

# Matthew 23 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

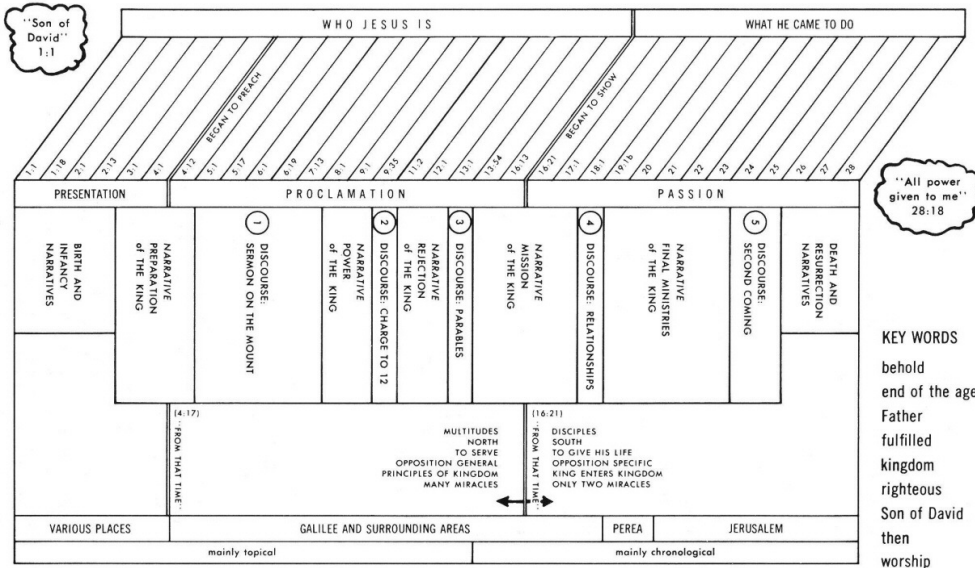
**CLICK VERSE**

**To go directly to that verse**

Matthew 23:1  
Matthew 23:2  
Matthew 23:3  
Matthew 23:4  
Matthew 23:5  
Matthew 23:6  
Matthew 23:7  
Matthew 23:8  
Matthew 23:9  
Matthew 23:10  
Matthew 23:11  
Matthew 23:12  
Matthew 23:13  
Matthew 23:14  
Matthew 23:15  
Matthew 23:16  
Matthew 23:17  
Matthew 23:18  
Matthew 23:19  
Matthew 23:20  
Matthew 23:21  
Matthew 23:22  
Matthew 23:23  
Matthew 23:24  
Matthew 23:25  
Matthew 23:26  
Matthew 23:27  
Matthew 23:28  
Matthew 23:29  
Matthew 23:30  
Matthew 23:31  
Matthew 23:32  
Matthew 23:33  
Matthew 23:34  
Matthew 23:35  
Matthew 23:36  
Matthew 23:37  
Matthew 23:38  
Matthew 23:39

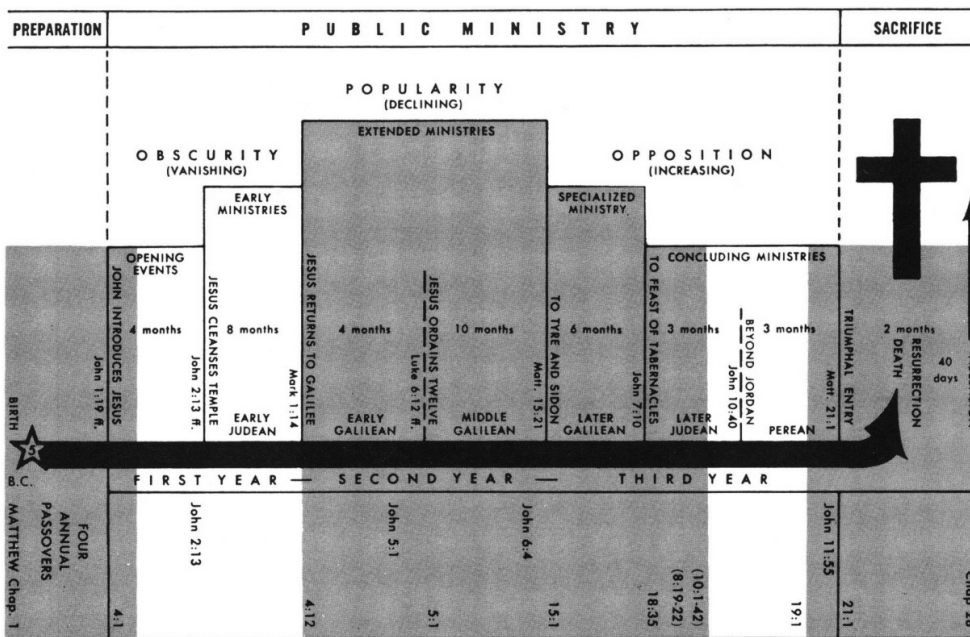
---

MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." 2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

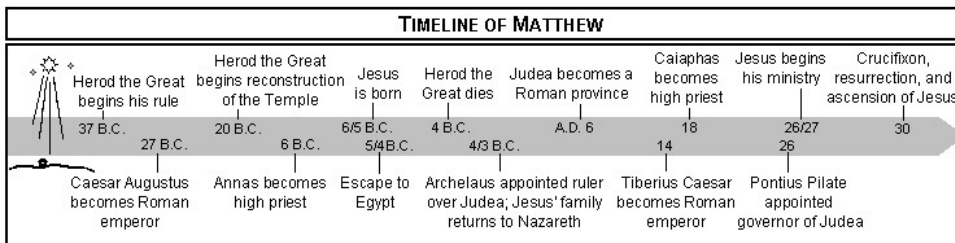


Click chart to enlarge  
 Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission  
 Another Chart from Swindoll

**THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)**



Click chart to enlarge



Source: Borrow Ryrie Study Bible

**PLEASE NOTE - THIS PAGE IS INCOMPLETE AND IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION - JULY, 2024 EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN 2024**

Matthew 23:1 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples,

- Mt 15:10-20 Mk 7:14 Lu 12:1,57 20:45

**Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples,**

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Mt 23:1-12. The scribes and Pharisees explained the law of Moses, and enforced obedience to it. They are charged with hypocrisy in religion. We can only judge according to outward appearance; but God searches the heart. They made phylacteries. These were scrolls of paper or parchment, wherein were written four paragraphs of the law, to be worn on their foreheads and left arms, Exodus 13:2-10, 11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 13-21. They made these phylacteries broad, that they might be thought more zealous for the law than others. God appointed the Jews to make fringes upon their garments, Numbers 15:38, to remind them of their being a peculiar people; but the Pharisees made them larger than common, as if they were thereby more religious than others. Pride was the darling, reigning sin of the Pharisees, the sin that most easily beset them, and which our Lord Jesus takes all occasions to speak against. For him that is taught in the word to give respect to him that teaches, is commendable; but for him that teaches, to demand it, to be puffed up with it, is sinful. How much is all this against the spirit of Christianity! The consistent disciple of Christ is pained by being put into chief places. But who that looks around on the visible church, would think this was the spirit required? It is plain that some measure of this antichristian spirit prevails in every religious society, and in every one of our hearts.

**Matthew 23:2 saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;**

- Ne 8:4-8 Mal 2:7 Mk 12:38 Lu 20:46

**saying: “The scribes ([grammateus](#)) and the Pharisees ([pharisaios](#)) have seated themselves in the chair of Moses**

**MacArthur** notes that "Not all Pharisees were **scribes**, but the scribes were primarily Pharisees, who were interpreters and teachers of the law of Moses and the traditional rabbinic writings. Their teaching provided the theological framework for the Pharisees' legalistic system of works-righteousness. The **scribes** were the dominant force in Judaism, not only theologically, but socially. Their views affected every aspect of life, and they also handled all legal matters, including property, estates, and contracts. They were revered, and given the respectful title of Rabbi (Mt. 23:7). That title was sometimes given to Jesus because He was a teacher (cf. John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 6:25). It was commonly believed that Moses received the law, then gave it to Joshua, who gave it to the elders, who gave it to the prophets, who gave it to the **scribes**. (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**NET NOTE** - **Scribes** - The traditional rendering of γραμματεὺς (grammateus) as “scribe” does not communicate much to the modern English reader, for whom the term might mean “professional copyist,” if it means anything at all. The people referred to here were recognized experts in the law of Moses and in traditional laws and regulations. Thus “expert in the law” comes closer to the meaning for the modern reader. **Pharisees** were members of one of the most important and influential religious and political parties of Judaism in the time of Jesus. There were more Pharisees than Sadducees (according to Josephus, Ant. 17.2.4 [17.42] there were more than 6,000 Pharisees at about this time). Pharisees differed with Sadducees on certain doctrines and patterns of behavior. The Pharisees were strict and zealous adherents to the laws of the OT and to numerous additional traditions such as angels and bodily resurrection.

**Scribes** (1122) [grammateus](#) from [grapho](#) = to write) was one skilled in Jewish law and theology scribe, expert, scholar ([Mt 2.4](#)). **Grammateus** also referred to a chief executive officer of a governmental entity such as a town official secretary, town clerk ([Acts 19.35](#)). Jesus gives a long rebuke including **8 WOES** primarily to the Scribes and Pharisees which should be read to help understand how this group of Jewish religious men functioned (See [Mt 23:1-39](#), [13](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), etc). Most sources consider the **lawyers** (nomikos - meaning one skilled in the Mosaic law) to be scribes specialized in the jurisprudence of the Law of Moses. Finally the scribes in [Lk 5:17](#) (nomdidaskalos) were teachers of the Jewish law who were equal to the lawyers and scribes. In the Septuagint [grammateus](#) frequently used for a political officer who assisted kings or magistrates by keeping written accounts of public acts and occurrences or royal revenues ([2 Ki 12:10](#)) (See [Brown-Driver-Briggs definition of saphar](#)).

**Pharisees** (5330) [pharisaios](#) is transliterated from the Hebrew [parash](#) (06567 - to separate) from Aramaic word [peras](#) (06537) ("Peres" in [Da 5:28-note](#)), signifying to separate, owing to a different manner of life from that of the general public. After the resettling of the Jewish people in Judea on their return from the Babylonian captivity, there were two religious groups among them. One party contented themselves with following only what was written in the Law of Moses. These were called **Zadikim**, the righteous. The other group added the constitutions and traditions of the elders, as well as other rigorous observances, to the Law and voluntarily complied with them. They were called **Chasidim** or the pious. From the Zadikim the sects of the Sadducees and Karaites were derived. From the Chasidim were derived the Pharisees and the Essenes. In [I Mac2:42](#), among

the persons who joined Mattathias against Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), about 167 b.c., are named the Asideans (Asidaíoi), who are described as voluntarily devoted to the law. The Asideans are mentioned also in [I Mac 7:13](#); [II Mac 14:6](#). In the time of our Lord, the Pharisees were the separatists of their day, as well as the principal sect among the Jews. The Pharisees considered themselves much holier than the common people ([Lu 18:11, 12](#)). They wore special garments to distinguish themselves from others. PRINCIPLE TENETS OF PHARISEES: In opposition to those of the Sadducees, and the former group maintained the existence of angels and spirits and the doctrine of the resurrection ([Acts 23:8](#)), which the latter party denied ([Mt 22:23](#); [Mk 12:18](#); [Lu 20:27](#)). The Pharisees made everything dependent upon God and fate (Josephus, The Jewish Wars, ii.8.14). However, they did not deny the role of the human will in affecting events (Josephus, Antiquities, xviii.1.3). ZEAL FOR TRADITION: The Pharisees distinguished themselves with their zeal for the traditions of the elders, which they taught was derived from the same fountain as the written Word itself, claiming both to have been delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai ([Mt 15:1-6](#); [Mk 7:3-5](#)). See also parádosis (3862), tradition, and entalma (1778), a religious precept versus entole (1785), commandment. ([See more detailed notes from William Barclay](#))

**Matthew 23:3 therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.**

- whatsoever: Mt 15:2-9 Ex 18:19,20,23 De 4:5 5:27 17:9-12 2Ch 30:12 Ac 5:29, Ro 13:1
- for: Mt 21:30 Ps 50:16-20 Ro 2:19-24 2Ti 3:5 Titus 1:16

**therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.**

**Matthew 23:4 “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.**

- Mt 23:23 11:28-30 Lu 11:46 Ac 15:10,28 Ga 6:13 Rev 2:24

**They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.**

**Matthew 23:5 “But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.**

- all: Mt 6:1-16 2Ki 10:16 Lu 16:15 20:47 21:1 Jn 5:44 7:18 12:43 Php 1:15 2:3 2Th 2:4
- they make: De 6:8 Pr 3:3 6:21-23
- the borders: Mt 9:20 Nu 15:38,39 De 22:12

### LOOK AT HOW RELIGIOUS I AM!

**But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels([kraspedon](#)) of their garments**

**NET NOTE - Phylacteries** were small leather cases containing OT scripture verses, worn on the arm and forehead by Jews, especially when praying. The custom was derived from such OT passages as Exod 13:9; 16; Deut 6:8; 11:18. The term κράσπεδον (kraspedon) in some contexts could refer to the outer fringe of the garment (possibly in Mark 6:56). This edge could have been plain or decorated. L&N 6.180 states, “In Mt 23:5 κράσπεδον denotes the **tassels** worn at the four corners of the outer garment (see 6.194).” Tassels refer to the tassels that a male Israelite was obligated to wear on the four corners of his outer garment according to the Mosaic law (Nu 15:38; Deut 22:12).

---

**Fringe** (the tassel)([2899](#))([kraspedon](#)) is the outer limit of something and thus means the edge, border, hem of a garment (Mt 9:20; 14:36; Mk 6:56; Lk 8:44, cf Lxx of Zech 8:23). **Kraspedon** also means tassel (Hebrew tsitsit) or fringe on the four corners of

the outer garment ([see picture](#), [another picture](#)), worn as a reminder to observe the commandments (Mt 23:5, cf. Nu 15:38, 39; Dt 22:12).

**Gilbrant** - By the time of Jesus the original purpose of the **kraspedon** had been lost. Jesus wore the kraspedon on His garment, so one hung in the middle of His back (Matthew 9:20; 14:36; Mark 6:56; Luke 8:44), but He condemned the Pharisees for their departure from the original meaning (Matthew 23:5). Instead of allowing the tassels to remind them of God and His Word, they made them larger than necessary to remind God of their goodness! The woman with the issue of blood touched the hem or tassel of Jesus' garment (Mt 9:20; Lk 8:44). Why she touched the **kraspedon** rather than His shoulder, feet, or hair cannot be determined. But she was not concerned about the superstition of the Pharisees concerning the tassel. She was putting her faith in Jesus. The **tzitzit** refers to the fringes on the borders of the robes. They were meant to hang from the corners of the upper garment (Dt 22:12), which was worn on top of the clothing. The tassel was probably made by twisting the overhanging threads of the garment into a knot that would hang down. This was a reminder of the covenant. The tassels were retained down through history, and today more elaborate prayer shawls with tassels are worn during prayer.

#### Matthew 23:6 "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues,

- Mt 20:21 Pr 25:6,7 Mk 12:38,39 Lu 11:43-54 14:7-11 20:46,47 Ro 12:10 Jas 2:1-4 3Jn 1:9

#### They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues([synagoge](#))

**Synagogues** (4864) **sunagoge** from **sunago** = lead together, assemble or bring together) refers to a group of people "going with one another" (sunago) literally describes a bringing together or congregating in one place. Eventually, sunagoge came to mean the place where they congregated together. The word was used to designate the buildings other than the central Jewish temple where the Jews congregated for worship. Historically, the Synagogues originated in the Babylonian captivity after the 586 BC destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar and served as places of worship and instruction. Sunagoge was the name of a group "Synagogue of the Freedmen" (Acts 6:9). Synagogues should have been (and frequently were) a place of teaching and proclamation of the Gospel (Mt 4:23, 9:35, 12:9, 13:54, Mk 6:2, Lk 4:15, 16, Lk 4:44, 6:6, 13:10, Jn 6:59, 18:20, Acts 9:20 = Paul immediately "began to proclaim Jesus," Acts 13:5 = Paul proclaimed "the word of God," Acts 14:1 = place Paul, et al, spoke and where "a large number of people believed," Acts 17:17, 18:4, 18:19, 19:8 = Paul, et al reasoned with various audiences in synagogues). In James 2:3 the synagogue seems to describe an assembly-place for Judeo-Christians. Sadly many synagogues became hotbeds of hypocrisy (Mt 6:2), assemblies for arrogant display (a form of hypocrisy) (Mt 6:5, Mk 12:39, Lk 11:43, 20:46).

**Synagogue** is used in the Septuagint of Ps 21:16 to describe a group of persons who banded together with hostile intent. Synagogues also were used as places where court was held and punishment inflicted = they became places of false accusation (Lk 12:11) and of scourging, flogging, etc of true disciples (Mt 10:17, Mk 13:9, Lk 21:12, Acts 22:19 = imprisoned, Acts 26:11 = Paul's punishment of believers, ), and places of violent reaction to unpopular teaching (Lk 4:28).

#### Matthew 23:7 and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

- Rabbi: Jn 1:38,49 3:2,26 6:25 20:16

**and respectful greetings ([aspasmos](#)) in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men** - For the Jews greeting is an important ceremony. "There is later Jewish material in the Talmud that spells out such greetings in detail." ([NET NOTE](#))

**Windisch on respectful greetings** adds that "Like the seat of honour in the synagogue or at a feast, greeting in the market-place is one of the distinctions to which rabbis raise claim by reason of the dignity of their office. A greeting is given on the street when  $\epsilon\lambda\iota\psi\ \rho\alpha\beta\beta\iota$  is first addressed to the one who is to be honoured. In their desire for a greeting, the rabbis want to be greeted first and therefore publicly recognised as superiors (cf. Alexander and the high-priest in Jos. Ant., 11, 331, → 496, n. 4). Censuring the claim of the rabbis to  $\sigma\pi\alpha\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ , Jesus does not wish his disciples to be honoured by greetings but rather to greet others. It is known that this basic principle was taught and practised by many rabbis, especially Jochanan ben Zakkai - " To offer rabbis the  $\sigma\pi\alpha\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$  coveted by them was the impulse of all pious Jews." (TDNT, volume 1, page 498)

**Respectful greetings** (salutation)(783) **aspasmos** from **aspazomai** = welcome, greet, to salute) describes the use of set words or phrases to express a welcome or farewell -- salutation, greeting, either orally or by letter. Acknowledgement or expression of good will on meeting. Louw-Nida = "employ certain set phrases as a part of the process of greeting, whether communicated directly or indirectly." Liddell-Scott adds an embrace. **Aspasmos** the noun form is extremely rare in antiquity, both in literary documents and nonliterary papyri.

**TDNT** - To offer rabbis the **σπασμός** coveted by them was the impulse of all pious Jews. Only once (Mk. 9:15) do we read that the multitude respectfully greeted Jesus: **δόντες α τ ν ξεθαμβήθησαν, κα προστρέχοντες σπάζοντο α τόν.** But there is frequent mention of → **προσκυνε ν** before Jesus, and this is a particularly respectful form of **σπασμός**. The caricature of such greeting is the mocking of Jesus as the King of the Jews in Mk. 15:18 f.: **κα**

**Matthew 23:8 "But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.**

- be: Mt 23:10 2Co 1:24 4:5 Jas 3:1 1Pe 5:3
- one: Mt 10:25 17:5 26:49 Jn 13:13,14 Ro 14:9,10 1Co 1:12,13 3:3-5
- all: Lu 22:32 Eph 3:15 Col 1:1,2 Rev 1:9 19:10 22:9

**But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers**

**Matthew 23:9 "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.**

- call: 2Ki 2:12 6:21 13:14 Job 32:21,22 Ac 22:1 1Co 4:15 1Ti 5:1,2 Heb 12:9
- for: Mt 6:8,9,32 Mal 1:6 Ro 8:14-17 2Co 6:18 1Jn 3:1

**Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven**

**Matthew 23:10 "Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.**

**Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ**(**Christos** - one who has been anointed)

**NET NOTE - Christ** - The term **Christos** was originally an adjective ("anointed"), developing in LXX into a substantive ("an anointed one"), then developing still further into a technical generic term ("the anointed one"). In the intertestamental period it developed further into a technical term referring to the hoped-for anointed one, that is, a specific individual. In the NT the development starts there (technical-specific), is so used in the gospels, and then develops in Paul to mean virtually Jesus' last name. It was a common belief in Judaism that Messiah would be the **son of David** in that he would come from the lineage of David. On this point the Pharisees agreed and were correct. But their understanding was nonetheless incomplete, for Messiah is also David's Lord. With this statement Jesus was affirming that, as the Messiah, he is both God and man.

**Matthew 23:11 "But the greatest among you shall be your servant.**

- Mt 20:26,27 Mk 10:43,44 Lu 22:26,27 Jn 13:14,15 1Co 9:19 2Co 4:5 2Co 11:23 Ga 5:13 Php 2:5-8

**But the greatest among you shall be your servant**

**Matthew 23:12 "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.**

- Mt 5:3 18:4 Job 22:29 Ps 138:6 Pr 15:33 16:18,19 29:23 Isa 57:15 Da 4:37 Lu 1:51,52 14:11 18:14 Jas 4:6 1Pe 5:5

**Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted**



**Matthew 23:13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.**

- woe: Mt 23:14,15,27,29 Isa 9:14,15 33:14 Zec 11:17 Lu 11:43,44
- for ye shut: Mt 21:31,32 Lu 11:52 Jn 7:46-52 9:22,24,34 Ac 4:17,18 5:28,40 Ac 8:1 13:8 1Th 2:15,16 2Ti 3:8 4:15

## **JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS THE GREAT PRETENDERS!**

**But woe to you, scribes ([grammateus](#)) and Pharisees ([pharisaiois](#)), hypocrites ([hupokrites](#)), because you shut off (closing) the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in**

**Gilbrant** on **hypocrites** - Every New Testament instance of [hupokrites](#) occurs in the Synoptic Gospels and every one occurs in a saying of Jesus. Moreover, every instance but two (parallel texts) is in the plural form (cf. Matthew 7:5; Luke 6:42).

**NET NOTE - TECHNICAL NOTE** - The most important MSS (א B D L Z Θ f1 33 892\* pc and several versional witnesses) do not have 23:14 “Woe to you experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You devour widows’ property, and as a show you pray long prayers! Therefore you will receive a more severe punishment.” Part or all of the verse is contained (either after v. 12 or after v. 13) in W 0102 0107 f13 and several versions, but it is almost certainly not original. The present translation follows NA27 in omitting the verse number as well, a procedure also followed by a number of other modern translations. Note also that Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47 are very similar in wording and are not disputed textually.

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Mt 23:13-33. The scribes and Pharisees were enemies to the gospel of Christ, and therefore to the salvation of the souls of men. It is bad to keep away from Christ ourselves, but worse also to keep others from him. Yet it is no new thing for the show and form of godliness to be made a cloak to the greatest enormities. But dissembled piety will be reckoned double iniquity. They were very busy to turn souls to be of their party. Not for the glory of God and the good of souls, but that they might have the credit and advantage of making converts. Gain being their godliness, by a thousand devices they made religion give way to their worldly interests. They were very strict and precise in smaller matters of the law, but careless and loose in weightier matters. It is not the scrupling a little sin that Christ here reproves; if it be a sin, though but a gnat, it must be strained out; but the doing that, and then swallowing a camel, or, committing a greater sin. While they would seem to be godly, they were neither sober nor righteous. We are really, what we are inwardly. Outward motives may keep the outside clean, while the inside is filthy; but if the heart and spirit be made new, there will be newness of life; here we must begin with ourselves. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was like the ornaments of a grave, or dressing up a dead body, only for show. The deceitfulness of sinners' hearts appears in that they go down the streams of the sins of their own day, while they fancy that they should have opposed the sins of former days. We sometimes think, if we had lived when Christ was upon earth, that we should not have despised and rejected him, as men then did; yet Christ in his Spirit, in his word, in his ministers, is still no better treated. And it is just with God to give those up to their hearts' lusts, who obstinately persist in gratifying them. Christ gives men their true characters.

---

**Hypocrites** ([5273](#)) [hupokrites](#) from **hupó** = under, indicating secrecy + **krino** = to judge) describes one who acts pretentiously, a counterfeit, a man who assumes and speaks or acts under a feigned character. A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be something he or she is not. **W E Vine** adds "primarily denotes "one who answers;" then, "a stage-actor;" it was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of the voice; hence the word became used metaphorically of "a dissembler, a hypocrite."

**Hupokrites** - 18x/18v - Matt. 6:2; Matt. 6:5; Matt. 6:16; Matt. 7:5; Matt. 15:7; Matt. 22:18; Matt. 23:13; Matt. 23:14; Matt. 23:15; Matt. 23:23; Matt. 23:25; Matt. 23:27; Matt. 23:29; Matt. 24:51; Mk. 7:6; Lk. 6:42; Lk. 12:56; Lk. 13:15

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek this noun (a compound form related to *krinō* [2892], “judge”) denotes the individual who “answers” or “replies” on stage. At the same time, it can depict the “interpreter” or “expounder” who explained the drama to the audience. In 536 B.C. Thespis introduced an individual who replied to the chorus (a group of male dancers and singers) in the festival of Dionysius held every spring in Athens. This individual wore a mask (as did the chorus) and was called the *hupokritēs*, the one who “answers” or “interprets.” The *hupokritēs* came to be the actor in Greek theater. *Hupokritēs* alone never had an unfavorable ethical meaning in classical Greek (Wilckens, “*hupokrinomai*,” *Kittel*, 8:563). **Septuagint Usage** Negative meanings of *hupokritēs* developed in the Septuagint and in Hellenistic Jewish usage, where it occurs most

regularly in later writings. Found only in Job 34:30 and 36:13, hupokritēs (Hebrew chānēph, “estranged from God, godless”) contains clearly negative ethical implications. According to Wilckens, in Jewish thinking “the hupokritēs is the ungodly man, the ungodly man is the hupokritēs” (ibid., 8:564). The negative sense attached to this word perhaps derived from Jewish dislike of the pagan Greek theater and hupokritēs’ association with lying and deception (ibid., 8:566). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**William Barclay** - Originally the Greek word [hupokrites](#) meant one who answers; it then came to be specially connected with the statement and answer, the dialogue, of the stage; and it is the regular Greek word for an actor. It then came to mean an actor in the worse sense of the term, a pretender, one who acts a part, one who wears a mask to cover his true feelings, one who puts on an external show while inwardly his thoughts and feelings are very different. To Jesus the Scribes and Pharisees were men who were acting a part. What he meant was this. Their whole idea of religion consisted in outward observances, the wearing of elaborate phylacteries and tassels, the meticulous observance of the rules and regulations of the Law. But in their hearts there was bitterness and envy and pride and arrogance. To Jesus these Scribes and Pharisees were men who, under a mask of elaborate godliness, concealed hearts in which the most godless feelings and emotions held sway. And that accusation holds good in greater or lesser degree of any man who lives life on the assumption that religion consists in external observances and external acts. There is an unwritten saying of Jesus which says, “The key of the Kingdom they hid.” His condemnation of these Scribes and Pharisees is that they are not only failing to enter the Kingdom themselves, they shut the door on the faces of those who seek to enter. What did he mean by this accusation? We have already seen (Matthew 6:10) that the best way to think of the Kingdom 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. The Pharisees believed that to do God’s will was to observe their thousands of petty rules and regulations; and nothing could be further from that Kingdom whose basic idea is love. When people tried to find entry into the Kingdom the Pharisees presented them with these rules and regulations, which was as good as shutting the door in their faces. The Pharisees preferred their ideas of religion to God’s idea of religion. They had forgotten the basic truth that, if a man would teach others, he must himself first listen to God. The gravest danger which any teacher or preacher encounters is that he should erect his own prejudices into universal principles and substitute his own ideas for the truth of God. When he does that he is not a guide, but a barrier, to the Kingdom, for, misled himself, he misleads others. ([Matthew 23 - William Barclay’s Daily Study Bible](#))

**Matthew 23:14** [“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.”]

- for ye: Josephus says that this sect pretended to a more exact knowledge of the law, on which account the women were subject to them, as pretending to be dear to God. Ex 22:22-24 Job 22:9 31:16-20 Mk 12:40 Lu 20:47 2Ti 3:6 Titus 1:10,11 2Pe 2:14,15
- long: That these were long we learn from Bab. Berachoth, where we are told that the very religious prayed nine hours a day.
- therefore: Mt 23:33-36 11:24 Lu 12:48 Jas 3:1 2Pe 2:3

[“Woe to you, scribes ([grammateus](#)) and Pharisees ([pharisaios](#)), hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.”]

**Matthew 23:15** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

- for: Ga 4:17 6:12
- proselyte: Es 8:17 Ac 2:10 13:43
- ye make: Jn 8:44 Ac 13:10 14:2,19 17:5,6,13 Eph 2:3

**Woe to you, scribes ([grammateus](#)) and Pharisees ([pharisaios](#)), hypocrites ([hupokrites](#)), because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves**

**NET NOTE** - Grk “a son of Gehenna.” Expressions constructed with u ὅς (huios) followed by a genitive of class or kind denote a person belonging to the class or kind specified by the following genitive (L&N 9.4). Thus the phrase here means “a person who



belongs to hell." The word translated hell is "Gehenna" (γέεννα, geenna), a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew words ge hinnom ("Valley of Hinnom"). This was the valley along the south side of Jerusalem. In OT times it was used for human sacrifices to the pagan god Molech (cf. Jer 7:31; 19:5-6; 32:35), and it came to be used as a place where human excrement and rubbish were disposed of and burned. In the intertestamental period, it came to be used symbolically as the place of divine punishment (cf. 1 En. 27:2, 90:26; 4 Ezra 7:36).

**Hell (Gehenna)** ([1067](#)) [geenna](#) from Hebrew **gay** = valley + **Hinnom**) is literally the **valley of Hinnom**, the ravine or valley south of Jerusalem where the refuse and filth, bodies of dead animals, and bodies of criminals were cast and burned. These fires were continually kept burning, all a fit symbol of the future home of all unrepentant, unregenerate wicked men and women. It was a foul, forbidding place where the fire, smoke, and stench never ceased. It is thus fitting that geenna is where sin and unrepentant sinners will one day find it's "resting place". Geenna is essentially synonymous with the lake of fire, a God's "cosmic garbage dump," mentioned in the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:14-15-see note. Into this place both death and Hades are cast. It is the place that was prepared for "the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41), but which will also become the final abode of the unrighteous. Jesus Himself declared "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Mt 25:46, see context Mt 25:31-46).

See on site [Study of Eternal Punishment](#)

**Matthew 23:16** "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.'

- ye blind: Mt 23:17,19,24,26 15:14 Isa 56:10,11 Jn 9:39-41
- Whosoever shall swear by the temple: Mt 5:33,34 Jas 5:12
- it is: Mt 15:5,6 Mk 7:10-13
- he is: Ga 5:3

**Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated**

**Matthew 23:17** "You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? 18"And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.'

- Ye fools: Ps 94:8
- or: Mt 23:19 Ex 30:26-29 Nu 16:38,39

**You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? 18"And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated**

**Matthew 23:18** "And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.'

- guilty: or, debtor, Mt 23:15

**"And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.**

**Matthew 23:19** "You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering?"

- or: Ex 29:37 30:29

**You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering**

**Matthew 23:20** “Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it.

**Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it**

**Matthew 23:21** “And whoever swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it.

- and by: 1Ki 8:13,27 2Ch 6:2 7:2 Ps 26:8 132:13,14 Eph 2:22 Col 2:9

**And whoever swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it**

**Matthew 23:22** “And whoever swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

- by the: Mt 5:34 Ps 11:4 Isa 66:1 Ac 7:49 Rev 4:2,3

**And whoever swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it**

**Matthew 23:23** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

- for: Lu 11:42
- anise: Gr. [anethon <Strong's G432>.] dill. Dill is a species of plant of the pentandria digynia class, growing native in Spain and Portugal. The root is fusiform and long; stems, erect-grooved, jointed, branched, and about two feet in height; leaves, doubly pinnated, sweet and odorous; flowers, flat, terminal umbels; corolla, five ovate, concave, yellow petals, with apexes inflected; germen, like that of fennel; seeds, scarcely the length of a caraway seed, but broader and flatter, of a brown colour, aromatic, sweetish odour, and warmish, pungent taste.
- cummin: Gr. [kuminom <Strong's G2951>] Cummin is a plant of the same class as dill: it rises eight or ten inches on a slender round procumbent, branching stem; leaves, a dark green, narrow, linear, and pointed; flowers, purple, in numerous four rayed umbels; corolla, five unequal petals, inflected, and notched at the apex; seeds, oblong, striated, of a brown colour, strong, heavy odour, and warm, bitterish taste.
- the weightier: Mt 9:13 12:7 22:37-40 1Sa 15:22 Pr 21:3 Jer 22:15,16 Ho 6:6 Mic 6:8 Ga 5:22,23
- these: Mt 5:19,20

**Woe to you, scribes ([grammateus](#)) and Pharisees ([pharisaios](#)), hypocrites ([hupokrites](#))! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others**

**Matthew 23:24** “You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

- Mt 7:4 15:2-6 19:24 27:6-8 Lu 6:7-10 Jn 18:28,40

**You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel**

**Matthew 23:25** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

- for: Mt 15:19,20 Mk 7:4-13 Lu 11:39,40
- full: Isa 28:7,8

Woe to you, scribes ([grammateus](#)) and Pharisees ([pharisaios](#)), hypocrites ([hupokrites](#))! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence

**Matthew 23:26** “You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

- cleanse: Mt 12:33 Isa 55:7 Jer 4:14 13:27 Eze 18:31 Lu 6:45 2Co 7:1 Heb 10:22 Jas 4:8

You blind Pharisee ([pharisaios](#)), first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also

**Matthew 23:27** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.

- like: Isa 58:1,2 Lu 11:44 Ac 23:3
- sepulchres: Nu 19:16

Woe to you, scribes ([grammateus](#)) and Pharisees ([pharisaios](#)), hypocrites ([hupokrites](#))! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness

**NET NOTE** - whitewashed tombs - This was an idiom for hypocrisy—just as the wall was painted on the outside but something different on the inside, so this person was not what he appeared or pretended to be (for discussion of a similar metaphor, see L&N 88.234; BDAG 1010 s.v. το χος). See Deut 28:22; Ezek 13:10–16; Acts 23:3.

**Matthew 23:28** “So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

- ye also: Mt 23:5 1Sa 16:7 Ps 51:6 Jer 17:9,10 Lu 16:15 Heb 4:12,13
- but: Mt 12:34,35 15:19,20 Mk 7:21-23

So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness

**Matthew 23:29** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

- ye build: Lu 11:47,48 Ac 2:29

Woe to you, scribes ([grammateus](#)) and Pharisees ([pharisaios](#)), hypocrites ([hupokrites](#))! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous

**Matthew 23:30** and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’

- the blood: Mt 23:34,35 21:35,36 2Ch 36:15 Jer 2:30

and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’

**Matthew 23:31** “So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

- witnesses: Jos 24:22 Job 15:5,6 Ps 64:8 Lu 19:22
- that: Ac 7:51,52 1Th 2:15,16

**So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets**

**Matthew 23:32 "Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.**

- the measure: Ge 15:16 Nu 32:14 Zec 5:6-11

**Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers**

**Matthew 23:33 "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?"**

- serpents: Mt 3:7 12:34 21:34,35 Ge 3:15 Ps 58:3-5 Isa 57:3,4 Lu 3:7 Jn 8:44 2Co 11:3 Rev 12:9
- how: Mt 23:14 Heb 2:3 10:29 12:25

**You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell**

**Matthew 23:34 "Therefore, **behold**, I am sending you prophets and 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,**

- I send: Mt 10:16 28:19,20 Lu 11:49 24:47 Jn 20:21 Ac 1:8 1Co 12:3-11 Eph 4:8-12
- prophets: Ac 11:27 13:1 15:32 Rev 11:10
- and wise: Pr 11:30 1Co 2:6 3:10 Col 1:28
- scribes: Mt 13:52
- ye: Mt 10:16,17 Jn 16:2 Ac 5:40 7:51,52,58,59 9:1,2 12:2 14:19 Ac 22:19,20 2Co 11:24,25 1Th 2:16 Heb 11:37

**Therefore, **behold** (*idou*), I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes(*grammateus*); some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues (*synagoge*), and persecute from city to city**

**NET NOTE** - mastigoo - "of flogging as a punishment decreed by the synagogue (Dt 25:2f; s. the Mishna Tractate Sanhedrin-Makkoth, edited w. notes by SKrauss '33) w. acc. of pers. Mt 10:17; 23:34."

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Mt 23:34-39. Our Lord declares the miseries the inhabitants of Jerusalem were about to bring upon themselves, but he does not notice the sufferings he was to undergo. A hen gathering her chickens under her wings, is an apt emblem of the Saviour's tender love to those who trust in him, and his faithful care of them. He calls sinners to take refuge under his tender protection, keeps them safe, and nourishes them to eternal life. The present dispersion and unbelief of the Jews, and their future conversion to Christ, were here foretold. Jerusalem and her children had a large share of guilt, and their punishment has been signal. But ere long, deserved vengeance will fall on every church which is Christian in name only. In the mean time the Saviour stands ready to receive all who come to him. There is nothing between sinners and eternal happiness, but their proud and unbelieving unwillingness.

**Behold** (2400) **idou** is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **idou** in the **middle voice** means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The **aorist imperative** is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" In 2Cor 5:17 Paul uses **idou**, to get his reader's attention as he introduces the truth that the one who in now **in Christ** is a qualitatively new person. (see also notes above on "behold")

**Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine

underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**Matthew 23:35 so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.**

- upon: Ge 9:5,6 Nu 35:33 De 21:7,8 2Ki 21:16 24:4 Isa 26:21 Jer 2:30,34 26:15,23 La 4:13,14 Rev 18:24
- the blood of righteous: Ge 4:8 Heb 11:4 12:24 1Jn 3:11,12
- unto: 2Ch 24:20-22 Zec 1:1 Lu 11:51

**so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.**

**Matthew 23:36 "Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.**

- Mt 24:34 Eze 12:21-28 Mk 13:30,31 Lu 21:32,33

**Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation**

**Matthew 23:37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.**

- Jerusalem: Jer 4:14 6:8 Lu 13:34 Rev 11:8
- thou: Mt 23:30 5:12 21:35,36 22:6 2Ch 24:21,22 Ne 9:26 Jer 2:30 26:23 Mk 12:3-6 Lu 20:11-14 Ac 7:51,52 1Th 2:15 Rev 11:7 17:6
- how: 2Ch 36:15,16 Ps 81:8-11 Jer 6:16,17 11:7,8 25:3-7 35:15 Jer 42:9-13 44:4 Zec 1:4
- even: De 32:11,12 Ru 2:12 Ps 17:8 36:7 57:1 63:7 91:4
- and ye: Mt 22:3 Pr 1:24-31 Isa 50:2 Ho 11:2,7 Lu 14:17-20 15:28 19:14-44

**Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling**

**NET NOTE** - The double use of the city's name betrays intense emotion. Although the opening address ("Jerusalem, Jerusalem") is direct (second person), the remainder of this sentence in the Greek text is third person ("who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her"). The following sentences then revert to second person ("your ... you"), so to keep all this consistent in English, the third person pronouns in the present verse were translated as second person ("you who kill ... sent to you"). **How often I have longed to gather your children.** Jesus, like a lamenting prophet, speaks for God here, who longed to care tenderly for Israel and protect her.

**Matthew 23:38 "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!**

- Mt 24:2 2Ch 7:20,21 Ps 69:24 Isa 64:10-12 Jer 7:9-14 Da 9:26 Zec 11:1,2,6 14:1,2 Mk 13:14 Lu 13:35 19:43,44 21:6,20,24 Ac 6:13,14

**Behold ([idou](#)) your house is being left to you desolate!**

**Matthew 23:39 "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"**

- Ye shall not: Ho 3:4 Lu 2:26-30 10:22,23 17:22 Jn 8:21,24,56 14:9,19
- Blessed: Mt 21:9 Ps 118:26 Isa 40:9-11 Zec 12:10 Ro 11:25 2Co 3:14-18



**For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD  
(Ps 118:26.)**