

A Study of Matthew 23

I. Outline.

1. Denouncing of the Scribes & Pharisees (Matthew 23.1-36; cf., Mark 12.38-40; Luke 11.37-52; 20.45-47).
2. Jesus' Lament over Jerusalem (Mt 23.37-39; Lk 13.34-35).

II. Summary.

Jesus taught His followers to "observe and do" what the Pharisees taught as they, "sat in Moses' seat." They knew and understood the law well enough to explain and teach it to people. But the warning also followed, "Do not do according to their works: for they say, and do not do." (Mt 23:3). The Pharisees were guilty because they made religion an impossible burden, "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Mt 23:4) They loaded the people with impossible encumbrances, however they refused to carry those burdens themselves. These religious leaders became a stumbling block to the person that wanted to learn and live in God's way. They did this because their spiritual motives were all wrong: **(1)** Their works were to be seen of men (Mt 23:5), **(2)** They loved the chief seats (Mt 23:6), and **(3)** Religious titles had a great appeal to them. (Mt 23:7-10) They were proud and arrogant. They were haughty and self-righteous, and they had little or no respect for the common people. Jesus taught them the lesson of true greatness by saying, "He who is greatest among you shall be your servant." (Mt 23:11) Christians should always remember that, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Mt 23:12). Woes were pronounced because the Pharisees would not enter the kingdom themselves and hindered those that would enter (Mt 23:13). They did this by perverting what the prophets had foretold about the Messiah, and then teaching their perversions to people. Imagine a religion that would allow you to make long prayers and at the same time steal houses from widows. (Mt 23:14). They would steal the widow's house in the self-righteous pretense that it was for God. The Pharisees would go around the world to make a proselyte and when he was made he was worse than they (Mt 23:15). They go out for converts and bring them under their own evil doctrines and practices of thievery. Just look around you in our modern day religious orders, the rip-off artist demand a high price in this day and use much of the contributions on themselves. Their schemes hammer on your emotions while they steal you blind. These people quote the scripture, however they never teach the scripture and are never touched by the scriptures. The Pharisees even found ways to break their promises to God. "Whoever shall swear by the temple it is nothing" (Mt 23:16-22)...etc. God is greater than anything. Therefore, those that serve Him are faithful to their word. The Pharisees got little things correct but failed in matters of mercy, faith and judgment. Jesus said that they were good about doing things that the law had not even expressly commanded, but when it came to doing the greater things they had omitted them (Mt 23:23-24). The scribes and Pharisees were not clean on the inside, in their heart, where it mattered. They were religiously beautiful on the outside but were very corrupt within. They pretended to have such respect for all the prophets that their fathers had killed! They honored the prophets and built their tombs. They would even garnish their sepulchers. They did all of this but they were still corrupt on the inside. God wants the outside right, but that begins with a change from within. Jesus saw straight through the Pharisees. He looks at the heart of man! They looked beautiful on the outside but inwardly,

they were full of hypocrisy, envy, haughtiness, lust, and malice. He pictured the result of the Pharisees religion in these shocking words, "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Mt 23:33) They rebelled against the Light of Christ Himself, that He still brings into the world today. God had done much to lead the Jews religiously. He sent prophets, wise men and scribes. The Jews rejected God's way and God's men. "Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city." (Mt 23:34) They now stood guilty before the Creator. "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." (Mt 23:35). Jesus did not give up on the Jews. He looked at them with love, mercy, compassion, and a desire that they would repent of their sins and live godly for Christ Jesus. He compassionately lamented the fact that Jerusalem had rejected God. He wept and said, "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!" (Mt 23:37-38).

--Charles Box, Charles Box Commentaries, an e-Sword Module

III. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the Christ.

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IV. Aids in Exposition.

Matthew 23.2... **THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES SIT IN MOSES' SEAT**—"This saying seems to contradict the strong polemic against the Pharisees in Matthew, and especially 16:12, but it must be understood in context. Verses 4–36 qualify the otherwise strong endorsement of the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus was thus either being ironic in verses 2–3, saying, in essence, 'They presume to sit in Moses' seat, so you had better do what they say!' Or He was endorsing the objectives of their teaching but denigrating the application ('They are attempting to safeguard the purity of Israel and its faithfulness to the covenant, so listen to them; just do not follow their practice')" [Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1445). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers]. ||||| "**The scribes and the Pharisees** were two distinct groups, though there was some overlap between them: the scribes were the professional interpretative experts on the Torah itself, while the Pharisees were experts in theological matters that the Torah raised. **Moses' seat**. Traditionally understood as referring symbolically to the authority of Moses. However, recent archaeological evidence has revealed a literal chair found in early synagogues. Whether literal or figurative, it refers to a place from which experts on the law taught" [*ESV Study Bible*, p. 1870].

Matthew 23.3... **WHATSOEVER THEY BID YOU OBSERVE, THAT OBSERVE AND DO; BUT DO NOT YE AFTER THEIR WORKS: FOR THEY SAY, AND DO NOT**—"It has always been the temptation of the religious to put emphasis on their teaching and to take more lightly the obligations to live out the precepts they inculcate. It so easily becomes a habit to live in such a way as to sustain or acquire a reputation for piety, without giving heed to what we are deep down. So Jesus warns his hearers that they should not live in the way the Pharisees lived, though they should take careful note of what the Pharisees taught. When the Pharisees brought out the significance of

the teaching of Moses, they were doing something of great importance for the people of God. What they were teaching was both meaningful and creditable: they should be heard. But when they acted hypocritically, that was another matter: they should not be imitated or followed” [Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel According to Matthew* (p. 573). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press].

Matthew 23.4... THEY BIND HEAVY BURDENS ... BUT THEY THEMSELVES WILL NOT MOVE THEM WITH ONE OF THEIR FINGERS—“The Pharisees hypocritically refused to live by the rules they imposed on others... HEAVY BURDENS—which contrast with Christ’s light burden (Mt 11.30; 1 Jn 5.3)—includes their traditions (Mt 15.2ff) and their legalistic approach to righteousness (Mt 5.20). ... 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 once can make” [Kenneth L. Chumbley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1999, p. 401].

Matthew 23.5... THEY MAKE BROAD THEIR PHYLACTERIES, AND ENLARGE THE BORDERS OF THEIR GARMENTS—“Phylacteries, called by the Rabbis *tephillin*, *prayer-fillets*, were worn on the left arm, toward the heart, and on the forehead. They were capsules containing on parchment these four passages of Scripture: Ex. 13:1–10; 13:11–16; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21. That for the head was to consist of a box with four compartments, each containing a slip of parchment inscribed with one of the four passages. Each of these slips was to be tied up with well-washed hair from a calf’s tail; lest, if tied with wool or thread, any fungoid growth should ever pollute them. The phylactery of the arm was to contain a single slip, with the same four passages written in four columns of seven lines each. The black leather straps by which they were fastened were wound seven times round the arm and three times round the hand. They were revered by the Rabbis as highly as the scriptures, and, like them, might be rescued from the flames on a Sabbath. They profanely imagined that God wore the *tephillin*” [Marvin Vincent, (1887). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Vol. 1, pp. 122–123). New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons]. **MADE BROAD THEIR PHYLACTERIES**—“The ‘wide phylacteries’ spoken of by Jesus in our text-verse refers to the enlarging of the case so as to make it conspicuous” [Freeman, J. M., & Chadwick, H. J. (1998). *Manners & Customs of the Bible* (p. 462). North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers]. ||||| **BORDERS OF THEIR GARMENTS**--“The Greek word is *kraspedon* ... J. Schneider writes: ‘In the Bible it denotes the ‘hem of a garment’ or especially the ‘tassel’ which the Jews bore on each of the four corners of their outer garment as a constant reminder of all the commandments (Num 15.38ff; Deut 22.12). ... In Matthew 23.5 Jesus lashes the Pharisees for their purely outward display of piety. Using wool of the prominent hyacinth blue and white, they made their tassels as long as possible in order to gain a reputation for zealous prayer and strict observance of the commandments’ (TDNT, 3:904)” [Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, p. 20].

Matthew 23.6-7... LOVE THE UPPERMOST ROOMS AT FEASTS, AND THE CHIEF SEATS IN THE SYNAGOGUES ... AND TO BE CALLED OF MEN, RABBI, RABBI—“ROOMS here does not carry with it our modern meaning, but rather reclining places” [Bob Winton, *Book of Matthew*, p. 273]. ||||| “Long couches were provided in their dining-halls, on each of which three persons would usually recline. The first, reclining on his left side, rested his left elbow on a cushion at the end of the couch, his feet thrown back toward the rear so as to allow another to recline just below and in front of him. The third was an equal distance below the second, the head of each being far enough below his neighbor above to keep from interfering with the free use of his hands in

eating. The middle position was the position of honor, here called the uppermost room, and the Pharisees are charged with loving to secure it” [J.W. McGarvey, *New Testament Commentary, Vol I—Matthew and Mark*, Gospel Light, p. 196]. ||||| **RABBI.** “The word comes directly from the Hebrew into Greek and English. The Hebrew term *rab* meant ‘great’ and was used for someone who occupied a high and respected position. *Rabbi* means ‘my great one.’ Edward Lohse writes: ‘The one called *rabbi* is recognized thereby to be higher in rank than the speaker’ (TDNT, 6:961). It was especially the custom among the Jews for a pupil to address his teacher with this term. Lohse comments: ‘The pupil followed his teacher with obedience and respect and expressed this by addressing him as *rabbi*, ‘my master’ but also ‘my teacher’ (p. 962). In the NT we find *rabbi* used only in Matthew (5 times), Mark (4 times), and John (8 times). Luke never uses *rabbi*, because his Greek readers would not be familiar with the term. The KJV translates *rabbi* as ‘Master’ nine out of the 17 times it occurs in the NT. But it is better to transliterate it—*rabbi*.” [Ralph Earle, p. 20].

Matthew 23.8-10... BUT BE NOT YE CALLED RABBI ... CALL NO MAN YOUR FATHER UPON THE EARTH: FOR ONE IS YOUR FATHER ... FOR ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST—“The point of this text is not what titles may legitimately be used in addressing those in authority, but that titles are not to be used to confer privilege or status. Jesus used characteristically Semitic, hyperbolic rhetoric to get His point across” [*Apologetics Study Bible*, p. 1445].

Matthew 23.12... WHOSOEVER SHALL EXALT HIMSELF SHALL BE ABASED; AND HE THAT SHALL HUMBLE HIMSELF SHALL BE EXALTED—“These paradoxical statements drive home the teaching of verses 5-10. The love of prominence and recognition has no place in a kingdom where greatness is measured by service (Mt 20.26-27). Those who seek human applause are headed for a humiliating (ABASED, *tapeinoō*, to depress, bring low) reversal of what they thought of themselves. Jesus is looking for genuine lowliness, for those who seek only to serve. It is these who shall be ultimately honored (EXALTED, *upsōō*, lifted up, raise to honor; Mt 6.4; 10.38-39; 16.25). ‘The only “superior” among you is the one who serves the others’ (JBP)” [Kenneth L. Chumbley, pp. 403-404].

Matthew 23.13... HYPOCRITES! FOR YE SHUT UP THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AGAINST MEN—“**Hypocrites** (Υποκριταί). From Υποκρίνω, to separate gradually; so of separating the truth from a mass of falsehood, and thence to subject to inquiry, and, as a result of this, to expound or interpret what is elicited. Then, to reply to inquiry, and so to answer on the stage, to speak in dialogue, to act. From this the transition is easy to assuming, feigning, playing a part. The hypocrite is, therefore, etymologically, an actor” [Marvin Vincent, Vol 1, p. 124]. ||||| “**23:13-14** These verses are the first of seven prophetic denunciations against the Pharisees (23:13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29; cf. 11:21; 18:7; 24:19; 26:24). Each woe, except that of 23:16 which refers to the ‘blind guides,’ is spoken to the ‘teachers of religious laws and you Pharisees. Hypocrites!’ The general pattern seems to be (1) pronouncement of woe, (2) reason for pronouncement, and (3) explanation of the reason for the pronouncement. The stark contrast between Pharisaiic “righteousness” and Kingdom norms is reminiscent of the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount in 5:21-6:33.” [Turner, D., & Bock, D. L. (2005). *Cornerstone biblical commentary, Vol 11: Matthew and Mark* (p. 296). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers].

Matthew 23.14... YE DEVOUR WIDOWS’ HOUSES, AND FOR A PRETENCE MAKE LONG PRAYER: THEREFORE YE SHALL RECEIVE THE GREATER DAMNATION—“DEVOUR WIDOWS HOUSES is a figure of speech, showing the extreme avarice of these men” [Bob Winton, p. 276]. ||||| “The greed with

which they defrauded widows is represented by the strong figure of eating up the houses in which they lived” [J.W. McGarvey, p. 344].

Matthew 23.15... YE COMPASS SEA AND LAND TO MAKE ONE PROSELYTE, AND WHEN HE IS MADE, YE MAKE HIM TWOFOLD MORE THE CHILD OF HELL THAN YOURSELVES—“The second woe builds on the theme of the first. The efforts of the scribes and Pharisees to convert others (lit. ‘to make proselytes,’ cf. Acts 2:10–11; 6:5; 13:43) are tragically ironic. It is not certain whether this refers to efforts to convert Gentiles to Judaism or efforts to convert Jews to Phariseism. Possibly both are in view. McKnight (1991:106–108) concludes that the Pharisees did not actively pursue new converts from among the Gentiles, but that they urged that ‘God-fearing’ Gentiles (cf. Acts 10:22; 13:16, 43; 16:14; 17:17; 18:7) become full converts to Judaism and observe the Pharisaic halakha. The description of the extent of their efforts (‘land and sea’) recalls Jonah 1:9; Hag 2:6, 21.” [Cornerstone, p. 296].

Matthew 23.16-22... WHOSOEVER SHALL SWEAR BY THE TEMPLE, IT IS NOTHING; BUT WHOSOEVER SHALL SWEAR BY THE GOLD OF THE TEMPLE, HE IS A DEBTOR—“Among their many perversions of truth was the teaching that, **Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated.** The very fact that they had developed such a double standard for swearing gives evidence that their concern was not for truth but for the evasion of it when it did not suit their selfish interests. The underlying purpose behind the first part of the standard was to provide sanctimonious justification for lying with impunity. A person could lie all he wanted, provided he swore by the temple and not by the gold of the temple. ... The use of oaths had become so perverse in Israel that they were used even to renege on promises made to God. If a person, for example, vowed to give a certain amount to the Lord’s work, he would often swear to his vow **by the temple.** If he later decided he had pledged too much, or if he never intended to give the full amount, he had an out, because that vow was considered to be **nothing**” [MacArthur, John F. *Matthew 1-28*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary Four Volume Set (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series) (Kindle Locations 38276-38280). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition].

Matthew 23.23... YE PAY TITHE OF MINT AND ANISE AND CUMMIN, AND HAVE OMITTED THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS OF THE LAW, JUDGMENT, MERCY, AND FAITH—“The Mosaic law required giving a tenth of all that one produced for the ongoing work of the Lord through the Levites and priests (e.g., Lev. 27:30–33). **mint, dill, cumin.** The Pharisees were so scrupulous in following this injunction that they paid a tithe even from their smallest garden crops. Jesus does not say that they were wrong in this (‘These you ought to have done’), but that they should do this without neglecting the far more important matters” [The ESV Study Bible, p. 1871]. ||||| “So far as this was done at the bidding of an imperfectly illumined conscience our Lord does not blame it. It was not, like the teaching as to oaths and the Corban, a direct perversion of the law. What He did censure was the substitution of the lower for the higher (*Plumptre*). Mint was grown for its pleasant odor; anise, or dill, and cummin for their aromatic flavor. These were cultivated, not for food, but for scents and relishes; and only a small quantity of each would be grown in a private garden for the use of a household (*Fraser*)” [Lewis, W. S., & Booth, H. M. (1892). Preacher’s Homiletic Commentary, *Matthew* (p. 532). New York; London; Toronto: Funk & Wagnalls Company].

Matthew 23.24... WHICH STRAIN OUT A GNAT, AND SWALLOW A CAMEL—“The Greek verb *diulizo* (only here in the NT) does not mean ‘strain at,’ but ‘strain out.’ The true picture is that of a pious

Pharisee straining his drinking water through a piece of thin cloth so that he won't accidentally eat an unclean animal (the tiny gnat), while at the same time he swallows—literally, 'drinks down'—one of the biggest ceremonially 'unclean' animals, the camel" [Ralph Earle, p. 21].
 |||| "It is interesting to note that the Aramaic words for 'gnat' (*qalma*) and 'camel' (*gamla*) are quite similar, so Jesus' hyperbole was also a pun. Additionally, this language speaks to the inconsistency of the Pharisees, since both gnats and camels were unclean and could not be eaten (Lev 11:4, 23)" [Cornerstone, p. 297].

Matthew 23.25... YE MAKE CLEAN THE OUTSIDE OF THE CUP AND OF THE PLATTER, BUT WITHIN THEY ARE FULL OF EXTORTION AND EXCESS—"The sixth woe contrasts appearances with reality. By emphasizing things people noticed (Mt 23.5) and neglecting inner holiness, the Pharisees destroyed their character while maintaining their reputation. If a cup is dirty on the inside, it is not fit for use no matter how clean it is on the outside (James 1.21). The spiritual filth that polluted the Pharisees usually included extortion (*harpagē*, rapaciousness, plunder; Mt 23.14) and self-indulgence (EXCESS, *akrasia*, incontinent, uncontrolled, self-indulgent; 1 Cor 7.5). Though outwardly religious, they were not about to let religion get in the way of their pet sins" [Kenneth L. Chumbley, p. 408].

Matthew 23.27-28... YE ARE LIKE UNTO WHITED SEPULCHRES, WHICH INDEED APPEAR BEAUTIFUL OUTWARD, BUT ARE WITHIN FULL OF DEAD MEN'S BONES, AND OF ALL UNCLEANNESS—"The Pharisees were like tombs, which in Jesus' day could be outwardly very beautiful but within held nothing but death and decay. These tombs were customarily whitewashed to identify them clearly to passersby, since people would be rendered unclean for seven days through any contact with them (Num. 19:16; cf. Luke 11:44)" [The ESV Study Bible, p. 1872].

Matthew 23.29-31... YE BUILD THE TOMBS OF THE PROPHETS, AND GARNISH THE SEPULCHRES OF THE RIGHTEOUS ... YE ARE THE CHILDREN OF THEM WHICH KILLED THE PROPHETS—**GARNISH** "The verb *cosmeo* means 'put in order,' and then 'adorn' (NASB) or 'decorate' (NIV). Our word 'cosmetics' comes from this root" [Ralph Earle, p. 20]. |||| "These Pharisees and scribes claimed to honor the prophets which were rejected and persecuted by their Jewish ancestors. They beautified the tombs of these great men of God, and claimed that they would have treated them better had they lived during that time. It is easier to see the sins of another generation, since we have the perspective of time, but it is difficult for many to see that they are doing the same thing. To read the Old Testament prophets is to see a picture of modern society, in the world and in the church" [Bob Winton, p. 279].

Matthew 23.32... FILL YE UP THEN THE MEASURE OF YOUR FATHERS—"Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. This is irony. They had passed the point of no return; and like Balaam of old, they could not have gone back if they had tried at this point, although there was no possibility of their even trying. As the angel said to Balaam, "Go with the men!" so Jesus here commanded them to do the thing they had already purposed to do, and from which there was now no longer any possibility of drawing back. Evil hearts had already committed the foul murder which their external actions would only confirm before the week ended" [Burton Coffman Online].

Matthew 23.33... HOW CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL?—"THEIR QUANDARY: *how shall we escape?* Given their present course and character, they could not. Although His question is formally rhetorical, the literal form of His question should cause at least some of the more meditative among them to reflect. "If God sees you in your present, hell-inspired role, can He welcome you? If not, what plans are you making to avert His inexorable wrath?" But His

deliberative question is really a rhetorical substitute for an assertion: “You shall not escape being consigned to Hell!” So long as they remain impenitent, their destiny is inflexibly decided” [Harold Fowler, Bible Study Textbook Series, College Press, An e-Sword Module].

Matthew 23.35... THAT UPON YOU MAY COME ALL THE RIGHTEOUS BLOOD SHED UPON THE EARTH, FROM THE BLOOD OF RIGHTEOUS ABEL UNTO THE BLOOD OF ZACHARIAS SON OF BARACHIAS—“Luke 11:51 identifies the prophet who died in the temple simply as Zechariah, and there is no problem identifying him as the priest Zechariah ben Jehoiada of 2 Ch 24:20–22, since 2 Chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew Bible and it records Zechariah crying out for vengeance (see Gen 4:10; 2 Ch 24:22). But Matthew 23:35 says the murdered prophet was the son of Berechiah, which seems to identify him with the author of the book of Zechariah (Zec 1:1). Most understand the reference in Matthew to be a blending of the two Zechariahs that occurred in Jewish tradition. It is possible, however, that Zechariah the priest had a father named Berechiah and that Jehoiada was the name of his grandfather, since Jehoiada died at the age of 130, shortly before the murder of Zechariah (2 Ch 24:15). Others suggest that the minor prophet Zechariah is intended and that he was murdered as described, though there is no evidence for this claim” [*Apologetics Study Bible*, p. 1446].

Matthew 23.36... ALL THESE THINGS SHALL COME UPON THIS GENERATION—“Here again is the familiar theme of the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen in the Vineyard (Mt 21:40). This time, however, Jesus reveals the time-schedule for the hurricane of holy wrath that would break over Israel: *this generation*. He will enlarge upon this ominous threat in the next chapter when He describes the siege and taking of Jerusalem and reiterates the time-schedule (Mt 24:34). The wrath of God that destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and dispersed the unbelieving Jews among the nations, therefore, was neither unreasonable nor unexpected (Deuteronomy 28).” [Harold Fowler].

Matthew 23.37... HOW OFTEN WOULD I HAVE GATHERED THY CHILDREN TOGETHER, EVEN AS A HEN GATHERETH HER CHICKENS UNDER HER WINGS, AND YOU WOULD NOT?—“No lamentation in all history can surpass the one in this passage of Scripture. Although the established false teachers of His day had tried to undermine His doctrine and authority at every turn, treating Him as an enemy, yet He had not come to destroy them but to do them good (John 12:47b). If they only would have responded to His pleadings, He should have given them comfort, protection, and salvation” [Ira Y. Rice, Jr., “Jesus’ Final Confrontation with the Jews and His Judgment upon them,” in *Studies in Matthew*, Editor: Dub McClish, p. 153].

Matthew 23.38... BEHOLD, YOUR HOUSE IS LEFT UNTO YOU DESOLATE—“Their house was the temple. It was formerly called God’s house, but they had made it into a den of thieves. It was to be left to them desolate—uninhabited” [Bob Winton, p. 280].

Matthew 23.39... YE SHALL NOT SEE ME HENCEFORTH, TILL YE SHALL SAY, BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD—“Christ’s earthly ministry has ended. He has come to the city for the last time and there will be no further opportunity like the one which then presented itself. In the future, the only way the Jews would see Christ would be through the eyes of faith (Gal 3:1); and that would only happen if they welcomed Him as their Lord (Mt 21:9)” [Kenneth L. Chumbley, p. 413].

V. Lessons & Applications.

Matthew 23.11... BUT HE THAT IS GREATEST AMONG YOU SHALL BE YOUR SERVANT—“The desire for greatness is characteristic of human beings. Although depravity has turned this principle into

an evil direction, it was implanted in us for the noblest of purposes, and it is, even in our present state, a witness to the immortal progress for which we were originally designed. It is not proper therefore to denounce this desire without reservation; for it if is directed in the right channel, it serves as the mainspring of the soul, and without it one's energy and elevation are at an end. Inasmuch, then, as this desire for greatness belongs to our human nature, we should not seek its extirpation. Instead, we should give it a spiritual character, and turn it into a direction that will benefit others rather than ourselves. This is the way that Jesus deals with the problem. He points out the mistaken view which fallible beings have of the question, and then shows them what true greatness is, and bids them seek after it" [Leslie G. Thomas, *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary*, 1959, p. 168].

|||| **Cultivation of humility.** (a) Timidity versus humility. Some people mistake timidity for humility. To be timid is to be shy, retiring, and shrinking from public notice. The timid can never accomplish much good in the world, but humility is a modest sense of one's insignificance or unworthiness. To have a 'modest' sense of one's ability and importance does not include that underestimation which leads one to inactivity. (b) Egotism opposed to humility. Paul forbids egotism when he says one is 'not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith" (Rom 12.3). Egotism is repulsive and hinders one's influence for good. (c) Have the mind of Christ. Paul tells us—Philippians 2.3-9... **Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.**" [Roy H. Lanier, Sr., *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary*, 1957, pp. 191-192].

Matthew 23.12... WHOSOEVER SHALL EXALT HIMSELF SHALL BE ABASED; AND HE THAT SHALL HUMBLE HIMSELF SHALL BE EXALTED—"Here Jesus had just given some wise warnings pertaining to self-exaltation among His followers. He instructed His disciples not to be like the proud, egotistical Jewish leadership who loved to be seen of men, loved chief places at feasts, coveted the most honored synagogue seats, and loved the high-sounding salutations by which their admirers addressed them. Jesus warned against the use of religious titles like Rabbi, Father, Master, and so on. They were to pursue the 'all-ye-are-brethren' philosophy and aim for service rather than recognition. Religious title-wearers among us should take notice. Those who lift up themselves will be brought low; those who humble themselves will know true exaltation. Both God and fellow men will see to this. **Lessons Learned.** (1) A person wrapped up in himself and tied with the ribbons of pride makes an awfully small package—one filled completely with hot air. (2) No person really has a justifiable basis for being self-inflated. (3) The truly humble person will have 100 friends to the one a proud person has. (4) Preachers who love their high-sounding titles are lacking in humility. (5) Heaven's door does not stand open long for the proud" [Robert R. Taylor, Jr., *Companion*, 1990-1991, p. 231].

Matthew 23.23-28... "It is immeasurably sad that many people use as an excuse for not obeying the Gospel the statement that there are 'just too many hypocrites in the church,' yet their own lives are filled with hypocrisy. No Bible passage approves of hypocrisy; the Scriptures say hypocrites are hell-bound. Those who hide behind them likewise are hell-bound. **Lessons**

Learned. (1) Hypocrisy is uniformly linked with the devil and his devotees—never with Christ and his devout disciples. (2) Every hypocrite is spiritually digging his own grave. (3) Hypocrisy runs with the worst of company in every biblical mention of this malady. (4) No one can hide behind a hypocrite without acknowledging that the hypocrite is larger than he is. (5) H. Leo Boles, a former editor for the Gospel Advocate Company, once wrote, ‘Jesus teaches here that an effort to appear to men better than we are is hypocrisy and makes hypocrites of those who attempt it’ [Robert R. Taylor, Jr., *Companion*, 1990-1991, p. 241].

Matthew 23.25... YE MAKE CLEAN THE OUTSIDE OF THE CUP—“In this woe also, another remarkable imbalance in the thinking of the Pharisees was pinpointed by Jesus. All of the dishes they used were subjected to the ceremonial washing to avoid legal defilement; but Christ made it clear that cleanliness of another kind had been neglected. It was far more important that food be “clean” in the sense of its not having been obtained through extortion, and that gluttony or excess could occur in spite of all ceremonial cleanliness. Of course, extortion and excess were two of the Pharisees’ commonest sins. They robbed widows and orphans, dealt deceitfully, defrauded in money-changing, and violated wholesale the great moral precepts of the Law; in a genuine moral sense, therefore, their food was contaminated with extortion and excess. That was the real uncleanness which should have concerned them but did not. On the other hand, they never forgot the ceremonial washings! Christ did not condemn outward cleanliness, nor even the washing of cups and platters, but made such things secondary. And how did Christ teach that the **INSIDE** of the cup and platter should be cleansed? That was to be done through no outward ceremonial but was to be accomplished by honesty, industry, thrift, temperance, truthfulness, fairness, regard for the needs of others, and, in short, by living righteous lives” [<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/matthew-23.html> , Visited 160708].

Matthew 23.35... RIGHTEOUS ABEL—“(1) The setting of this statement. Matthew 23 contains a scathing denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day. In verses 29-36 he accused them of standing in the tradition of their wicked ancestors who had persecuted and killed the prophets of God. And indeed it did come to pass that the prophets (himself and his apostles) among these people to whom he was speaking would suffer such a fate. But, as with Matthew 19.1-6, our purpose in this lesson is not to give an extended exegesis of the passage at hand, but to use it to demonstrate Jesus’ attitude toward the early chapters of Genesis. (2) Factualness of the story of Abel. Jesus referred to the historical deaths of two righteous men mentioned in the Old Testament. The second of these characters, Zachariah son of Barachiah, occasions some difficulty of identification. But no student of the Bible has any difficulty in identifying Abel. The fourth chapter of Genesis relates the account of Adam’s first two sons, Cain and Abel, bringing sacrifice to God. Abel offered his by faith (Heb 11.4), and was accepted but Cain was rejected with his offering. Cain became violently angry with his brother and killed him in the field. (3) Is this Genesis narrative factual? Was there a historical personage known as Abel who died violently for righteousness’ sake? There is no doubt as to Jesus’ attitude. He accepted the full account as being unquestionably true. Abel’s death according to the Biblical record was as factual an occurrence as the deaths of Jesus and his apostles!” [Thomas B. Warren, *Teacher’s Annual Lesson Commentary*, 1973, pp. 248-249].

VI. Questions.

True or False

- 01. ____ One of the adjectives Jesus used to describe Pharisees was BLIND.
- 02. ____ Jesus pointed out that He could not force the people to come to Him.
- 03. ____ Sitting in Moses’ Seat was a position of AUTHORITY, according to Jesus.
- 04. ____ The first WOE from Jesus was regarding shutting up the kingdom against men.
- 05. ____ Jesus did not think highly of the concept of ranking oaths dependent upon various objects.

I Found it in Verse(s)

- 06. ____ Whited sepulchers.
- 07. ____ Righteous blood shed.
- 08. ____ Borders of garments.
- 09. ____ Twofold more the child of hell.
- 10. ____ The altar sanctifies the gift.

Short Answer

- 11. Though outwardly appearing righteous to men, the scribes and Pharisees actually were:

- 12. Jesus asked these leaders how they could escape this:

- 13. Scribes and Pharisees loved this:

- 14. The indicator of the dedication these leaders had to making proselytes:

- 15. Three things Jesus mentioned that these leaders were accustomed to tithing:

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week’s handout

ANSWERS to Matthew 22 Questions... **01**—True (18); **02**—False (23); **03**—True (30); **04**—True (46); **05**—True (8); **06**—13; **07**—25 and/or 28; **08**—32; **09**—38; **10**—1; **11**—Someone at a wedding with no wedding garment (11); **12**—Caesar’s (21); **13**—a lawyer (35); **14**—The Pharisees (41-42); **15**—Oxen and fatlings (4).

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle. The words 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

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

ALTAR	BLIND	BLOOD	CALL	EVEN
EXALT	FATHER	FULL	GIFT	GOLD
GREATER	HEAVEN	HOUSE	HYPOCRITES	KILL
MAKE	MASTER	NEITHER	OBSERVE	OUTWARD
PHARISEE	PROPHETS	RABBI	RIGHTEOUS	SCRIBES
SEAT	SWEAR	SWEARETH	SYNAGOGUES	TEMPLE
THEN	THEREFORE	WORKS		

IX. EXTRA CREDIT FOR “SUPER” Bible Students...

Will you please consider answering these three SIMPLE questions based on the Bible text of this chapter? I will try to make use of your answers. Bring them with you next week. Tear out this last sheet from the Study Guide and be prepared to put it in a basket. I think it will be a great help to all of those in the class if you will do so. Thank you in advance for your marvelous cooperation!

W O R D: What word would you like to know more about in this chapter?

W O N D E R: I wonder what this phrase, verse, or series of verses means...

W I S H: I wish myself—or others whom I know or even don’t know—would understand this fact, principle, or concept from this chapter...