

1. Jesus' Rebuke to the Religious Elite

Matthew 23:35 (NKJV):

"That on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar."

In this verse, Jesus issues one of His strongest warnings to the scribes and Pharisees. By referencing Abel and Zechariah, He encapsulates the entire Old Testament history of violence against God's messengers—from Genesis (Abel) to Chronicles (Zechariah), which was the last book in the Jewish Hebrew Bible at the time.

These men represent not only individual martyrs but also a pattern of systemic rejection of truth—a warning to every generation.

2. Abel: The First Martyr and the Voice of Innocent Blood

Genesis 4:8 (NKJV):

“Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and... Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”

Hebrews 11:4 (NKJV):

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain... and through it he being dead still speaks.”

Abel’s blood cried out for justice (Genesis 4:10). Though he was the first martyr, his voice still symbolically speaks for all the righteous who suffer unjustly. Theologically, Abel’s death is the prototype of innocent bloodshed, and a foreshadow of Christ’s own death.

3. Zechariah son of Berechiah: Identity Clarification

While Jesus refers to “Zechariah son of Berechiah,” biblical scholars largely agree He was referring to Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest, recorded in:

2 Chronicles 24:20-21 (NKJV):

“Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest... So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord.”

Why the different name?

In Jewish tradition, genealogical references often skip generations. “Son of Berechiah” could be an alternate family name or even refer to a grandfather or ancestor. What matters theologically is the act—Zechariah, a righteous priest, was murdered in the sanctuary, desecrating the very heart of Israel’s worship.

4. The Weight of National Guilt

Matthew 23:31-32 (NKJV):

“Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt.”

Jesus identifies a generational pattern of rejecting God's prophets. This isn't merely historical—it reflects spiritual hardness that transcends time. Jesus declares that the blood of the martyrs will come upon that generation—fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

5. The Cry for Justice in Heaven

Revelation 6:9-10 (NKJV):

"...I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God... and they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge...?'"

These martyrs are not forgotten. In God's justice system, blood has a voice. The altar in heaven is a direct theological parallel to the altar in the temple—the very place where Zechariah was slain.

6. Divine Vengeance and Theological Justice

Revelation 16:5-6 (NKJV):

“You are righteous, O Lord... For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.”

The Bible teaches that God is just (Deuteronomy 32:4) and will avenge the righteous (Romans 12:19). When human courts fail, divine justice remains. God’s judgment is not vengeful in human terms; it is a response to unrepentant sin.

7. The Gospel Response: Jesus’ Blood Speaks Better Things

Hebrews 12:24 (NKJV):

“...to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.”

While Abel’s blood calls for justice, Jesus’ blood calls for mercy.

The cross is the ultimate answer to the cries of righteous blood—it is God’s offer of forgiveness to even those who killed His prophets.

8. A Call to Repentance and Spiritual Awakening

Hebrews 2:3 (NKJV):

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...?”

Today, many still reject God’s messengers, though not by stoning—but by indifference, false doctrine, or institutional compromise. Refusing salvation through Christ aligns one with those who resisted God in ages past.

Salvation demands that we:

- Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31)
- Repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38)
- Walk in holiness and love (Romans 12:1-2)

Conclusion: Whose Blood Will Cover You?

All through Scripture, two types of blood cry out:

1. The blood of the innocent, calling for justice.
2. The blood of Jesus, offering mercy and redemption.

To escape divine judgment, one must be covered by the blood of Christ—the only blood that reconciles us to God (Colossians 1:20).

Psalm 23:4 (NKJV):

“...Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

Let His shepherding rod lead you into truth—and away from judgment.

May the Lord bless you, give you discernment, and draw you fully into the covering of the blood that saves.

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