

# MATTHEW 23

## THE FINAL MIC DROP!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

We have reached the apex of the crescendo of the last few chapters where Jesus has been confronted by the religious aristocracy of Israel. Though we read this in chapter form, it is actually one rather lengthy conversation, or debate. The scribes, Pharisees, et al. have had Jesus in the hot seat but now He turns the tables on them. The entirety of Matthew 23 consists of eight woes, that is statements of a coming judgment on Jerusalem.

As children, we have all seen a sibling or another child getting in trouble. We have a tendency to sit back thinking, "Get him mom! He deserves it!" We need to resist this temptation. We don't need to adopt an "us versus them" mentality. Rather we should adopt, "But for the grace of God go I." Because what we see Israel in general and its leaders in particular being charged with, can also be ascribed to us if we're not careful.

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of the shekinah glory of God leaving the Temple. In 1 Kings 9:6-9, you can read another account of why God would leave and destroy the Temple and Israel. And sadly, in this latter part of Matthew we have reached the point where the final declaration has come in the form of eight woes.

### ***Mt. 23:1-12***

***1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, 2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. 4 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. 5 But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' 8 But you, do not be called "Rabbi"; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.***

- Do as they say, but not as they do. Hypocrisy. Jesus first addresses the surrounding crowds.
- Then He turns on the scribes and Pharisees, systematically addressing their hypocrisy and corruption.
- Why on them? Federal representation. In this generation, it has come to a head.
- “The iniquity of the Amorites.”
- Verse 12 – “Who is going to be greatest among us” once again.

Woes 1&2

**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. 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.**

- Pretension, money and corruption. Jesus will expound on these as the chapter unwinds.
- They shut up the kingdom of Heaven.
- Warning to ministers and other “heads” such as fathers.

Woe #3

**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.**

- Proselytizing – gaining converts for the sake of putting notches in your belt and not for the sake of the convert or his/ her relationship with God.
- Leading them down the wrong path.

Woe #4

**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? 18 And, “Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.’ 19 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? 20 Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. 21 He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. 22 And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.**

- Blind guides! Money has become more important than the true purpose of

the Temple. They have forgotten the sanctity of the Temple and the name of God while they pretend to hold righteous indignation against those who profane it. This is at the root of their hypocrisy.

Woe #5

***23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes 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!”***

- They would go to the trouble of weighing and counting seeds and spices in order to tithe in all they had, but had forgotten about justice, mercy and faith. They should have tithed, but they shouldn't have left off dealing with others in honesty, compassion and grace.
- They strained at gnats while swallowing camels.

Woes 6 & 7

***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, 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.***

- All things external. This goes back to the pretension with which they walked around, loving the attention of the people. They appeared to be righteous but inwardly they were full of extortion and self-indulgence.
- Whitewashed tombs – define. They appear outwardly righteous but inside are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe #8

***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? 34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, 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, 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. 36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.***

- We wouldn't have killed the prophets! But they are doing just that! They are continuing and repeating the same sin! (v.32)
- We can all fall into a trap such as this.
- Serpents and vipers! Here Jesus is partially quoting John the Baptist, linking his denunciation of them with that of Jesus' denunciation. How can they escape the condemnation of Hell?
- In verses 34 – 36, the past and the present come together. "I send" present tense. From Abel to Zechariah. Their blood has yet to be avenged.
- Talking about THAT generation. Verse 32, they have filled the measure of their father's guilt. (The iniquity of the Amorites.) Federal headship once again.

***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! 38 See! Your house is left to you desolate; 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!' "***

- Jesus laments the coming judgment. He isn't happy about it and we shouldn't be either. He wanted to gather them to Himself, but they weren't willing.
- "Your house" as opposed to "God's House in Mt. 21:13.
- **Matthew 21:13**
- **13 And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "**
- Now we are back to that of which Ezekiel referenced.
- The number 8 = new beginnings.
- The only thing that could turn this around would be if they said, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" at that time. But they didn't.
- Woe! Judgment is coming.

The judgment to which Jesus was referring would not come for 40 years. Now there's a number for you. So what can we take from this?

- But for the grace of God go I.
- We can fall into the same trap as Israel and her leaders. Hypocrisy, going through the motions, leaving out the weightier matters of the kingdom.
- Has God's house/ temple (our bodies as well as the church) become our own?

- A loving, just God must at some time bring judgment. Do you think Hitler should go unpunished?
- **God's grace is long-suffering.** Israel had been in that state for some time. Jesus even gives them another 40 years to repent before the destruction of Jerusalem. Read ahead.
- **Redeem the time!**