

Matthew 23

Matthew 23:1-39 - The King's Judgment!

Scriptures:

¹ Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to

Notes:

This chapter is a strong rebuke to the Jewish religious people of Jesus' time. It should also serve as warning to all true believers, our religion matters to God. Insincere, hypocritical, and unloving religion does not please God.

His disciples,

Scriptures:

² saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in

Notes:

The scribes and Pharisees served an important role in the religious life of the Jewish people. They interpreted the things of God and His Word for the people.

'sit in Moses' seat.' = They have Moses' authority to lead God's people to God!

Moses' seat.

Scriptures:
1 Corinthians 13:5 -
Examine yourselves as to
whether you are in the
faith. Test yourselves. Do
you not know yourselves,
that Jesus Christ is in
you?—unless indeed you
are disqualified.

^{S+P} 3 Therefore whatever they tell you ⁽¹²⁾ to observe,

G5083 - to
observe
(conform) v. — to
conform one's
action or practice
to.

Notes:
It is hard to say how or why they
strayed from a righteous path. There
may have been a selfish desire for
gain or recognition. It may have
been a desire for power and
authority. Maybe it was how they
were raised and taught to worship
God. It is very possible they believed
they were right with God. They may
have believed that what they
believed was God's own truth. They
probably believed they were doing
God's work, obeying God's Word,
and doing God's will. Seven times
Jesus will use the phrase, "woe to
you, scribes and Pharisees". That is a
declaration of condemnation or
judgment. Their faith may have been
sincere, but Jesus is about to tell
them they are sincerely wrong.

that observe and do, but do not do according

^{S+P} to their works; ^{S+P} for they say, and do not do.

G2041 – acts or
deeds.

As Christ-followers we must be
watchful of spiritual creep. This is
when our faith is gradually eroded or
compromised by the worldly
influence around us. We must try to
maintain radical openness to God's
Spirit to examine our faith (1
[Corinthians 13:5](#)).

Jesus is not telling them to do
everything the scribes and Pharisees
tell them to do. Insofar as they are
teaching God's Word rightly, the
people are to obey and follow them.

As someone ordained by God to
proclaim to His Word, will, and ways
to His people, I take this chapter
very seriously. The old saying,
'Practice what you preach,' comes to
mind. The Bible calls us to a very
high standard – the perfection of
Christ. As a man I know that I fall
short of that perfect standard. One
of the ways I guard my soul from
being a hypocrite is to put myself on
the receiving end of every message I
preach. I am called to stand before
you but spiritually I remind myself I
am one of you. I need to hear the
message just as much as you do. I
always listen to my messages the
week after I teach them and I try to
listen as someone who needs to
hear what the Spirit is saying to me.

Scriptures:

4 For ^{S&P} they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear,

G1195 -

G926 - backbreaking
adj. — characterized
by difficulty to the
point of exhaustion;
especially on account
of weight."

G5413 – loads.

G1419 – difficult.

Notes:

Questions to ask ourselves as we go
through this text. **Do we practice
what we preach?**

and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they

themselves will not move them with one of

^{S&P} their fingers.

Scriptures:

5 But all ^{S&P} their works ^{S&P} they do to be seen by ^{OO}

Notes:

The next question we should ask
ourselves. **Are we satisfied and
content with God's approval rather
than man's?**

We should crave the smile of God
and be dead to the applause of men.

[→] men. They make their phylacteries broad and

enlarge the borders of ^{S&P} their garments.

Scriptures:

^{S+P} [♡] 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best

Notes:

The next question: **Do we imagine ourselves as superior to others?**

The scribes and Pharisees believed they better than the common believed and asserted that superior as assumed authority.

seats in the [☆]synagogues,

Scriptures:

7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be

Notes:

called by men, [♂] 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

G4461 - Rabbi (teacher) n. — (Hebrew) an honorific and respectful term of address for a teacher of the Mosaic Law (or the Scriptures).

Scriptures:

8 But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is

Notes:

¹² your ^{~+}Teacher, the ^{~+}Christ, and you are all

G2519 -

brethren.

Scriptures:

⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father; for

Notes:

One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

Scriptures:

¹⁰ And do not be called teachers; for One is

Notes:

Jesus is not forbidding teachers and other positions of authority within the church because elsewhere He calls for these things. What He is saying is that we should not aspire to these titles so that we can use them to control people and elevate ourselves. To do so is to prove that pride is active in your heart.

your Teacher, the Christ.

Scriptures:

11 But he ¹² who is greatest among ¹² you shall be

Notes:

G3187 -

¹² your servant.

G1249 - διάκονος
(diakonos)

Scriptures:

Philippians 2:8 - And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

12 And whoever exalts himself

G5312 - lifts up.

Notes:

Our next question of self-examination is: **Do we humbly serve others or are we hypocritically focused on ourselves?**

Humbly serving others is the way of Christ (Philippians 2:8). Jesus' entire earthly ministry was characterized by humble service.

will be humbled, and he who humbles himself

G5013 - to be brought low (humbled) v. — to be or become reduced in rank, character, or status.

will be exalted.

Scriptures:

13 "But ^{S&P}woe ^Sto you, ^Sscribes and ^PPharisees,

G3759 - horror
(interjection) n.
— an interjection
of grief or of
denunciation.

hypocrites! For you ^{S&P}shut up ^Mthe kingdom of

G2808 -

^Pheaven against men; for you ^{S&P}neither go in

^{S&P}yourselves, nor do you ^{S&P}allow those who are

G863 -

entering to go in.

Notes:

The next question: **Are we hindering or helping others to be saved?**

The scribes and Pharisees were preventing people from entering the kingdom of God by their hypocritical ways. In the last chapter we learned that the greatest commandment was to love God with our whole being and to love others. Their unloving adherence to the commands of God were blocking people from approaching God for salvation.

One of the ways we can hinder people from coming to Christ is if we misrepresent Him to the lost. We cannot make promises for God that He didn't make, and we can't misrepresent His character or nature. For people to be saved, we must show them the real Jesus.

Another hindrance to faith is encouraging people to follow you rather than following Christ.

14 Woe to ^{S&P} you, ^S scribes and ^P Pharisees,

hypocrites! For you ^{S&P} devour widows' houses,

and for a pretense make long ^P prayers.

Therefore you ^{S&P} will receive greater

condemnation.

G2917 –
punishment.

15 "Woe to you, ^{s+p}scribes ^sand ^pPharisees,

hypocrites! For you ^{s+p}travel land and sea to win

one proselyte, and when he ^ois ^{s+p}won, you make

G4339 - proselyte n. — a person who has left former practices or homeland to embrace a new way of life or country; especially used of a gentile conforming to the customs of Pharasaism or Sadduceism.

him twice as much a ^oson of ^ohell as

^{s+p}yourselfes.

Scriptures:

16 “Woe to you, ^{scribes} blind guides, who

G5185 – not able to understand. G3595 -

say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is

G3660 – swear an oath.

nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of

the temple, ^{scribes} he is obliged ^{to} perform it.’

G3784 - ought, be obligatory in view of some moral requirement.

Notes:

Our next question of self-examination is: **Are we more concerned about biblical minutiae than we are with practical truths that lead to humbly serving others.**

The scribes and Pharisees prided themselves on knowing the fine details of the law and they often debated these details energetically.

There is a place for debate and discuss but it should always be done with a desire to know how to better love God and others in a way that glorifies God.

Scriptures:

17 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the

Notes:

gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

Scriptures:

18 And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is

Notes:

nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that

is on it, he is obliged *to perform it.*'

Scriptures:

19 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the

Notes:

gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

Scriptures:

20 Therefore he who swears by the altar,

Notes:

swears by it and by all things on it.

Scriptures:

21 He who swears by the temple, swears by it

Notes:

and by Him who dwells in it.

Scriptures:

22 And he who swears by heaven, swears

Notes:

by the throne of God and by Him who sits on

it.

Scriptures:
John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

23 "Woe to you, ^{SAP} scribes ^S and Pharisees, ^P

hypocrites! For you ^{SAP} pay ^{10%} tithe of mint and

G586 – tithe, give a tenth.

anise and cummin, and have neglected the

G863 – abandoned.

weightier matters of the law: justice and

G926 – important.

mercy and faith. These you ought to have

done, without leaving the others undone.

Notes:
One of the mistakes some Christ-followers make is looking at tithing or giving to the work of God as optional or voluntary. Giving is an act of faith and is in the character of God (John 3:16). More important than an act of faith and obedience or as an expression of worship, giving is a display of love. How much should you give? As much as reflects your love for God, His church, and the others who will be ministered to by your giving. God is a giving God and God's people should be giving people.

Scriptures:

24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and

Notes:

swallow a camel!

Scriptures:

Matthew 15:18-19 - But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

Notes:

Our next question of self-reflection is: **Are we focused on how we see ourselves or on how the world sees us or how God sees us?**

Another way of expressing that question might be: Are we more concerned about looking holy or about being holy?

hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the

Purity or holiness always begins on the inside and then manifests in our words and actions. Jesus talked about that from a negative perspective ([Matthew 15:18-19](#)). It would serve us all better to care little about the world thinks of us and care deeply about what thinks about us.

cup and dish, but inside they are full of

extortion and self-indulgence.

Scriptures:

26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of

Notes:

the cup and dish, that the outside of them

may be clean also.

Scriptures:

27 "Woe to you, ^{S&P}scribes and ^SPharisees,

hypocrites! For you are like ^{S&P}whitewashed

^Dtombs which indeed appear beautiful

outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's*

bones and all uncleanness.

Notes:

Religious busyness will not cover up spiritual deadness. If we are spiritually going through the motions, going to church, reading our Bible, attending a Bible study, serving others, but not yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit we are missing the point of being a Christian.

Scriptures:

28 Even so you also outwardly appear

Notes:

G1855 -

G5316 -

righteous to men, but inside you are full of

G1342 - just, upright, i.e., being in accordance with God's compelling standards.

hypocrisy and lawlessness.

G458 - lawlessness n. — the state of being or behaving in open defiance to the law.

Scriptures:

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

Notes:

Our next question is: **How do you treat God's messengers?**

If God sends someone into your life or leads you to a church or ministry that is faithfully declaring God's Word, are you showing them the respect that is due them as a messenger of God.

hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of

the prophets and adorn the monuments of

the righteous,

Scriptures:

30 and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our

Notes:

Jesus is pointing to their hypocrisy of saying they would not have persecuted the prophets of old while they are plotting to put the Messiah to death.

fathers, we would not have been partakers

with them in the blood of the prophets.'

Scriptures:

31 “Therefore ^{S&P}you are witnesses against

Notes:

yourself^{S&P} that you are son^{S&P}s of those who ^{O?}

murdered[ⓧ] the prophets.

Scriptures:

32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’^{S&P} ^{O?}

Notes:

guilt.

33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How

^{S+P}
can you escape the condemnation of hell?

G5343 -

G2920 - verdict,
sentence of
judgment.

G1067 - Gehenna, a
Hellenized
transliteration of the
Hebrew, "Hinnom
Valley." A ravine just
SSW of the Temple
Mount in Jerusalem. A
place of trash fires and
perpetually burning
rubbish, hence the
figurative extension of a
place of eternal
punishment.

Scriptures:

34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets,

Notes:

'I send you prophets' is a subtle claim to His deity. Jesus is predicting how His followers will be treated in the future. A quick study of Paul's life proves how accurate this prediction was.

wise men, and scribes: some of them you will

kill and crucify, and some of them you will

scourge in your synagogues and persecute

from city to city,

Scriptures:

Matthew 27:22-25 - Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"

They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!"

23 Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?"

But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!"

24 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."

25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."

35 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.

Notes:

In just a few days, these same men will take part in inciting the crowds to call for the crucifixion of Jesus, their Messiah (Matthew 27:22-25). A terrible condemnation awaits those who would others to reject their Savior.

Scriptures:

36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will

Notes:

come upon this generation.

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one 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!

G2309 – desire,
want to.

Scriptures:

38 See! ^{S&P} Your house is left to you ^{S&P} desolate;

G2048 - desolate
(uninhabited) adj.
— uninhabited
and uncultivated.

Notes:

Scriptures:

39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more

till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the

name of the LORD! "

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Notes:

We must avoid the temptation of looking down upon the scribes and Pharisees and agreeing with their condemnation. Instead, we should remind ourselves that it was our sin that nailed Jesus to that horrible cross. We are not innocent, but, through faith, we are saved. We must remind ourselves that if not for the grace of God we would be just like them. And then we must resolve to regularly examine our faith to make sure we aren't becoming like them.

As Christ-followers we have the glorious privilege of walking through this life with the living God. God made that possible by sending Jesus to make a way for us to be right with God. We appropriate that privilege by faith, and we prove that privilege to the world by obedience to God's Word and surrender to God's Spirit.

This week was the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion. Many thousands of young men willingly sacrificed their lives to free Europe from the evils of Hitler's Germany. It is a humbling reminder that freedom is never free.

We are going to partake of Communion this morning. We do this to remind ourselves of just what had to happen so that we could be saved – freed from the bondage and consequence of our sin. But not just remember, we should also recommit to live a life that is worthy of the sacrifice that was made for it. Let's take some time and reflect upon these questions and ask God to speak to us about just how real our faith is.