

THE ULTIMATE WOE!

JAMIE MCNAB

3.8.19

We've spent a few weeks looking at various words ... phrases ... translation problems — Gentiles ... Foundation of the World ... Time of The End ... Don't Lose Your Crown and some misunderstood scriptures (such as: As a man thinketh in his heart ... so is he).

Today ... I want to look at another word. Very small word — only 3 letters — but potentially packs a big punch!

It has a range of meanings ... though fairly closely-related. Quite a common word ... so it might help us in our personal Bible Study to have a deeper insight into how it is used and what it really means.

The word is “Woe”. The Greek is: “Ouai”.

It is used about 47 times in the New Testament — 41 times it is translated as “woe” and the other 6 times as “alas”.

Firstly ... dictionaries tell us the word expresses grief or denunciation. Usually associated with calamity or tragedy.

Rather than “woe” ... we today might exclaim “how tragic!” or “what a calamity!”

Maybe on the news ... we hear of a car crash with several deaths and exclaim: “how tragic!” ... or perhaps a family die in a house fire — again we explain “how tragic!”

Those are calamities and tragedies ... but there is no real blame or guilt — accidents — and nobody pronounced a denunciation or condemnation on them. Plenty of grief too.

When we come to “woes” in the Bible ... the tragedies or calamities are often punishments ... and there are often denunciations ... a damnation ... involved. And one of the punishments includes a very serious warning to all believers. A woe that none of us wants to face.

Let's start with the 6 times the Greek word is translated as "alas" — signifying great grief. They are all in one chapter.

Revelation 18:1-4

1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "**Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!**

3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "**Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.**

This is talking about the punishment of the great harlot. Babylon is fallen!

Revelation 18:8-11

8 **Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.**

9 **"The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her,** when they see the smoke of her burning,

10 **standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!** For in one hour your judgment has come.'

11 **"And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:**

Alas ... alas — weeping and mourning.

Revelation 18:15-19

15 **The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,**

16 **and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!**

17 For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What is like this great city?'

19 **"They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'**

Grief stricken. "Alas" used 6 times in all.

You could say: "what a tragedy!" ... "what a calamity!" ... or ... "woe is me!" ... "woe is us!"

Anguish ... loss ... massive destruction ... death.

And it's punishment. From God. Babylon is guilty and deserves its woes.

We can see here that the Greek word pictures torment ... distress ... ruin ... catastrophe.

No wonder the world's leaders and traders cry "alas — how tragic! How awful!"

The word "Ouai" is not something minor. This is absolute world-wide destruction.

Revelation 8:1-2

1 **When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.**

2 **And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.**

The first 3:

- 1/3 of the trees burned up
- 1/3 the seas and the oceans become blood
- 1/3 of the waters become poisonous

Now to the 4th trumpet:

Revelation 8:12

12 **Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.**

Darkness overtakes the earth!

Revelation 8:13

13 **And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (3 final trumpets described as 3 woes)**

The final 3 trumpets.

These 3 are singled out because they're so destructive! Anguish ... loss ... calamity ... tragedy. A huge loss of life.

And they are PUNISHMENTS FROM GOD ... for sin and wickedness.

They're awful!

Revelation 9:1-6, 11

1 **Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.**

2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.

3 **Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.**

4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

5 **And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months.** Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

6 **In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.**

11 **And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.**

The 5th trumpet — men seek to die!

On to the 6th trumpet.

Revelation 9:12-21

12 **One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.**

13 **Then the sixth angel sounded:** And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, **“Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”**

15 **So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.**

16 **Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million;** I heard the number of them.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulphur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and **out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.**

18 **By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.**

19 For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.

20 **But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands,** that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

21 **And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.**

A third of mankind die ... but the remaining two thirds don't repent.

The 7th trumpet is Jesus taking over rule and pouring out the 7 last plagues ... as we covered last week.

So ... more evidence of how destructive “woes” can be. None of us wants to be on the receiving end of any woe!!

However ... some people have been warned in advance that they will be at the receiving end of a frightening woe.

Jesus was often very specific.

Matthew 11:20-24

20 **Then He began to rebuke (denounce) the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent:**

21 **“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.**

22 **But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.**

23 **And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven (in your own eyes), will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.**

24 **But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”**

Woe! Woe!

Jesus is denouncing specific groups — Chorazin ... Bethsaida ... Capernaum.

These people heard the Truth. They saw the Truth! They saw mighty signs. They ought to have repented — even Sodom would have repented!! Even though they saw Jesus and witnessed what He was saying and doing ... and didn't bother to pursue it.

It looks like these cities will be in the second resurrection? But it won't be easy for them there. How can they defend themselves for rejecting the Truth??

When Jesus declares “woe” unto them — that's not just a mild rebuke! Not just a slap on the wrist!

It's a powerful condemnation of trial and tribulation ... with at least a hint of the Lake of Fire and eternal damnation — the ultimate woe!

Matthew 26:19-25

19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

20 **When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve.**

21 Now as they were eating, He said, **“Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.”**

22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, **“Lord, is it I?”**

23 He answered and said, **“He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me.”**

24 **The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!** It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

25 **Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Rabbi, is it I?” He said to him, “You have said it.”**

Woe to that man. What does that mean?

Jesus said it would have been good if he had not been born. It can only mean the Lake of Fire — that’s the woe/calamity! Destroyed for ever!

There are many calamities and tragedies in this fallen world ... but the ultimate tragedy is to end up annihilated in the Lake of Fire — the second death. **That is the ultimate woe.**

It’s a real place! Total ... everlasting ... destruction.

Revelation 21:7-8

7 **He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.**

8 **But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death shall.”**

The Lake of Fire — the 2nd death. The ultimate woe!

When Jesus is giving warnings ... it’s with the hope that people will realise the problem and take the opportunity to turn away from the road that leads to destruction.

1 Corinthians 9:11-18

11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?

12 If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?

14 **Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.**

15 But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. *(Paul didn't take any money from them)*

16 **For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!**

17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

18 What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

Verse 16: “Woe is me” if I preach not! Paul knows the outcome if he turns away from his mission from God — the Lake of Fire.

He is compelled — obligated — to preach. He doesn't want to receive “the woe”.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

24 **Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.**

25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

26 **Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.**

27 **But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**

Verse 27: “Disqualified” — KJV: Castaway. Otherwise translated as reprobate — to be destroyed — in the Lake of Fire.

Paul disciplined himself ... exercised self-control. As we must do ... if we want to receive the Crown of Victory ... and not the ultimate woe.

It may take some strong decisions.

Matthew 18:1-7

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2 Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,

3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

6 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 **Woe to the world because of offences!** **For offences must come, but woe to that man by whom the offences comes!**

WOE if you cause offence.

In context ... disciples were to be teachers and good examples. **Woe** to them if they're not ... and cause others to stumble off the path.

A real warning to all ministers — even today. "**Woe**" ... Lake of Fire ... may await you.

By extension — it can apply to us too!

Matthew 18:8-10

8 "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. **It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.** (*The ultimate woe*)

9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. **It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.**

10 "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

Everlasting fire! Gehenna fire! Second death.

That is the ultimate woe ... to those who cause others to stumble (God's little ones).

Has any potential new convert ever been turned off the Truth by our behaviour or conduct ... or our words or by our attitude?

The Apostle Paul shows us the right example.

Romans 14:1-3

1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.

2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables.

3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

Some immature ones ... sensitive ones... due to background (about meat that had been sacrificed to idols on a pagan altar).

Romans 14:12-23

12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; (*contaminated by a foreign god*) but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

20 **Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.** All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offence.

21 **It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.**

22 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Don't destroy another believer by your "correct" eating and drinking! Don't "offend".

1 Corinthians 8:8-13

8 **But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.**

9 **But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.**

10 For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols?

11 **And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?**

12 But **when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.**

13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

If food makes a believer stumble — Paul would give it up forever! Avoid the woe!!

All of us ... though especially teachers or preachers — are obliged to avoid causing others to stumble.

If they're a potential son or daughter of God ... and we — through our selfishness or carelessness — cause them to turn their back on the Truth ... "woe to that man" (or that woman).

Ministers are in the firing line especially as they can affect many others. The New Testament makes it plain there are plenty of false ministers ... teaching destructive heresies. Their end is the Lake of Fire — "woe unto them".

Jude 1:3-4

3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to **contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.**

4 **For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men,** who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Certain men crept into the church ... unnoticed. And they're marked out for condemnation.

Jude 1:8-11

8 Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.

9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

10 **But these (creeps) speak evil of whatever they do not know;** and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.

11 **Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.**

Jude denounces them: "Woe to them!" (Hell-Fire).

Jude 1:12-13

12 **These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves.** They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, **twice dead**, pulled up by the roots;

13 **raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.**

At your feasts! Twice dead — implies guaranteed 2nd death — the ultimate "woe".

Strong language by Jude. These men are evil destroyers of God's people ... though they look like sheep in appearance.

Jude is the only person who employs the word “woe” in this manner ... other than Jesus. But of course ... Jude was Jesus’ half-brother and probably acquired it from his brother?

Jesus didn’t hold back His warnings. Strong ...though difficult to say if they had much effect?

Jesus pronounced woes 8 times on certain individuals — in just one chapter!

Matthew 23:13

13 “**But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Woe — not going into the Kingdom ... so — the 2nd death —the Lake of Fire.

It’s a warning. They could possibly repent? The Apostle Paul did.

Matthew 23:14

14 **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. **Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.**

Greater condemnation = 2nd death ... the Lake of Fire —from which you are not coming back?

Matthew 23:15

15 “**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Son of Gehenna — son of Hell Fire ... Lake of Fire — and total destruction.

Matthew 23:16-17

16 “**Woe to you, blind guides,** who say, Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’

17 **Fools and blind!** For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

Blind guides ... they didn't know the way.

Matthew 23:23-33

23 "**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

24 **Blind guides**, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! (*Picky ... ignoring the big stuff — the TV evangelists!*)

25 "**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

26 **Blind Pharisee**, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 "**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, (*look the part*) but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

28 **Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

29 "**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

31 **"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.**

32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt.

33 **Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?**

How can you escape the condemnation of hell — of Gehenna — the Lake of Fire? They can't ... unless they repent.

These hypocrites — pretenders — are heading towards the ultimate woe. Gehenna Hell Fire and the second death. It's the ultimate tragedy and calamity for one born with the potential of everlasting life in the Family of God.

Jesus' 8 woes are not just a religious slap on the wrist. This is the strongest language you can use — to devote someone to calamity and personal ruin!

If anyone realises what a Biblical woe is ... especially the ultimate tragedy ... hopefully they'd be more careful ... more faithful?

So when we read the 40+ times the New Testament refers to "woes" ... hopefully we'll have a better insight into what those woes are.

And ... as far as we are concerned ... keep alert that we don't position ourselves to be at the receiving end of a woe!

That's a serious warning to teachers and ministers.

But for all of us ... we'd better be sure we don't cause any of God's little ones to stumble ... by our actions or behaviour ... Jesus said "woe unto that man!"

We don't want to be that man (or that woman)!