

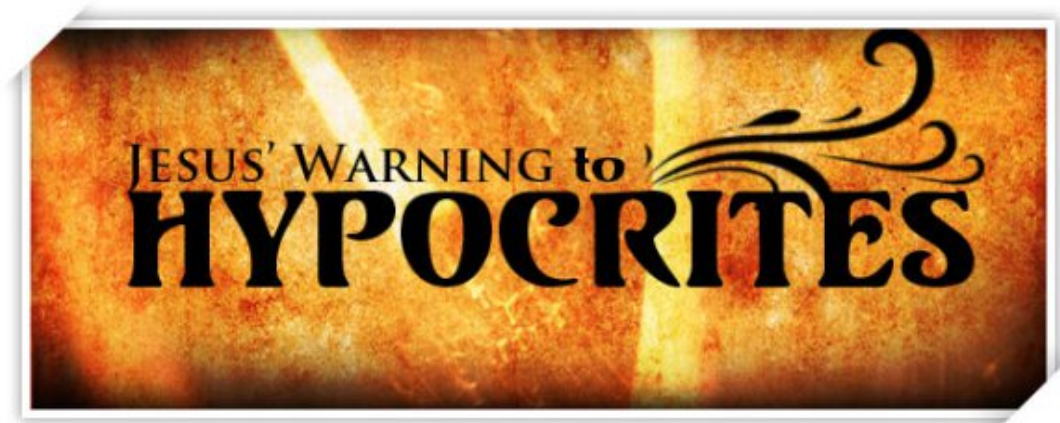
The Gospel of Matthew

Booklet 25 – Three Lessons

Lesson 69 - Matthew 23:1-12

Lesson 70 - Matthew 23:13-26

Lesson 71 - Matthew 23:27-39



Holy Week Continues

International ESL/Bible Lessons
Intermediate to Advanced Level

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Much of the material in these lessons come from *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. I*, by William Barclay. Daily Study Bible Series. Other content comes from Bible Commentaries, Dictionaries and on-line sources. All pictures are from Google Images.

The Gospel Of Matthew

Material for this section is from William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew: The Daily Study Bible Series*. The Westminster Press. Philadelphia. 1975.

Matthew's Gospel is carefully designed.

Section One includes The Genealogy of Jesus, The Birth Story, The John the Baptist Sequences, Baptism and Temptation of Jesus.

Section Two, from Chapters 5-7 is The Sermon on the Mount, or the Teachings of Jesus. These are gathered into a group from all the time of Jesus's ministry. These are the *words* of Jesus.

Section Three shows the actions or *doings* of Jesus.

Chapter 18	Gives the greatest of ethical teaching: humility, responsibility, self-renunciation, individual care, discipline, fellowship, and forgiveness.
Chapter 19	Teaches on divorce and wealth.
Chapter 20	Hiring workers. Walking to Jerusalem. A new standard of values.
Chapter 21	Begins Last week of life of Jesus; Entering Jerusalem as a King, first days
Chapter 22	Teaching in parables; Opposition to Jesus
Chapter 23	Jesus' Warning to the Hypocrites: Pharisees, etc..

The Gospel Of Matthew

Lesson 69 - Matthew 23: 1-12. A Warning Against Hypocrisy

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds / and to his disciples: / ² “The teachers of the law / and the Pharisees / sit in Moses’ seat. / ³ So you must be careful / to do everything they tell you. / But do not do what they do, / for they do not practice / what they preach. / ⁴ They tie up heavy, / cumbersome loads / and put them on other people’s shoulders, / but they themselves / are not willing to lift a finger / to move them.

⁵ “Everything they do / is done for people to see: / They make their phylacteries wide / and the tassels on their garments long; / ⁶ they love the place of honor at banquets / and the most important seats in the synagogues; / ⁷ they love to be greeted with respect / in the marketplaces / and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.

⁸ “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ / for you have one Teacher, / and you are all brothers. /

⁹ And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ / for you have one Father, / and he is in heaven. / ¹⁰ Nor are you to be called instructors, / for you have one Instructor, / the Messiah. /

¹¹ The greatest among you / will be your servant. / ¹² For those who exalt themselves / will be humbled, / and those who humble themselves / will be exalted.



Vocabulary

1. Cumbersome: Large and heavy and therefore difficult to use.
2. Phylacteries: A small leather box containing texts on vellum, worn by Jewish men at Morning Prayer as a reminder to keep the law.
3. Tassels: a tuft of loosely hanging threads, cords, or other material knotted at one end and attached for decoration to home furnishings, clothing, or other items.
4. Garment: An item of clothing.
5. Synagogue: A Jewish house of prayer.
6. To exalt: Hold someone or something in very high regard.
7. To be humbled: To be made to feel insignificant, inferior, or subservient.



Questions

1. What does it mean when we say, “Do as I say, not as I do”?
2. Moses is considered THE Lawgiver. What could Moses’s seat be?
3. What is hypocrisy and why is this a problem for a Pharisee?
4. Why do we expect so very much from our teachers and leaders?

Notes

1. The Pharisees sit in the “Seat of Moses” for he was the great teacher and lawgiver. But they are Hypocrites for they teach

what is the Law of Moses and that law is good. But they add many rules to the law and that part is not so good. Knowing God is not just keeping the law.

2. The Ten Commandments of Moses, given by God, are based on reverence for God and respect for mankind. However by adding over 600 rules, the Pharisees had made religion a burden to the people. It did not lead them to God, and it gave the people no joy.
3. Ostentation is the pretentious display of something to show that you are richer, more religious, more blessed than other people. Jesus used the Phylacteries and the Tassels as a show of how very holy these people were. Many people wore them when they prayed. However, the Pharisees made a great show of richer and bigger objects. Today they are perpetuated by the tassels on the prayer shawls of the Jews.
4. In addition, the Pharisees expected the seats of honor or seats where everyone could see them. The honored seats of the elders actually faced the people. In front of the people the Pharisees put on a face of especial piety.
5. Pharisees liked to be called Rabbi. They wanted the great respect that was to be given to a Rabbi. A Rabbi is a Jewish scholar or teacher, especially one who teaches the Jewish law.
6. Barclay says, on page.287 of *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 2*, "The whole design of the Pharisees / was to dress and act in such a

way / as to draw attention to themselves; / the whole design of the Christian should be / to obliterate himself, / so that / if men see his good deeds, / they may glorify not him, / but his Father in Heaven. / Any religion / which produces ostentation / in action / and pride in the heart / is a false religion.

7. Tassels were to remind Israelites to keep the Law. (Num.15: 37).
The longer the tassel, the greater importance the wearer attached to the Law.
8. Phylacteries were small leather-covered boxes containing Scripture passages. The four passages were written small on very fine paper and the boxes worn on wrist or forehead:
 - Ex.13: 1-10. *Remember the Passover. Keep it before you, a sign on your hand and forehead.*
 - Ex.13: 11-16. *Redeem the first-born as a reminder of Passover. Keep the memory of Passover on your arm and forehead.*
 - Deut.6:4-9 The Sh'ma: *"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord." Make the commandments a sign on your hand and forehead.*
 - Deut.11:13-21 *A warning to heed the commandment, and put reminders on hand and forehead, on the doorposts and gates.*

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The Gospel Of Matthew

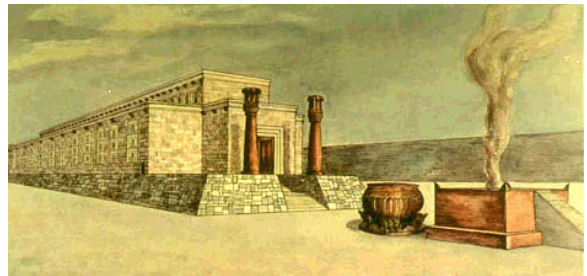
Lesson 70 - Matthew 23: 13-26 Seven Woes on Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

¹³ “Woe to you, / teachers of the law / and Pharisees, / you hypocrites! You shut the door / of the kingdom of heaven / in people’s faces. / You yourselves do not enter, / nor will you let those enter / who are trying to.

¹⁵ “Woe to you, / teachers of the law / and Pharisees, / you hypocrites! / You travel over land and sea / to win a single convert, / and when you have succeeded, / you make them twice as much / a child of hell as you are.

¹⁶ “Woe to you, / blind guides! / You say, / ‘If anyone swears by the temple, / it means nothing; / but anyone / who swears by the gold of the temple / is bound by that oath.’ / ¹⁷ You blind fools! / Which is greater: / the gold, / or the temple that makes the gold sacred? /

¹⁸ You also say, / ‘If anyone swears by the altar, / it means nothing; /



but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar / is bound by that oath.’ / ¹⁹ You blind men! / Which is greater: / the gift, / or the altar / that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ Therefore, / anyone who swears by the altar / swears by it / and by everything on it. / ²¹ And anyone /

who swears by the temple / swears by it / and by the one who dwells in it. / ²² And anyone / who swears by heaven / swears by God's throne / and by the one who sits on it.

²³ "Woe to you, / teachers of the law and Pharisees, / you hypocrites! / You give a tenth of your spices— / mint, dill and cumin. / But you have neglected / the more important matters of the law— / justice, / mercy and faithfulness. / You should have practiced the latter, / without neglecting the former. ²⁴ You blind guides! / You strain out a gnat / but swallow a camel.

²⁵ "Woe to you, / teachers of the law / and Pharisees, /you hypocrites! / You clean the outside of the cup and dish, / but inside / they are full of greed / and self-indulgence. / ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! / First clean the inside of the cup and dish, / and then the outside also will be clean.

Vocabulary

1. Woe: Things that cause sorrow or troubles. Serious distress and trouble.
2. Hypocrite: Pretense. Claiming to have moral standards or beliefs, but acting in just the opposite way.
3. To swear by (something): Express great confidence in the use, value or effectiveness of something.

4. [*Reductio ad absurdum* means the ‘method of proving the falsity of a premise by showing that its logical consequence is absurd or contradictory. Latin for argument to absurdity.]

Adjective	Noun	Verb	Adverb
Hypocritical	Hypocrite Hypocrisy		Hypocritically
	<u>Convert</u> Conversion	To <u>convert</u>	
Gathering	Gathering	To gather	

Questions

1. What are some of the modern day “woes” that we have today?
2. Can you give an example of a hypocrite you know or know about?
3. When do we as parents act like hypocrites?
4. A “blind guide” is an interesting choice of words. What does it mean?
5. What is a “tenth” in the religion of the Jews? Do we have another word for giving a “tenth”?
6. What happens when a person is given too many silly rules?

Notes

1. Verses 13-26 show us the greatest public condemnation in the NT. In slang we might say that Jesus was *telling the Pharisees off*,

or that Jesus was telling them *what they really are*. He was verbally attacking the Pharisees as hypocrites.

2. Here we are studying a series of seven woes. The first woe condemns the Pharisees for keeping people out of heaven. They make religion and God seem so pretentious that they are completely turned off.
3. The word hypocrite is very old in most languages. It is similar to the Greek word for actor, for an actor is one who wears a mask or pretends to be someone he isn't.
4. The Pharisees were very concerned about their outward appearance in clothing and actions. They wore elaborate and really noticeable phylacteries and tassels and acted very pious.
5. Matthew 6 tells us that the best way to think of the Kingdom of God is to think of it as a society on earth where God's will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven. To be a citizen of the Kingdom, and to do God's will are one and the same thing. God is love and we should listen to God.
6. The Pharisees believed that to do God's will was to observe their thousands of petty rules and regulations. Nothing could be further from the Kingdom whose basic idea is love.

Barclay, p. 289

7. Anti-Semitism or hatred against the Jews was real in the ancient world as it is today. Jews believed that they were the chosen

people of God and they could not socialize or talk with Gentiles. They could not walk in the house of a Gentile, and could not eat with them.

8. However, many were attracted to the purity and moral conduct of Jews. They wanted to leave their world of immorality and join with those who had a moral law. Many became *god-fearers*. They accepted the concept of one God and accepted the moral code. But they did not go so far as becoming Jews by circumcision.
9. In the verses 16-22, Jesus showed the skill of the Pharisees in evading the real purpose of taking an oath or making a promise to God. Barclay tells us what Jesus was saying, "You have brought evasion to such a fine art / that it is possible to regard an oath by the Temple as not binding; / while an oath by the gold of the Temple is binding; / and an oath by the altar as not binding, / while an oath by the gift on the altar is binding."
10. This is rather to be regarded as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Jewish methods than a literal description. Treating oaths in this way is a fundamental deceitfulness. A truly religious or good man would never make an oath with the idea of deliberately breaking it or evading it. For Jesus knew that God hears every word and sees every intention of the heart.
11. Jesus, in verses 23-24 also shows how the tithe or tenth of the tiny herb from the garden that the Pharisees painstakingly

counted and gave to the Temple did not make up for the lack of justice, mercy and fidelity. The sense of proportion was terribly wrong on the part of the Pharisees.

12. Finally, Jesus tells us and the Pharisees and Scribes that only the outside is important to them. The inside is full of dirt and bad intentions, but they don't cleanse that. Remember the many many rules and laws for being clean or unclean formed the lives and actions of the Pharisees. For example, they could not touch a dead body, or were unclean for a week. If an item is made of wood and metal, then the wood can become unclean, but the metal cannot. And so many more rules!

The Gospel Of Matthew

Lesson 71 - Matthew 23: 27- 39.

27 “Woe to you, / teachers of the law / and Pharisees, / you hypocrites! / You are like whitewashed tombs, / which look beautiful on the outside / but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead / and everything unclean. / ²⁸ In the same way, / on the outside / you appear to people as righteous / but on the inside / you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

²⁹ “Woe to you, / teachers of the law / and Pharisees, / you hypocrites! / You build tombs for the prophets / and decorate the graves of the righteous. / ³⁰ And you say, / ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, / we would not have taken part with them / in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ / ³¹ So you testify against yourselves / that you are the descendants / of those who murdered the prophets. / ³² Go ahead, / then, / and complete what your ancestors started!

³³ “You snakes! / You brood of vipers! / How will you escape being condemned to hell? / ³⁴ Therefore / I am sending you prophets / and sages / and teachers. / Some of them / you will kill and crucify; / others you will flog in your synagogue / and pursue from town to town. / ³⁵ And so upon you / will come all the righteous blood / that has been shed on earth, / from the blood of righteous Abel / to the

blood of Zechariah / son of Berekiah, / whom you murdered
between the temple / and the altar. / ³⁶ Truly I tell you, / all this will
come on this generation.

³⁷ “Jerusalem, / Jerusalem, / you / who kill the prophets and stone
those sent to you, / how often I have longed / to gather your
children together, / as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,
/and you were not willing. ³⁸ Look, / your house is left to you
desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, / you will not see me again / until you say,
/ ‘Blessed is he / who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Vocabulary

1. Whitewash: To make a negative situation appear better than it is.
Deliberate attempt to conceal unpleasant facts.
2. Grave: a place of burial for a dead body. This word, grave, is very
old in the English language. It has multiple meanings, such as
being serious means talking about grave (or serious) subjects.

Idioms and phrases:

Life beyond the grave

Dig your own grave (Do something foolish that causes one to fail
or lose everything.

Take one's secret to the grave.

Turn over in one's grave (Cause distress or anger to someone
dead)

3. To flog: To beat with a whip or stick as punishment or torture.

Related Words:

Adjective	Noun	Verb	Adverb
	Whitewash	To whitewash	
	Flogging	To flog	

Questions

1. Can you think of an example of whitewashing something in politics?
2. Can you explain *whitewashing* in your own words?
3. What silly rules do religious people come up with today?
4. Why do you think Jesus attacked the Pharisees so strongly?
5. How does Jesus feel about Jerusalem and the Temple?

Notes

1. Remember all those rules the Pharisees had? Well, almost a universal rule during the times of Rome and Jesus was that all the dead had to be buried outside the city or city walls. Therefore, along the roads into the towns and cities were the tombs of and for the dead.
2. Now, if a Jew or Pharisee were to touch a dead body or a tomb, they could not participate in the Temple activities. As the people traveled into Jerusalem for the Passover Feast, they had to walk along these roads.
3. The practice during the month of Adar was to paint or whitewash these tombs so no one would accidentally brush up against or lean against one. It was like a gleaming path of white painted rocks

coming into the city. The outside looked clean and lovely, but the inside was filled with bones and decay.

4. Jesus used the simile, You are like whitewashed tombs, / which look beautiful on the outside / but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead / and everything unclean. / What a terrible thing to say to someone! He was saying their outward actions were those of very good and religious men, but the inside — their hearts— were full of evil and corruption.
5. This is also true today. Shakespeare said a man might smile and smile and be a villain. This is where we get the term, a con-man. He is a person who gains your confidence, then steals all your money. Jesus calls them Snakes! and Vipers! Very strong words they are!
6. Jesus says that the history of the Jews includes the murder of the very men that God uses to help men know HIM. Jesus names Abel and Zechariah as two prophets that had been murdered. That would be like saying the prophets, from A to Z, were murdered by “religious” men.
7. Jesus ends this passage with statements that show the tragedy of rejected love. In verses 37-39, Jesus speaks with the heart of a parent whose child or children have gone down the wrong path.
8. Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Synoptic Gospels, make it seem like Jesus was not in Jerusalem until the last year of his ministry. Yet, we know from John, that Jesus had come many times to Jerusalem during his ministry. This passage shows us that in the gospels we have only the merest sketch of the life of Jesus.

9. Barclay speculates: “Only forty years were to pass and in A.D. 70 Jerusalem would be a heap of ruins. That disaster was the direct consequence of the rejection of Jesus Christ. Had the Jews accepted the Christian way of love and abandoned the way of power politics, Rome would never have descended on them with its avenging might. It is the fact of history—even in time—that the nation which rejects God is doomed to disaster.” (p. 300.)
(Note: Recall that my most frequently used reference book is *The Gospel of Matthew. The Daily Study Bible Series. Vol. 2.*)

The Seven Woes (Matthew 23: 13-31)

- 23:13 The First Woe condemned the scribes and Pharisees for keeping people out of the Kingdom of heaven. They did not hesitate to dissuade people from following Jesus.
- 23:15 The Second Woe was for making converts that were worse than they were.
- 23:16 The Third Woe was for finding ways not to honor their commitments. They made a hierarchy of objects to swear by. Jesus illustrated: if you swear by the temple, you are not bound; but if you swear by the gold of the temple, you must keep your promise. The hierarchy of values appears to be that the sacrificial gift is less than (<) the altar < the gold of the altar < the temple < the gold of the temple < heaven < the throne of God < of God Himself. If they could diminish the value of the thing they swore by, they might escape from the vow. So their word was worthless in itself.
- 23:23 The Fourth Woe was for straining at gnats—being meticulous about the details of religious observance like tithing the garden herbs--but swallowing the camel. They intended to please God in

small things like donations of plants, but ignored crucial matters such as justice and mercy in their dealings with people.

23:25-31 The Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Woes are kinds of hypocrisy.

* They were like dishes that were clean on the outside but dirty inside. They looked good but their minds were bent on extortion and ripping people off. A disputed text (23:14) mentions devouring widows' houses. *They were like whitewashed tombs. They appeared righteous but were hypocritical and in fact lawless (Gr. "anomia"), spiritually dead. *They maintained the tombs of the prophets. They deplored what former generations had done to the prophets, but they were in the business of destroying The Great Prophet of God and His disciples.

—Wikipedia

The seven woes of *hypocrisy* are:

- (1) They taught about God but did not love God — they did not enter the [kingdom of heaven](#) themselves, nor did they let others enter. ([Matt 23:13-14](#))
- (2) They preached God but converted people to dead religion, thus making those [converts](#) twice as much sons of hell as they themselves were. ([Matt 23:15](#))
- (3) They taught that an oath sworn by the temple or altar was not binding, but that if sworn by the gold ornamentation of the temple, or by a sacrificial gift on the altar, it *was* binding. The gold and gifts, however, were not sacred in themselves as the temple and altar were, but derived a measure of lesser sacredness by being connected to the temple or altar. The teachers and Pharisees worshipped at the temple and offered sacrifices at the altar because they knew that the temple and altar were sacred. How then could they deny oath-binding value to what was truly sacred and accord it to objects of trivial and derived sacredness? ([Matt 23:16-22](#))

- (4) They taught the law but did not practice some of the most important parts of the law — justice, mercy, faithfulness to God. They obeyed the minutiae of the law such as tithing spices but not the weightier matters of the law. ([Matt 23:23-24](#))
- (5) They presented an appearance of being 'clean' (self-restrained, not involved in carnal matters), yet they were dirty inside: they seethed with hidden worldly desires, carnality. They were full of *greed and self-indulgence*. ([Matt 23:25-26](#))
- (6) They exhibited themselves as righteous on account of being scrupulous keepers of the law, but were in fact not righteous: their mask of righteousness hid a secret inner world of ungodly thoughts and feelings. They were full of wickedness. They were *like whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside, but full of dead men's bones*. ([Matt 23:27-28](#))
- (7) They professed a high regard for the dead prophets of old, and claimed that they would never have persecuted and murdered prophets, when in fact they were cut from the same cloth as the persecutors and murderers: they too had murderous blood in their veins. ([Matt 23:29-36](#))