

Matthew 23 (English Standard Version)

Matthew 23

¹Then Jesus^(A) said to the crowds and to his disciples, ^{2(B)} "The scribes and the Pharisees^(C) sit on Moses' seat, ³so practice and observe whatever they tell you—^(D) but not what they do.^(E) For they preach, but do not practice.^(F) They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear,^(a) and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.^(G) They do all their deeds^(H) to be seen by others. For they make^(I) their phylacteries broad and^(J) their fringes long, ⁶and they^(K) love the place of honor at feasts and^(L) the best seats in the synagogues ⁷and^(M) greetings in^(N) the marketplaces and being called^(O) rabbi^(b) by others.^(P) But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are^(Q) all brothers.^(c) ^{9(R)} And call no man your father on earth, for^(S) you have one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor,^(T) the Christ. ^{11(U)} The greatest among you shall be your servant. ^{12(V)} Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

¹³"But woe^(W) to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you^(X) shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you^(Y) neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.^(d) ¹⁵

New King James

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

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single^(Z) proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a^(AA) child of^(AB) hell^(e) as yourselves.

¹⁶"Woe to^(AC) you,^(AD) blind guides, who say,^(AE) 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.'¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or^(AF) the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸And you say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by^(AG) the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.'¹⁹ You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or^(AH) the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by^(AI) him who dwells in it. ²²And whoever swears by^(AJ) heaven swears by^(AK) the throne of God and by^(AL) him who sits upon it.

²³(AM) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For^(AN) you tithe mint and dill and^(AO) cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law:^(AP) justice and mercy and faithfulness.^(AQ) These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴You **blind guides**, straining out a gnat and swallowing^(AR) a camel!

²⁵(AS) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For^(AT) you clean the outside of^(AU) the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of^(AV) greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of^(AW) the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

²⁷(AX) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like^(AY) **whitewashed tombs**, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and^(AZ) all uncleanness. ²⁸So you also^(BA) outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of^(BB) hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹(BC) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' ³¹Thus you witness against yourselves that you are^(BD) sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³²(BE) Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. ³³You **serpents**,^(BF) you **brood of vipers**, how are you to escape being sentenced to^(BG) hell? ³⁴(BH) Therefore^(BI) I send you^(BJ) prophets and wise men and^(BK) scribes,^(BL) some of whom you will kill and crucify, and^(BM) some you will^(BN) flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, ³⁵so that on you may come all^(BO) the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent^(BP) Abel to the blood of^(BQ) Zechariah the son of Barachiah,^[I] whom you murdered between^(BR) the sanctuary and^(BS) the altar. ³⁶Truly, I say to you,^(BT) all these things will come upon this generation.

³⁷(BU) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that^(BV) kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have^(BW) gathered^(BX) your children together^(BY) as a **hen gathers her brood**^(BZ) under her wings, and^(CA) you would not! ³⁸See,^(CB) your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say,^(CC) 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Background

¹Then Jesus^(A) said to the crowds and to his disciples...

Just yesterday, Jesus entered and cleaned the temple. Today, he went into the temple again, the Pharisees challenged His authority and tried to entangle Jesus in His words. After that, Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, but apparently the Pharisees were present also.

What I see.

- 1) Jesus was not afraid of offending the Pharisees. He openly criticized the Pharisees harshly. I have not read more harsh words from Jesus when he rebuked someone's sins than here. I wish not those words are applicable to me ever.
- 2) Jesus said the reason for the Pharisees to do good deeds was for other to see. They attract others to themselves by their outward appearance. They love to be honored as ones who were better than others.
- 3) Including the missing vs. 14, there are 6 times Jesus used the word hypocrites to describe the Pharisees. Jesus must extremely hate hypocrites.
- 4) **sit on Moses' seat... they preach, but do not practice** – Pharisees are those have the authority or are in the position to tell people what is right and what is wrong according to God's word.
- 5) Jesus also used some very harsh words to describe the Pharisees - **Blind guides; whitewashed tombs; serpents; brood of vipers.**
- 6) Misery to the hypocrites, or woe to the hypocrites because
 - a) They are a stumbling block to others who want to seek God. Vs. 13
 - b) They exploit the widows, i.e. the vulnerable by offering them lengthier prayer. vs 14.
 - c) They lead people who genuinely seek God to destruction. vs 15
 - d) They do not always want to be accountable for their words. vs 16
 - e) They focus on even the smallest offerings but ignore the essence of offerings, which is about justice and mercy and faithfulness. vs 23
 - f) They spend time and energy to work on the outside appearance and ignore the condition of their hearts. vs 25
 - g) They are like whitewashed tomb that looks good on the outside but inward is all filth. vs 27
 - h) They believe they are righteous, they do not recognize their own sins. vs 29
- 7) Jesus didn't hate these men He rebuked so strongly. His heart broke for them. Jesus loves His people even though they rejected Him. He laments for Jerusalem.

Questions to ponder

- 1) Who are today's Pharisees?
- 2) Do I have any of those marks?
- 3) How to prevent from falling into traps of becoming a hypocrite?