

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church  
**Matthew 23:37-39 | The Heart of Our Savior**  
Sunday November 2, 2025

**WELCOME:**

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

**REVIEW:**

We continue our study of Matthew's Gospel today.

For the past three months, we have been experiencing God verse by verse throughout the last week of Jesus' life.

Matthew chapter 21 was a turning point for Jesus.

Up until this point, Jesus told people to keep His identity a secret.

For the first time, Jesus tells the world Who He is—Israel's King.

He didn't ride into Jerusalem as a conquering king with a massive army.

That's what the world does—Antiochus Epiphanes, Pompey the Great, and Titus did all that.

Fulfilling prophecy, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. — *not a stallion*

**Zechariah 9:9**— Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!

Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem!

Look, your King is coming to you;

he is righteous and victorious,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

*not oppressive tyrant*

As Jesus of Nazareth rode into the city, the people of Jerusalem rejoiced and shouted—“***Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!***” (Matt. 21:9)

Today, we know this special day as Palm Sunday, even though it was actually the Monday of Passover week.

Although the city was rejoicing, the scribes and Pharisees did not.

+ **Luke 19:39**—Some of the Pharisees from the crowd told him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.”

+ **Luke 19:40**—He answered, “I tell you, if they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out.”

In other words, Jesus pronounced to the whole world that He is King, just as Zechariah prophesied.

On Tuesday, Jesus goes into the Temple to teach, but he can’t. Why?

Because the scribes and Pharisees turned the Temple into a circus.

The Temple was supposed to be a place for prayer and worship, but the religious leaders turned it into a shopping mall and a county fair.

Jesus will not tolerate anyone disrespecting His Heavenly Father, so He claims authority over the Temple and kicks out all the merchants. *Takes Action*

In other words, Jesus’ actions revealed that He is not only the King of Kings, but also the High Priest.

He is the High Priest who not only makes the once-and-for-all Passover sacrifice, but is the perfect spotless Lamb of God who takes away our sin once and for all.

Next is Wednesday—it’s a very long day of teaching for Jesus.

On the way to the Temple, Jesus is hungry and sees this big, beautiful fig tree from a distance.

The problem is that as Jesus drew closer to examine the tree for fruit, it didn't bear any.

And because this tree wasn't producing what it was designed to produce—Jesus cursed it.

He didn't curse it out of anger or because Jesus was hangry.

He cursed it because it was a sign—the fig tree represents Israel.

Israel looked good on the outside, but inside, they were spiritually dead.

What good is a fruit tree that doesn't produce fruit?

In cursing the tree, Jesus revealed to Israel that He is not only the King of kings, the High Priest, but also the Prophet of prophets.

Those three offices were always held by three different people. Why?

Because no one had the moral character to hold all three at the same time.

Jesus is the only one who has the divine character to hold all three simultaneously.

In a similar way, Jesus is the only one who can open the scroll in the book of Revelation (Rev. 5:1).

Although Jesus revealed that He was their King, High Priest, and Prophet, the scribes and Pharisees were not listening.

They're too busy talking—testing Jesus with three questions.

*complaining*

Jesus responds with three parables.

In the *Parable of the Two Sons*,

 **Matthew 21:31**—~~Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you,~~ <sup>thieves</sup> tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you.

Wouldn't you like to see the look on their faces? → <sup>profession and clergymen.</sup>

In the *Parable of the Landowner*,

 **Matthew 21:43**—~~Therefore I tell you,~~ <sup>therefore</sup> the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit.

In other words, they're losing their jobs—Jesus fires them.

In the *Parable of the Wedding Party*,

 **Matthew 22:8**—"Then he told his servants, 'The banquet is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.'

*Worthy*— meaning the false teachers of Israel didn't have the moral character.

The scribes and Pharisees knew that Jesus was pointing His finger at them with each parable.

This only made them more angry.

<sup>so they</sup> ~~They~~ come back with three more questions to trick Jesus.

The first question concerned God and Taxes.

The second dealt with a silly riddle about marriage in Heaven.

The third dealt with the most essential thing anyone could ever do—love God and love people.

With each answer, Jesus leaves everyone stunned by His divine wisdom.

Finally, after all this—Jesus asks them a theological question they can't answer.

After that, it's like the fear of God set in...

**Matthew 22:46**—No one was able to answer him at all, and from that day no one dared to question him anymore.

As the scribes and Pharisees turn their backs on Jesus and walk away—Jesus preaches His last sermon.

It's not a sermon on love, or how to treat people—Jesus has already preached those.

This sermon is about the scribes and Pharisees—the false teachers of Israel.

In Jesus' last sermon, He curses them seven times.

He calls them hypocrites, blind guides, blind morons, snakes, and a family of vipers.

Many people think Jesus's sermon is uncalled for and unjustly harsh.

But we learned that Jesus didn't do anything different than the prophets in the OT.

God is always protective of His chosen people.

He always calls a spade a spade / false teacher a false teacher.

BTW, the most loving thing anyone can ever do is tell someone else the truth.

And since Jesus is *The Way, The Truth, and The Life*, He did so with perfect grace, mercy, and justice. (Jn. 14:6)

### INTRODUCTION:

Today, we'll finish studying Jesus' sermon.

*The hard part is over. - Kind of.*

As Jesus closes, His tone changes.

His tone of holy indignation and righteous wrath softens to profound sadness and sorrow for the nation of Israel. Why?

Verses 37-39 serve as a bridge from the prophecy about the *spiritual fate* of the scribes and Pharisees to the *physical fate* of Jerusalem and the Temple itself.

Jesus' message remains as true and clear today as it was 2,000 years ago.

How so? Let's find out together!

### SCRIPTURE:

**Matthew 23:37**— "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

**Matthew 23:38**— See, your house is left to you desolate.

**Matthew 23:39**— For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, '**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**'"

*These are the holy words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, infallible, sufficient, and efficacious Word of Almighty God.*

**PRAY:**

*God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is pure. He is a shield to all who take refuge in him.* (Psalm 18:30)

**EXEGESIS:**

**Matthew 23:37**— “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

We can hear Jesus’ tone change.

The prophet Jeremiah expressed a similar grief when the Babylonians captured Judah.

**Jeremiah 13:17 NLT**— And if you still refuse to listen, I will weep alone because of your pride. My eyes will overflow with tears, because the Lord's flock will be led away into exile.

Just as Jeremiah cried for Israel, so does Jesus.

**Luke 19:41**—As he approached and saw the city, he wept for it,

**Luke 19:42**—saying, “If you knew this day what would bring peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.

**Luke 19:43**—For the days will come on you when your enemies will build a barricade around you, surround you, and hem you in on every side.

**Luke 19:41**—They will crush you and your children among you to the ground, and they will not leave one stone on another in your midst, because you did not recognize the time when God visited you.”

So with a divine sense of grief...

**Matthew 23:37**— “Jerusalem, Jerusalem,

The name Jerusalem means “city of peace,” and it was called the holy city.

Both titles convey a sense of irony.

Over many centuries, Jerusalem had become the city of violence and of unholiness.

In Revelation 11:8, Jerusalem is called “*Sodom and Egypt*.”

Sodom, referring to its perversion; Egypt, to its idolatry. *paganism*

Why does Jesus repeat Himself? “*Jerusalem, Jerusalem*.”

We see this repetition in the Old Testament, when Abraham was about to sacrifice his only son, and at the last second God called to him, saying, “*Abraham, Abraham!... Do not lay your hand on your son ... for now I know that you fear God*” (Gen. 22:11).

Later, when Jacob feared going with his family into the land of Goshen, God came and spoke to him, saying, “*Jacob, Jacob!... do not fear to go down to Egypt.... I will go down with you*” (Gen. 46:2–4).

Still later, in the wilderness, God called Moses out of the burning bush, saying, “*Moses, Moses!... Do not come closer,*” (Ex. 3:4).

In God’s midnight call to a very young prophet named Samuel, “*Samuel! Samuel!*” —And Sam replied, “*Speak, for your servant is listening*” (1 Sam. 3:10).

When Elijah was taken up to heaven in the chariot of fire, Elisha stood there looking on and cried out, “*My father, my father*” (2 Kings 2:12).

Then there was King David's cry of sorrow when he heard that his son died, and he wailed, "*O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!*" (2 Sam. 19:4).

In the Gospels, Jesus spoke tenderly to Martha when she complained that her sister Mary was not helping, "*Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things*" (Luke 10:41).

When Simon Peter told Jesus he would never deny Him, Jesus said: "*Simon, Simon, look out. Satan has asked to sift you like wheat.*" (Luke 22:31).

→ Fire breathing Christian Pharaoh

In the Epistles, there was Saul, traveling on the road to Damascus. Jesus asked, "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*" (Acts 9:4).

Of course, the most dramatic use of such repetition came from the cross itself, when Jesus cried out, *Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?*—"My God, My God, why have you abandoned Me" (Mark 15:34).

Every time a name is repeated, there is a sense of profound personal affection—except for one instance.

Jesus said, "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven,*" (Matt. 7:21)

On judgment day, people will come to Jesus, pretending to know Him.

They will repeat His name as if they have a personal relationship, but they don't.

### **KEYPOINT 1:**

→ Facts About Jesus, The Gospel

People may know of Jesus, but does Jesus know them?

(Illustration: "I go to church here.")

"*Jerusalem, Jerusalem,*" He is calling to His people in a very personal way.

**Matthew 11:28**—"Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

**Matthew 11:29**—Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**Matthew 11:30**—"For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

But there's a problem—they didn't want to. They didn't want to learn from Jesus.

They refused His offer of grace and rest, but instead wanted to work for their salvation.

They wanted to get to Heaven on their own terms and conditions.

Part of their plan was to kill God's people along the way.

**Matthew 23:37**— <sup>Jerusalem,</sup> who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her.

Jerusalem is anything but a city of peace—it's a city soaked in blood.

The picture here is that Israel was, is, and will continue to kill and stone God's people.

The verbs "kill" and "stone" in Greek are "who are killing ... and stoning."

In other words, it's not past tense—it's present active participle.

The killing and stoning will continue—next with Jesus, then the Apostles, and then with their disciples.

The book of Acts catalogs those events in detail.

**Matthew 23:37**— How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,

It's instinctive for a bird to protect her chicks.

We've all seen the baby quail running after Mama—"Mama Bear."

—Photo: MAMA Owl —6

In a much better way, God does the same thing.

MANY NAMES for God - Each name reveals a different aspect of His character.

- El Shaddai = "God Almighty."
- El Roi = "The God who Sees."

**Matthew 23:37**— How often I wanted to gather your children together,

How often is how often?

We see this imagery of divine protection and provision throughout the OT.

Moses also used this imagery in his final sermon to Israel before he died.

**Deuteronomy 32:11**— <sup>Look</sup> ~~He~~ watches over his <sup>people</sup> nest like an eagle and hovers over his young; he spreads his wings, catches him, and carries him on his feathers.

Boaz said to Ruth...

**Ruth 2:12**— May the Lord reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

The Psalmsist writes...

+ **Psalm 17:8**—Protect me as the pupil of your eye;  
hide me in the shadow of your wings

+ **Psalm 36:7**—How priceless your faithful love is, God!  
People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

+ **Psalm 91:4**—He will cover you with his feathers;  
you will take refuge under his wings.

+ **Isaiah 31:5**—Like hovering birds,  
so the Lord of Armies will protect Jerusalem;  
by protecting it, he will rescue it;  
by passing over it, he will deliver it.

Now Jesus has come personally to exercise that divine function of protection.

+ **Matthew 23:37**— but you were not willing!

Your ancestors didn't want protection then! And you don't want it now!

At every encounter with the scribes and Pharisees, they were never willing to listen, repent, or believe.

Israel's always had this problem with submission.

+ **Isaiah 30:15**—For the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has said:  
"You will be delivered by returning and resting;  
your strength will lie in quiet confidence.  
But you are not willing."

+ **John 1:11**—He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

Scribes? Pharisees

How did they not receive Jesus?

- Refused to listen to John the Baptizer — He came to prepare the way after 400 years of silence.
- Healed a paralyzed man—rather than rejoice, they accused Jesus of blasphemy. (Matt. 9)
- Driving out demons—called Jesus Satan (Matt. 9:34)
- Criticized Jesus for supposedly breaking Sabbath regulations (Matt 12:2)
- Planned to kill Jesus for healing a man's hand in church! (Matt 12:13)
- Told the people that Jesus does miracles by the power of Satan (Matt. 12:24)
- His hometown of Nazareth rejected Him (Matt 13:53).
- Criticized Jesus and the Disciples for not washing their hands properly (Matt 15:1)

At every encounter there was a problem — And they did not receive Him.

Jesus' closing remarks in His last sermon summarize the tragedy of Israel's rejection of Him.

Rejection of God's Son has consequences, and here they are.

**Matthew 23:38**— See, your house is left to you desolate.

First, the house is the Temple.

Second, notice that Jesus has changed pronouns about the Temple.

The day before, as Jesus cleansed the Temple of all the vendors, He said, "My house will be called a house of prayer," (Matt. 21:13).

Why does Jesus change pronouns? He tells us...

**Matthew 23:38**— See, your house is left to you desolate.

Because Jesus leaves it.

Desolation equals

The Greek adjective is *érēmos*—wilderness and desert—uninhabited and unlivable.

The Holy Temple of God is now deserted and abandoned by God Himself.

Just as a fig tree that bears no fruit is worthless, <sup>↑</sup>how much more is a Temple without God.

Jesus will not only not stay where He's not wanted,

Remember when Jesus cast thousands of demons out of men in the area of the Gerasenes?

 **Mark 5:15**— <sup>→ townspeople</sup> They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

 **Mark 5:17**—Then they began to beg <sup>Jesus</sup> him to leave their region.

<sup>→ townspeople</sup> In other words, they would rather be around a crazy, naked, demon-possessed man than have Jesus in their presence.

Jerusalem said the same thing.

Remember Barabbas? A known thief, murderer, and revolutionary. (Matt 27:20).

### **KEYPOINT 2:**

*By rejecting Jesus, Jerusalem rejected God's protection.*

And for the past 2,000 years, the nation of Israel has been without the protection of their God.

Think about Israel's history—and how many other nations have chased, abused, and killed the Jews.

- The Jews were massacred under the Romans (1st-4th centuries)
- Byzantine Empire (4th- 7th centuries)

- Conquered by the muslims (7th century)
- The Crusades (11th- 13th centuries)
- Egyptians (13th- 16th centuries)
- Ottoman Empire (16th- 20th centuries)
- German Holocaust (20th Century)

Since 1948, Israel has their country back, but all the other nations around them still want them dead.

All of this Israeli blood could have been avoided through repentance and faith. — 1<sup>st</sup> Century

Pretty big theological lesson here—if the Jews had repented and believed Jesus as their Savior, there would be no second coming of Christ.

How so? Because Jesus still needed to be crucified, buried, and raised from the dead.

True—and the Romans would have still killed Jesus because they would not tolerate anyone who claimed to be king.

Jesus still would have been buried and raised on the third day.

But the Jews were not willing.

**Matthew 23:39**— For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, **'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'**

God has a plan, and we are all a part of His divine timeline.

**Ephesians 1:9**— He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ

**Ephesians 1:10**— as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.

**Ephesians 1:11**—In him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will,

God hasn't given up on the Jews—far from it.

God is disciplining the Jews.

God chose to love them, but they refused to love Him back.

So what do you do with a wayward child? Discipline him.

Part of God's plan for the Jews is a partial blindness until God has grafted in the non-Jews/Gentiles.

→ Jew's sin / unbelief / unrepentance

**Romans 11:11**—by their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel jealous.

In other words, the Church got Jesus on the rebound!

That's been God's plan for the past 2,000 years.

**Matthew 23:39**—For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, **'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'**

This official messianic greeting is based on the Praise (Hallel) Psalms (113–118), which are chanted during the Jewish festivals.

**Psalms 118:26**—He who comes in the name of the Lord is blessed. From the house of the Lord we bless you.

Jesus makes this statement just a few days before the people pray this verse over their Passover meal!

Jesus tells the crowd that they will not see him again until something dramatic happens.

He does not threaten to stay away from them altogether, and He hasn't broken His covenants. *Promises.*

Jesus established His precondition for the second coming— He will not return until the Jewish leaders ask Him to come back.

Just as the Jewish leaders once led the nation to reject Him, a day must come when they will lead the nation to accept Him.

I love the way Jesus ends this sermon. He brings everything full circle.

He reminds the crowd of what they did as He entered the city two days prior.

They celebrated and worshiped Him by saying, "***Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.***" (Matt. 21:9)

Now Jesus refers back to that day and says— *You'll say it again, only next time you'll say it with new understanding.*

In other words, it's going to happen. The time is coming when the Jews will acknowledge Jesus as Lord.

*Believe*

There are three specific things where Scripture says we are not to be ignorant, unaware, or uninformed of God's mysteries:

1. Spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1)
2. The Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13)
3. The salvation of Israel (Romans 11:25, 26).

Jesus is describing an End Times reality, not something in the immediate future.

*Eschatology - Revelation*

**APPLICATION:**



### APPLICATION:

As I close, let me give you a few things to ponder this week.



### KEYPOINT 1:

*People may know of Jesus, but does Jesus know them?*

So let's make this personal—you know the name of Jesus and some facts about Jesus.

You may know the Gospel—but do you believe?

Or, are you acting like the scribes and Pharisees by rejecting Jesus?



### KEYPOINT 2:

*By rejecting Jesus, Jerusalem rejected God's protection.*

The same holds true today for those who reject Jesus and His gospel.

When people reject Jesus—they also refuse His protection and covering.

- 
- Does Jesus know you by name?
  - Whose wings are covering you?
  - If Jesus curses His chosen nation, what will He do to those who refuse to believe?

We don't have to guess. Scripture is crystal clear.

Next week we'll begin our study of Matthew 24, where Jesus teaches

1. About the immediate consequences of Jerusalem's unbelief.
2. About the future consequences of the world's unbelief.

### PRAYER

### Lord's Supper:

### DOXOLOGY

**BENEDICTION**

*“May the Lord bless you and protect you;*

*May the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;*

*May the Lord look with favor on you  
and give you peace.” ’ (Num. 6:24)*

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