The generation responsible for rejecting Jesus and persecuting His messengers was also the generation Jesus identified for the climactic covenant judgment (Matthew 23:34-36).

Genesis 4:8-10

Cain talked to his brother Abel; and it happened that when they were in the field Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Then He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's

blood is crying out to Me from the ground.

† Jesus deliberately reached back to Abel when describing the righteous blood that would be brought into the covenant reckoning. Abel's blood cried out from the ground for justice (Genesis 4:10).

† This establishes a biblical pattern. Innocent blood wasn't forgotten before God. Bloodshed cried for judgment, and Jesus announced that the covenantal accumulation of righteous blood was reaching its appointed reckoning in His generation (Matthew 23:35-36).

† The connection between Genesis and Matthew is striking. The Bible's first recorded murder of a righteous man becomes part of Jesus' indictment against the generation that would reject and kill God's Son and persecute His messengers (Matthew 21:37-39; 23:34-36).

2 Chronicles 24:20-22

Then the Spirit of God covered Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest like clothing; and he stood above the people and said to them, "This is what God has said, 'Why do you break the commandments of the Lord and do not prosper? Because you have abandoned the Lord, He has also abandoned you.'" So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the house of the Lord. So Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Zechariah's father Jehoiada had shown him, but he murdered his son. And as Zechariah died he said, "May the Lord see and avenge!"

† Zechariah was murdered in the sacred precincts after confronting covenant rebellion. His dying appeal was that God would see the crime and require an accounting (2 Chronicles 24:20-22).

† Jesus' reference to righteous blood reaching from Abel to Zechariah wasn't random. It summarized a long history in which God's messengers were rejected, persecuted, and murdered (Matthew 23:35).

† Jesus announced that the accounting requested by the blood

of the righteous was reaching its covenant climax. That is why His declaration ends with the unmistakable words, All these things shall come upon this generation (Matthew 23:36).

Luke 11:47-51

Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. So you are witnesses and you approve of the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs. For this reason also, the wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill, and some they will persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'

† Luke's parallel account makes the timing even harder to escape. Jesus said the blood of all the prophets would be required of this generation (Luke 11:50-51).

† Notice the language of accountability. Jesus didn't merely predict another period of persecution. He announced a reckoning for the accumulated blood of God's prophets (Luke 11:49-51).

† Matthew says all these things shall come upon this generation, while Luke says the blood shall be required of this generation. Together they identify both the nature and timing of the judgment (Matthew 23:36; Luke 11:50-51).

Matthew 21:33-41

"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it, and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and he leased it to vine-growers and went on a journey. And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his fruit. And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they did the same things to them. But afterward he sent his

son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let's kill him and take possession of his inheritance!' And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and lease the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the fruit in the proper seasons."

† The parable of the vineyard tells the same covenant story. God's servants were beaten, killed, and stoned, and finally the Son Himself was rejected and killed (Matthew 21:35-39).

† The killing of the Son brought the rebellion to its climax. The issue wasn't simply that previous generations had persecuted prophets. Jesus' generation was about to reject the Son and continue persecuting those He sent (Matthew 21:37-39; 23:34).

† Jesus therefore announced judgment upon those husbandmen. This is the same pattern seen in Matthew 23, generations of covenant rebellion reaching their climax in the rejection of Christ and producing judgment upon that generation (Matthew 21:40-41; 23:32-36).

Matthew 23:37-38

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who have been 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!

† Jesus immediately identified Jerusalem as the city with the history of killing the prophets and stoning God's messengers. This connects the righteous blood indictment directly to Jerusalem's coming desolation (Matthew 23:37-38).

† The movement of the passage is unmistakable. Jesus condemned the leaders, announced that righteous blood would be required of their generation, lamented over Jerusalem, and declared their house desolate (Matthew 23:29-38).

† This prepares the reader for the next chapter. Jesus left the

temple, His disciples pointed out its buildings, and He announced that not one stone would be left upon another (Matthew 24:1-2). Matthew 24 didn't begin a completely unrelated prophecy, it continued the judgment Jesus had just pronounced.

Matthew 24:1-2

Jesus left the temple area and was going on His way when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. But He responded and 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."

† There is no chapter break in Jesus' conversation. Matthew 24 follows directly from His declaration that Jerusalem's house was being left desolate (Matthew 23:38).

† The temple's destruction was therefore connected to the covenant judgment Jesus had just pronounced. The disciples saw the temple standing before them, and Jesus told them its magnificent stones would be thrown down (Matthew 24:1-2).

† The subject didn't suddenly become the destruction of planet Earth. The immediate subject was the temple, Jerusalem, covenant judgment, and the generation Jesus had already identified (Matthew 23:36-38; 24:1-2).

Matthew 24:34

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

† Jesus used the same generation language in Matthew 24 that He had just used in Matthew 23. This generation in Matthew 24:34 shouldn't be separated from this generation in Matthew 23:36.

† Matthew 23 says all these things shall come upon this generation. Matthew 24 says this generation shall not pass away until all these things are accomplished. The verbal connection is powerful (Matthew 23:36; 24:34).

† Jesus had already defined the guilty generation before the disciples ever asked Him about the temple's destruction. The

Olivet Discourse continues that same first-century judgment context (Matthew 23:34-38; 24:1-3, 34).

Historical References

† Josephus, writing about the Jewish War and Jerusalem's destruction, described a city consumed by internal violence, bloodshed, famine, factional warfare, and finally Roman destruction. His account provides important historical testimony concerning the catastrophic judgment that overtook Jerusalem in AD 70 (Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Books 5-6).

† Josephus described the temple being burned and Jerusalem devastated during the Roman siege. This historical setting closely matches Jesus' first-century warning that Jerusalem's house would be left desolate and the temple destroyed (Matthew 23:38; 24:1-2; Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6).

† Tacitus also recorded the Roman siege of Jerusalem under Titus and described the enormous population trapped within the city during the conflict. His Roman account independently confirms the historical setting of Jerusalem's catastrophic first-century destruction (Tacitus, *Histories*, Book 5).

† Eusebius later connected the calamities that befell the Jewish nation with the rejection of Christ and recorded the tradition that believers in Jerusalem escaped to Pella before the war (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapters 5-7).

How It Applies To Us Today

† We shouldn't take a judgment Jesus explicitly assigned to this generation and move it thousands of years into our future. The time statement should be allowed to mean what it meant to Jesus' original audience (Matthew 23:36).

† We should read Matthew 24 in the context Matthew itself provides. Jesus pronounced judgment upon His generation, declared Jerusalem's house desolate, predicted the temple's destruction, and then again said this generation wouldn't pass away until all these things were accomplished (Matthew 23:36-38; 24:1-2, 34).

† This fulfilled judgment doesn't mean Christ stopped reigning after AD 70. It means the old covenant age reached its decisive judgment and the kingdom of Christ stands victorious. We don't live waiting for Jerusalem's first-century judgment to happen again.

† The lesson for us is also spiritual. Religious appearance can't substitute for faithfulness to God. The scribes and Pharisees honored the prophets with monuments while rejecting the truth those prophets proclaimed and rejecting the Messiah standing before them (Matthew 23:29-32).

† Most importantly, Jesus' words should control our interpretation. When He said this generation, we shouldn't replace His audience with ours. The righteous blood was required of that generation, Jerusalem's house was left desolate, and the temple Jesus pointed to was destroyed within that generation (Matthew 23:35-38; 24:1-2, 34).

Q & A Appendix

Q: Did Jesus really say all the righteous blood would be required of one generation?

A: Yes. Matthew says all these things would come upon this generation, and Luke says the blood of all the prophets would be required of this generation (Matthew 23:35-36; Luke 11:50-51).

Q: Why did Jesus begin with Abel?

A: Abel was the first righteous person recorded in Scripture as being murdered, and his blood cried from the ground for justice (Genesis 4:8-10).

Q: Why is Zechariah important?

A: Jesus used Zechariah as the other boundary in His sweeping summary of righteous bloodshed. Zechariah was murdered in connection with God's sanctuary after confronting covenant rebellion (2 Chronicles 24:20-22; Matthew 23:35).

Q: Was Jesus talking about a generation thousands of years in the future?

A: No. He was speaking directly to the scribes and Pharisees and repeatedly used you before declaring that all these things

would come upon this generation (Matthew 23:29-36).

Q: Does Matthew 24 change the generation?

A: No. Matthew 24 continues directly from Matthew 23. Jesus declared Jerusalem's house desolate, predicted the destruction of the temple, and again said this generation wouldn't pass away until all these things were accomplished (Matthew 23:36-38; 24:1-2, 34).

Q: Was this judgment historically fulfilled?

A: Yes. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, within the lifetime of the generation Jesus addressed. Josephus, Tacitus, and later Eusebius preserve important historical testimony concerning that first-century catastrophe.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Matthew 23:29-32; Matthew 23:33-36; Genesis 4:8-10; 2 Chronicles 24:20-22; Luke 11:47-51; Matthew 21:33-41; Matthew 23:37-38; Matthew 24:1-2; Matthew 24:34

† Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Books 5-6; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapters 5-7

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