

Jesus—Matthew 23

Jesus Rebukes the Scribes & Pharisees

I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

1. Similar discussions are found in Matthew 15:10-20 and Mark 7:1-23. The lament over Jerusalem is also found in Luke 13:34-35. “Matthew 23 is the most sustained and unsparing condemnation of Pharisaism found in the NT” [Kenneth L. Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 399].
2. **23:2...** “...the scribes were a Pharisaic subset, being the group’s lawyers or experts on the Law of Moses). To ‘sit in Moses’ seat’ idiomatically refers to a teaching office (cf., professorial ‘chairs’). Neither the scribes nor Pharisees had been appointed by God as teachers, but had taken it upon themselves to teach the Law and were, in fact, the accepted religious authorities in Palestine. Any authority they had derived solely from their accurate interpretation and application of God’s word” [Ibid, p. 400].
3. **23:4...** “But the Pharisees didn’t even try to keep them; ‘they will not move them with one of their fingers’ describes about as small an effort as one can make” [Ibid, p. 401].
4. **23:5... PHYLACTERIES**—“Leather boxes containing a parchment on which is written in 4 columns: Ex 13:1-10; 11-16; Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21. These are worn by men during prayer—one on the middle of the forehead and one on the left arm just above the elbow. The use of phylacteries was based on an overly literal interpretation of passages like Ex 13:9-10; Deut 6:8. Evidently the Pharisees would broaden the leather straps by which the phylacteries were bound to their arms and foreheads, in order to make the phylacteries more prominent” [*The MacArthur Study Bible*, p. 1436].
5. **23:13-36...** “The woes in this section function almost as a converse of the ‘blesseds’ of 5:3-12; as the beatitudes set out the true way to please God, so the woes describe the wrong way, and pronounce judgment on those who follow and teach it” [Kenneth L. Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 404].
6. **23:13...** “The trouble with them was that they sincerely thought they were good men who were championing the cause of true religion, while all the time they failed to see that their goodness was largely counterfeit as well as lamentably deficient, and that what they regarded as the essentials of true religion were not its essentials at all...” [Ibid, p. 404].
7. **23:21-22...** “The Jews would never use the name of God in their oaths, but they would swear by things associated with Him (the temple, heaven, etc.). In this way they thought they avoided taking His name in vain (Ex 20:7) when they backed out of their word” [Ibid, p. 407].
8. **23:27...** “Whitewash, in our current vernacular, means to cover up a scandal. In Christ’s time it referred to the practice of whitening tombs with lime dust so that Jewish pilgrims on their way to the feasts could steer clear of them and avoid defilement (Num 9:16, cf., Lk 11:44). Whitewashing, therefore, was not a mark of beauty but a warning of uncleanness” [Ibid, p. 409].
9. **23:35...** “The history of persecution is traced from Abel (Gen 4:8) to Zacharias (2 Chr 24:20-21)—the first and last martyrs of the OT (2 Chronicles appeared last in the Jewish arrangement of the OT canon)” [Ibid, p. 412].

II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: **The Period of the Christ.**

III. Summary.

In this chapter we can get a very good picture of Jesus’ attitude toward false teachers. The false teachers of that day were the scribes and Pharisees whose priorities were entirely mixed up. Their concern was for the outward show and they had added much tradition to the Law of Moses. He gave seven names or descriptions to the false teachers of His day (vv., 13, 16, 17, 27, 31, 33). He referred to them as HYPOCRITES seven times (vv., 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). He pronounced seven WOES upon them (vv., 13, 15, 16-22, 25-26, 27-28, 29-30). A WOE is an interjection denoting pain or displeasure. Finally, He described the judgment for them: “How can ye escape the damnation of hell” (v. 33). Having rebuked the Pharisees, He indicates His care and concern for the people by weeping over the present condition of Judaism into which these hypocrites had led Jerusalem.

IV. Outline.

1. An address to the disciples regarding the authority of the Law and caution against following the example of the Pharisees (23:1-12).
2. An address of stinging rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees (23:13-33).
3. A pronouncement of judgment upon the disobedient leaders (23:33b-36).
4. Jesus laments over Jerusalem (23:37-39).

V. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ All of Matthew 23 is addressed to the multitude and Jesus’ disciples.
02. _____ The scribes and Pharisees loved the chief seats in the synagogues.
03. _____ The warnings of verses 34-35 would come upon future generations of Jews.
04. _____ The scribes and Pharisees said they would have treated the prophets better.
05. _____ Jesus taught it was wrong to tithe mint, anise, and cumin.

Who Am I? Who Said it? Who Did It?

06. _____ Full of hypocrisy and iniquity.
07. _____ “Ye fools and blind...”
08. _____ Greatest among you.
09. _____ Twofold more the child of hell.
10. _____ Would have been like a hen gathering her chicks under her wings.

Fill in the Blanks

11. “... the _____ and _____ sit in Moses’ seat.”
12. “Neither be ye called _____: for one is your _____, even Christ.”
13. “Ye _____ guides, which strain at a _____ and swallow a _____.”
14. “Ye _____, ye generation of _____, How can ye escape the _____ of _____.”
15. “Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon _____.”

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week’s handout

ANSWERS to Lesson 01-89... [01—False, Mt 22:14; 02—True, Mt 21:30; 03—False, Mt 22:12; 04—False, Mt 21:33; 05—True, Mt 21:45; 06—a, Mt 21:45; 07—d, Mt 21:23-27; 08—b, Mt 21:46; 09—b, Mt 22:9; 10—b, Mt 21:41; 11—way, righteousness, Mt 21:32; 12—read,

Scriptures, Mt 21:42; 13—his, son, reverence, son, Mt 21:37; 14—worthy, Mt 22:8; 15—bad, good, Mt 22:10.]

VI. Lessons & Applications.

1. **...The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat** (Mt 23:2). Jesus is giving great emphasis to the need to have proper authority. He wanted no one to get the idea from what He was about to say that He did not respect the authority of the Law of Moses. The scribes were those who copied the Old Testament Scriptures. They, therefore, were in a position to know it well. Insofar as they taught the people THE SCRIPTURES, they were to be obeyed, according to Jesus' careful instructions here! Today we are under the law of Christ and we must have a "thus saith the Lord" for all that we teach and practice (Col 3:17).
2. **...but do not after their works...** (Mt 23:3). Even though they should have known the proper way to lead the people, they were not doing so. The disciples are instructed by our Lord not to be like them! Jesus is saying that hypocrites (7x He refers to them as such in this chapter) are not worthy to be followed, but rather are like BLIND GUIDES (v. 16). To follow the example of the religious leaders of the day would be to follow them to their same judgment: THE DAMNATION OF HELL (v. 33).
3. **...but be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren** (Mt 23:8). This lesson is still needed among many of our brethren today. Most brethren who have advanced degrees enjoy being reminded of their having attained a doctoral degree by people using the term, DOCTOR, when referring to them. I see many announcements of preachers coming to preach in gospel meetings or teach in seminars and the term DOCTOR appears in the advertising. These things ought not so to be.
4. **Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?** (Mt 23:17). The scribes and Pharisees had added so much to the Law. Some of the additions involved their use of oaths. They made certain oaths of a more binding nature than other oaths. This was for their ability to say things with so-called, "mental reservation." It is obvious that all such attempts to get around the Father's desire that His people be honest are despicable and must be rejected! We as God's people MUST BE HONEST in our dealings with one another and with those outside the body of Christ!
5. **...and not to leave the other undone** (Mt 23:23). Some have a tendency to take passages such as the first part of this rebuke of the leaders and attempt to say that there are certain aspects of the commandments of the Lord that are unimportant and may thus be left undone. This is not what Jesus is teaching here. They should not leave undone the tithing of their possessions! However, the particular sin Jesus was emphasizing was the attitude of heart of the givers. Even if they had tithed every single possession and did so with impure motivation, their tithing would be rejected. Paul teaches us the importance of attitude in all that we do (1 Cor 13:1-3).
6. **Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers...** (Mt 23:33). It would be difficult to find a more graphic and extensive rebuke any place in Scripture than this that is charged upon the religious leaders of this day! We need to allow this chapter to help us get a good image in our own minds of how Jesus feels toward false teachers who mislead the people from the straight and narrow pathway! Are we to allow them to continue in such a state when we know of their false ways? Should we not have compassion toward their souls and rebuke their error? Failing this, can we not publicly oppose their teaching in order

that others might not follow the blind guide(s)? How can such be done without naming names?

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

Q A Z T O B E S E E N X S W E D C V P P
 F V F R T G B H H Y U J M K I O L P H L
 I O M O S E S S E A T I K M J U Y Y A H
 N N B G T R F V C D E W S X Z A L Q R A
 G Z X S W E D C U F R T G B N A H Y I U
 E J M K I O L P P Y H N B G C T R F S G
 R C D E R F V B P B G T Y T N H Y U E R
 S C D E D C V F E R T G E B N H Y U E I
 U J M N H Y T G R B R R S E B I R C S E
 V F R E D C X S M W I Q A Z X S W E D V
 C V F R T G B N O E B G V R B G T Y H O
 G R E E T I N G S H N M J U I K L O P U
 N H Y T G B V R T O N O D D N A Y A S S
 E D B C D E R F V B G T Y H N M J U I K
 N H Y R R F V C D B O R D E R S E D C X
 X S W E O D C Y V F R T G B N H Y U J M
 Q A Z X S A V C D E R F V B G T Y H N U
 N H Y U J A D M K I U O P U J Y H N B G
 B U R D E N S C D E R F C D E R F V B G
 T G B H N H Y E D C V F R T G B U D R L

[The highlighted words can be found above. They may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. DRL]

Matthew 23:2-7--²Saying, The **scribes** and the **Pharisees** sit in **Moses' seat**: ³All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, **that observe** and do; but do not ye after their works: for they **say, and do not**. ⁴For they bind **heavy burdens** and **grievous** to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their **fingers**. ⁵But all their works they do for **to be seen** of men: they make **broad** their **phylacteries**, and enlarge the **borders** of their garments, ⁶And love the **uppermost** rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷And **greetings** in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.