

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 23:

vs. 1-39:

Jesus, having silenced his foes, tells the people that they are to continue to show respect for the religious leaders for they occupy a place of authority, as instituted by God. They are responsible for seeing that the Law of Moses would be kept. This being the case, they are to be obeyed to the letter.

Jesus goes on and tells the people that the leaders are to receive this respect and honor, even though they don't deserve it. Jesus rightfully exposes how the religious leaders pretend to be religious, but are not the people that God has called them to be. They teach one thing and do another. They make it hard on other people to obey God, rather than making it easier to understand and follow.

All that the religious leaders are concerned about is for people to honor and respect them. The clothes they wear, the places they go, what they are called; have all been carefully chosen so that people (not God) will be impressed. Rather they should humble themselves in the sight of God, by simply submitting to His will; then they would find favor with God and He would exalt them. (The prohibition concerning calling people: "Father", is in regards to our spiritual life. The title would denote that some man had authority in regards to spiritual things, rather than God!)

Jesus continues to expose the religious leaders weaknesses. He states that they have no desire to enter heaven, and prevent others from entering, through all their rules and regulations. Those that come to them for such guidance are then influenced to follow their bad example.

Jesus shows their hypocrisy, citing the matter of oaths. According to them, a person had to be very precise in stating an oath, otherwise they could later legally claim that their oath was not binding in the sight of God. Jesus shows the fallacy of their thinking, and teaches that a persons word is always binding in the sight of God.

Even though the leaders were precise in some things, they neglected the "major" things in God's sight. They were wicked and had neglected justice, mercy and faithfulness. No matter how "good" they tried to appear, they would always be filthy on the inside, where it counted. Jesus prophesies that even though the leaders claim that they would not have made the mistake their fathers did (killing God's prophets), that indeed they will in the near future; and will therefore, share the guilt of their fathers sins.

The chapter concludes with Jesus' lament over Jerusalem and her unwillingness to come to Him. Concerning the last verse, Jesus states that they will not see Him (for who He really is), until the day of His return!

STUDY GUIDE

MATTHEW 23:

1. What did the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees not practice?
2. What is the purpose for all that the Pharisees and teachers do?
3. Where is our one Father?
4. What is the result of exalting yourself?
5. What does Jesus call the teachers and the Pharisees in verse 13?
6. By what, did the teachers and Pharisees say, one could swear by and it would mean nothing?
7. What did the teachers and Pharisees give a tenth of?
8. What more important things had they neglected?
9. What did Jesus say they were full of, on the inside?
10. Who was Jesus going to send to them?
11. What would they do with the ones sent?
12. What would they say, the next time they saw Jesus?

BONUS:

1. What is your impression of the Pharisees, and why?
2. Was Jesus wrong in speaking to them this way? Is it ever right to speak to Christians in this way? Explain.
3. How are you hypocritical? What do you think Jesus would say about it?