

# The Book of Matthew



**2023 – Part 5**

**4 more studies in Matthew's Gospel**

### Brief Outline of Matthew's Gospel

1:1 – 4:16	Introducing Jesus
4:17 – 16:20	Public ministry in and around Galilee
16:21 – 18:35	Private ministry in Galilee; preparing the disciples
19:1 – 25:46	Ministry in Judea
26:1 – 28:20	The death and resurrection of Jesus

### Please Note the following:

1. It is helpful, but not mandatory, to prepare your answers before meeting with your group.
2. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
3. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP.**

## Study 1 – The Parable of the Wedding Feast – Matthew 22:1-14 *(Sermon on 4-June-23)*

**Before we begin:** Look back at chapter 21:12-46 – summarize the events to get the context for Matthew 22:1-14.

- *Jesus entered the temple courts (for the Gentiles) and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and merchants because they were making “His house a den of robbers, instead of a house of prayer”. They had been overcharging people for money exchange and charged inflated prices (20x) for animals for sacrifices.*
- *Jesus healed the blind and the lame in the temple.*
- *Children sang praises to Jesus which the religious leaders didn’t like – and when they wanted to silence the children; Jesus said it was right and proper for children to sing His praises (quoting Psalm 8:2)*
- *Jesus then cursed a fig tree as a symbol of the lack of spiritual fruit He found in Israel.*
- *With all this going on the religious leaders then challenged Jesus’ authority to do all of this – so Jesus asked them a question: Was John the Baptist ministry, from Heaven or human origin. The religious leaders – don’t want to answer – because their answer might incriminate them. If they say from Heaven, Jesus will ask why they didn’t believe John or Jesus Himself; and if they say from human origin, they fear going against popular opinion of the people who hold that John was a prophet sent by God. So, they answer that they “don’t know”*
- *So, Jesus told two parables*
- *1<sup>st</sup> – a parable of a father who owned a vineyard and had two sons – 1<sup>st</sup> son said he would not work and then did; the 2<sup>nd</sup> son said he would work and then didn’t. The 1<sup>st</sup> son was meant to be the outcasts of society (tax collectors and prostitutes) who repented under John’s preaching of repentance; and the 2<sup>nd</sup> son was meant to be the religious who said they follow God but did not repent when John preached repentance.*
- *2<sup>nd</sup> – a parable of a vineyard – the landowner rented the vineyard to tenants. But when the landowner sent servants to collect fruit from the tenants – they were killed/mistreated. So, he sent more servants; who were treated the same. When the landowner sent His son, he thought the son would be respected; but he was killed! In the parable, the landowner is God, the religious leaders are the tenants, the servants are God’s prophets and the son is Jesus, God’s Son. God will deal with the wretched tenants (religious leaders) and give the vineyard to others. Why? Because they have not submitted to God’s authority and obeyed him! The others whom the vineyard will be given to are: The Apostles (instead of the religious leaders); the outcasts who have repented; loyal Jews who have rejected Jesus and the Gentiles who repent and believe in Jesus. These others can be summarized as the Jesus’ Church.*
- *It’s this idea of others being included in God’s Kingdom – rather than the Jews – who were supposed to be God’s people – but have rejected God’s Son – that is the theme of the next chapter 22:1-14 – where Jesus tells a parable of a wedding feast – to show who is included in His Kingdom. And the reason for others been included is because of v43 where Jesus says:*

*“Therefore, I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit”.*

### **Read Matthew 22:1-3**

1. Remind yourself what a parable is and its purpose?

*A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.*

*Usually, the story relates to some aspect of the culture of the time – farming; agriculture, weddings; feasts; family relationships etc.*

*The idea of the parable is to:*

- *Make people think about what the deeper meaning is*
- *Make people ask who do the people mentioned in the parable relate to in Jesus’ context*
- *Make people hearing the parable ask themselves –who is God/Jesus in the parable? Who am I in this parable? What correction may I have to make?*

2. What is the Kingdom of Heaven likened to in verse 2?

*It is likened to a wedding banquet prepared by a King.*

3. Who is the wedding banquet for?

*The wedding banquet is for the King’s son. It would be the Wedding of the Year!*

4. What do the invited guests do with the invite?

*The King’s servants went to those invited (presumably they had an invitation earlier a bit like our save the date) and now is the time for the banquet to start - but the invited guests refuse to come.*

### **Read Matthew 22:4-7**

5. How does the King persist in his invitation in verse 4?

*The King sent more servants to the invited guests and told them that the dinner is prepared – oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered and the roast dinner is ready!*

6. What is the response of those invited in verse 5?

*They paid no attention. Some went to work in a field – others to do business.*

7. What do some of the invited guests do in verse 6?

*The rest of the invited guests seized the servants, mistreated them and killed them!*

*This is bizarre; there’s no logical reason for killing the servants for delivering an invitation – yet that’s what the people of Israel did to the prophets – and to Jesus!*

8. How did the King respond to this outrage in verse 7?

*The King was enraged. He sent his army to destroy the murderers and burned their city!*

9. **Ponder:** In the parable: Who is the King? Who is the son? Who are the invited guests?

*The King = God, the Father*

*The Son = The Son of God, Jesus*

*The invited guests = The people of Israel (and especially the religious leaders)*

10. **Ponder:** What event might verse 7 be referring to? (cf. Matthew 23:38; 24:2)

*A prophecy looking forward to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.*

*Matthew 23:38* - Look, your house is left to you desolate.

*Matthew 24:2* - "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

*This is a picture of God's dealing with Israel. They rejected the Father when they refused to obey John the Baptist's preaching; they rejected God's Son when they arrested Him and crucified Him. In His grace and patience, He sent other witnesses. Even the Holy Spirit. But as Stephen says Acts 7:51 – you always resist the Holy Spirit.*

### **Read Matthew 22:8-10**

11. Who are now invited instead?

*The King tells the servants that the wedding banquet is ready but the invited guests did not deserve to come.*

*So, the King tells the servants to go to the street corners and invite 'anyone you find' to the banquet.*

12. What is the result of this invitation?

*Both bad and good were invited and the wedding hall was filled with guests!*

13. **Ponder:** What might the action of going to "the street corners" be likened to, today?

*Going to the street corners means to go to those who are seen as outcasts or inferior: poor, disabled, women, prostitutes and tax collectors.*

*"Going to the street corners" might be likened to evangelism – and inviting people to follow Jesus and join us at our church or another church!*

### **Read Matthew 22:11-14**

14. What custom seems to be in place for wedding guest attire? What does that say about the generosity of the King?

*It seems that the wedding guest had to wear wedding clothes and the assumption is that the host (the King) provided the wedding clothes! In this way, the poor need not be ashamed of their rags and the rich would have no right to boast of their dinner jackets and gowns.*

*Everyone comes into the wedding banquet on equal footing!*

15. What is the problem in verse 11?

*There was one guest (a man) who was not wearing the wedding clothes.*

16. How is the problem confronted in verse 12?

*The King himself asks 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man has no answer! He has blatantly insulted the King; he went there perhaps for the party/food and with interest or respect for the King or His Son!*

17. What does the King order to be done with the guest? Why? (cf. Matthew 21:43)

*The King orders him to be thrown outside into the darkness [a picture of Hell] where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth – i.e., suffering [Matthew 13:42; 24:51; 25:30]. Why – because the guest hasn't shown proper respect for the invitation, nor proper respect to the King. He hasn't taken the invitation or the event seriously. **AND – He thinks he is good enough as he is. A picture of people thinking they get to Heaven on their own efforts – not Jesus' There are tones of Isaiah 64:6 – "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags!"***

18. If this seems harsh; remember the King is God; what type of person does the man without proper wedding clothes represent? And why would this be offensive to God?

*God is holy and we are sinful. We need to humble ourselves before God and take Him seriously and take His invitation seriously. We need to be fair dinkum.*

*The hint of who this man is, is in v10, where it says "good and bad" were invited (just like in the parable of the Net in Matthew 13:47-48). It's a picture of someone who isn't clothed in Jesus' righteousness; who has accepted the invitation and come but hasn't wanted to change their life or drop their sin and cloth themselves in Jesus' holiness. It's a picture of complacency and arrogance.*

*An example of such a man – Judas; he has followed Jesus – he seems fair-dinkum – but he isn't?*

*We must accept what God gives to us – the righteousness of Jesus – and not try to make it our own righteousness and be self-righteous, like the religious leaders and this man without wedding clothes!*

19. **Ponder:** What does Jesus mean by verse 14? (cf. Matthew 21:43)

*It's a picture of how God's foreknowledge and election of people runs side by side with a person's freedom to choose. Some people say they follow Jesus but they don't actually do it – and have thus not been chosen. The reason they are not chosen because they show no spiritual fruit (they have their old dirty clothes on – instead of Jesus' holy clothes).*

*The meaning of the parable is this: God has provided the feast of the Kingdom; the wedding feast for His Son. The invitation goes far and wide. If you reject it, you miss the party. If think you can get in relying on your own fitness, you will be thrown out! Many are **invited**, but few, show, **by their response**, that they are **chosen**!*

*Both divine call and human response are required. Without the latter we do not show ourselves to be amongst God's elect (chosen). So what Jesus means is that many have received*



*the call, but had shown themselves “elect” by responding to it. Alas, the religious leaders and much of Israel, on the whole, fell into the category of the **many** who were called but did not respond.*

20. How is this parable similar to the parable of the two sons? (Matthew 21:28-31)

*The parable of the two sons – points to two types of people – those who repent after saying they wouldn’t obey God – and those who say they follow God but don’t really and don’t repent. Similarly, in this parable, we have two types of people – those who are invited and genuinely take up the invite – and those who invited but don’t come; either because they are not interested or openly reject or are too busy or even come but they’re not fair dinkum.*

21. How is this parable similar to the parable of the tenants? (Matthew 21:33-44)

*In the parable of the tenants and in this parable – there is a son and there are servants and there is rejection. The parable of the tenants is all about the lack of spiritual fruit – whereas this parable is about God’s grace. God’s gracious and generous invitation must go hand in hand with a response of spiritual fruit.*

22. What wedding garment might we have to wear to get into the kingdom? (cf. Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Psalm 30:11; 132:9; Isaiah 61:10)

Galatians 3:27 - *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

1 Corinthians 15:54 - *When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.*

Psalm 30:11 - *You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,*

Psalm 132:9 - *May your priests be clothed with your righteousness; may your faithful people sing for joy.’*

Isaiah 61:10 - *I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

**Read Isaiah 25:1-12 (especially vv6-12)**

23. How does this passage relate to Matthew 22:1-14?

*Vv6-12 are picture of a glorious feast for God’s people.*

*And it’s a feast for ALL peoples (v6)*

*And it’s an abundant feast – aged wine; best of meats and finest wines*

*It’s an occasion when the shroud (veil) that enfolds all peoples/nations – a shroud of evil and sin that prevents many from seeing God – will be lifted (v7)*

*And death will be swallowed up (v8) – as Paul says “Death is swallowed up in victory” by Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:54)*

*The Lord will wipe away every tear from all faces (v8) – and there will come a time when people will no longer be troubled by sin and no longer in a place to rebel (v8)*

*It will be a day of rejoicing in His salvation (v9)*

*Whereas in vv10-12 – God will resolve those who are rebellious.*

*Isaiah 25 relates to Matthew 22 in that the feast in Isaiah is like the Wedding banquet in Matthew – where those who take up the invitation will be saved but those who don't will be trampled upon.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 22:1-14**?

*Take God's invitation very seriously*



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

Psalm 30:11 - *You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy*

A picture of a poor beggar dressed in rags and being invited to the Wedding Banquet and now clothed in joy!



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *The parable shows God's grace. Everyone is invited – good and bad. No one is too bad to get an invite – but they have to respond on God's terms not their own terms (like the man without wedding garments did)*
- b. *Jesus offers us an invitation to repent, believe and follow Him; there is no logical reason to refuse His invitation; yet just like in the parable many do refuse*
- c. *It's an invitation to JOY – refusing the invitation misses the joy offered.*
- d. *Don't make excuses not to come to Jesus – we will regret it!*
- e. *Some of the reasons for not coming are not bad in themselves – people may be "busy" with things of the time/day – and forget about the things of eternity! People may choose the "second best" thing to do, rather than the "best" thing to do.*
- f. *Just like in the Wedding – The King asked people to come to His Son – and everything is ready for the guests – they don't have to prepare their own meal. In the same way, God's invites us to Jesus – and everything has been prepared for us – Jesus has died for sins to be forgiven and He has rose so people can have eternal life. All we have to do is to accept the invitation and come!*
- g. *Many of those invited – paid no attention (literally, made light of it and went their ways). Their reaction makes no sense, but it is an accurate description of the reaction of many to the Gospel of Jesus.*
- h. *It's not enough to accept the invitation – it needs to be a sincere heartfelt acceptance – if we love Jesus, we will obey His commands (John 14:15). We need to clothe ourselves in righteousness (Galatians 3:17). Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6)*



- i. *We must accept what God gives to us – the righteousness of Jesus – and not try to make it our own righteousness and be self-righteous, like the religious leaders and this man without wedding clothes!*
- j. *How sure are we of going to Heaven? It's a warning of both arrogancy and complacency. It's about genuine faith!*
- k. *As Revelation 19:9 says: Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

***Isaiah 25:7-8***

*<sup>7</sup> On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; <sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.*

**Finish in prayer:** Thanking God that through Jesus we have an invitation to His wedding banquet in Heaven (Revelation 19:7-10).

## Study 2 – The King’s Defence – Matthew 22:15-46

*(Sermon on 11-June-23)*

### Read Matthew 22:15-22

#### 1. Who are the Pharisees and the Herodians?

*The **Pharisees** were an influential religious sect within Judaism in the time of Christ and the early church. They were known for their emphasis on personal piety (the word Pharisee comes from a Hebrew word meaning “separated”), their acceptance of oral tradition in addition to the written Law, and their teaching that all Jews should observe all 600-plus laws in the Torah, including the rituals concerning ceremonial purification. The Pharisees were mostly middle-class businessmen and leaders of the synagogues and rabbis. Though they were a minority in the Sanhedrin and held a minority number of positions as priests, they seemed to control the decision-making of the Sanhedrin because they had popular support among the people. The Herodians held political power, and most scholars believe that they were a political party that supported King Herod Antipas, the Roman Empire’s ruler over much of the land of the Jews from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. The Herodians favored submitting to the Herods, and therefore to Rome, for political expediency. This support of Herod compromised Jewish independence in the minds of the Pharisees, making it difficult for the Herodians and Pharisees to unite and agree on anything. But one thing did unite them—opposing Jesus*

#### 2. What are we to make of their approach in verse 16, given what we are told in verse 15?

*They are flattering Jesus and “buttering” Him up.*

*Remember back in Matthew 21 – Jesus has questioned the religious leaders’ authority by cleansing the temple; and then He has told parables: of two sons; tenants in a vineyard and then a parable of a wedding banquet, which all point to them being excluded from the Kingdom.*

*So, they approach Jesus, by trying to set a trap for him – by saying how smart Jesus is and a man of integrity who is not swayed by others and then they hit Jesus with a tricky question. They are basically hiding their loaded question by publicly “sucking up” to Him.*

#### 3. What question **do** they **ask** in verse 17? Why is this question a potential dilemma for Jesus?

*The question they ask: “Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?”.*

*This tax was a poll tax implemented by the Roman Empire on all people.*

*The dilemma: If Jesus opposed paying the tax, He would be in trouble from the Romans and seen as a rebel. If He approved paying the tax, He would be in trouble with the Jews, especially from the Zealots who were fanatical protestors against Roman rule; and would be seen as a collaborator with the Romans. It seemed, whatever answer He gave, He would cause problems for Himself and His ministry.*

#### 4. What does Jesus reveal about Himself in verse 18?

*He knew their thoughts – their evil intent.*

5. Why does he call them hypocrites?

*The word hypocrite in Greek, literally means “an actor playing the part”.*

*The Pharisees and Herodians are playing a part – they pretend to flatter Jesus and butter Him up whilst all the time, they are trying to trap Him and have Him killed.*

6. How does Jesus use the coin to answer the question?

*The coin Jesus uses, is a denarius and it has the image of Caesar. Each ruler minted his own coins and put his image on.*

7. What does Jesus mean by “**give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God**”? (cf. 1 Peter 2:17)

*1 Peter 2:17 - Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.*

*Jesus is making a clean distinction between two kingdoms – and earthly (of humans) and heavenly (of God).*

*Things that belong to the earthly kingdom must remain there and things that belong to God must remain with Him.*

8. **Ponder:** What lessons can Christians learn from Jesus reply here?

*Jesus taught three things by saying this:*

- a. **Christians must honour and obey rulers.** See Romans 13; 1 Peter 2:13-17; 1 Timothy 2:1ff. We must respect our earthly rulers (or elected leaders), obey the law, pay taxes, and pray for all in authority.
- b. **Christians must honour and obey God.** Caesar was not God. Governments should not enforce or restrict religion (as in Acts 5:27-29 where the apostles are told to stop teaching about Jesus – the apostles replied “we must obey God rather than human beings”). The best citizen honours their country because they worship God.
- c. **Humans bear God’s image and owe God everything.** Caesar’s image was on the coin but God’s image is on humans (Genesis 1:26-27). Sin has marred that image but through Jesus, it can be restored (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:27) – like putting on Jesus’ clothes (wedding clothes) from last week’s parable.

*The relationship between religion and government is personal and individual. It is okay for the people of God to serve in government (like Daniel and Joseph of Arimathea).*

*But it is wrong for the government to control the church (which it came close to doing during COVID) or for the church to control government.*

**Read Matthew 22:23-33**

9. Who are the Sadducees?

*The Sadducees, sometimes historically called “Zadokites” or “Tzedukim,” are thought by some to have been founded by a man named Zadok (or Tsadok) in the second century BC. Another school of thought is that the word Sadducee is related to the Hebrew word sadaq (“to be righteous”). The Sadducees were an aristocratic class connected with everything going on in the temple in Jerusalem. They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, including that of chief priests and high priest, and they held the majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin.*

*The Sadducees worked hard to keep the peace by agreeing with the decisions of Rome (Israel at the time was under Roman control), and they seemed to be more concerned with politics than religion. Because they were accommodating to Rome and were the wealthy upper class, they did not relate well to the common man, nor did the common man hold them in high opinion. The commoners related better to those who belonged to the party of the Pharisees. Though the Sadducees held the majority of seats in the Sanhedrin, history indicates that much of the time they had to go along with the ideas of the Pharisaic minority, because the Pharisees were more popular with the masses.*

*Not all priests were Sadducees, but many of them were. The Sadducees preserved the authority of the written Word of God, especially the books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). While they could be commended for this, they definitely were not perfect in their doctrinal views. The following is a brief list of Sadducean beliefs that contradict Scripture:*

- 1. The Sadducees were extremely self-sufficient to the point of denying God’s involvement in everyday life.*
- 2. They denied any resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:23; Mark 12:18–27; Acts 23:8). Due to this belief, the Sadducees strongly resisted the apostles’ preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead.*
- 3. They denied the afterlife, holding that the soul perished at death and therefore denying any penalty or reward after the earthly life.*
- 4. They denied the existence of a spiritual world, i.e., angels and demons (Acts 23:8).*

*Because the Sadducees were basically a political party rather than a religious sect, they were unconcerned with Jesus until they became afraid, He might bring unwanted Roman attention. At that point the Sadducees joined with the Pharisees and conspired to put Christ to death (John 11:48–50; Mark 14:53; 15:1)*

10. What question do the Sadducees ask? On what basis of law are they referring to? (cf. Deuteronomy 25:5-10)

*They ask Jesus a hypothetical question where seven brothers in turn marry the same woman, who is widowed by each of them; so, whose wife will she be, at the resurrection, since all of them were married to her at one stage?*

*This question is based on a provision in law in Deuteronomy 25:5-19. The law is called the “levirate marriage”. The word “levirate” comes from the Latin word levir which means*

*“husband’s brother” and has nothing to do with the tribe of Levi). The purpose of the law was to preserve a man’s name should he die without a male heir. In a nation, like Israel, where family inheritance was a major thing, it was important that each home have an heir. It was considered a disgrace for a man to refuse to raise up a family for his dead brother.*

*The Sadducees based their disbelief of the resurrection here on the fact that no woman could have seven husbands in the future life.*

11. What’s the gist of Jesus’ reply to the Sadducees’ question?

*Jesus says they are wrong on two counts: a) they do know scripture and b) they do not know the power of God! Which inferred that they really did not know God.*

*There will be no need for marriage in Heaven because there will be no death; therefore, it will not be necessary to bear children to replace those who die.*

*Jesus also said people in the resurrection will be “like” angels. He did not say that they would “be” angels, but “like” angels – that is people will be heavenly beings.*

12. **Ponder:** What is it that the Sadducees don’t understand or refuse to believe in verses 31 and 32? What does Jesus mean by saying “**God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob**”?

*Jesus not only corrected their thinking about life in the resurrection but He also corrected their claim that there was no resurrection. He does it by referring to Moses – because He knows that they only accept the first 5 books of the Bible. He reminds them of Exodus 3:6 where God said to Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob”. He did not say “I was the God of Abraham...”. By saying “I am”, Jesus made it clear that these three men of faith are alive not dead and therefore “God is not the God of the dead but of the living!”*

13. What is the reaction of the crowd in verse 33? Why?

*The crowd were astonished because of His incredible teaching and the wise way He had answered.*

**Read Matthew 22:34-40**

14. Who comes on the scene now? Why?

*The Pharisees (perhaps having enjoyed the embarrassment of their “friends” the Sadducees) now come back on the scene.*

15. What question do they ask Jesus? What is their motive for asking this question?

*The question was*

*Their motive in v35 is to again “test” Him.*

*This was not a new question; the scribes had been debating this for centuries.*

*There were 613 commandments in the law, 248 positive and 365 negative.*

*No person could ever hope to know and fully obey all these commandments. So, to make it easier, the experts in the law divided them in to “heavy” (important) and “light” (“unimportant”). A person could major on the “heavy” commandments and not worry about the “trivial” ones.*

*The problem with that thinking is that you only need to break ONE commandment, heavy or light, and you’re guilty (see James 2:10).*

16. How does Jesus answer their question?

*Jesus quotes the “Shema” from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 – Shema comes from the Hebrew word “to hear” – since the verse begins “Hear, O Israel”*

*Jesus says “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”*

*But love for God cannot be divorced from love for one’s neighbour, so Jesus also quotes from Leviticus 19:17 and put it on the same level as the Shema. And He says all the Law and prophets hang of these two commandments*

17. How does Jesus’ answer summarize the 10 commandments? How could His answer be summarized down to one word?

*Jesus summarizes the 10 commandments down to loving God and loving others.*

*The first 4 commandments are about loving God and the last 6 are about loving others.*

*In fact, it all boils down to ONE word – LOVE.*

*Jesus had another deeper meaning in His answer.*

*When Jesus claimed to be God, many opposed Him because they could not believe it was right to worship a creature. Jesus received worship and did not rebuke those who did. Was this idolatry? No! Because Jesus is God.*

*But if Jesus’ answer was that the Law commands us to Love God and love our neighbour, then it would not be wrong for the Jews to love Jesus. As Jesus says in John 8:42 “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me” The problem was, they accepted the authority of the Law but refused to obey it and apply it to their lives (like many today).*

**Now it’s Jesus’ turn to ask a question; Read Matthew 22:41-46**

18. What question does Jesus ask the Pharisees? (cf. Matthew 16:13-15)

*Jesus does not ask the question He asked His disciples “Who do people say I am?” (Matthew 16:13-15); instead, He asks “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son, is He?”*

19. Why is Jesus asking this question?

*To get them to think about who He really is.*



20. What reply do the Pharisees give in verse 42? Why? (cf. 2 Samuel 7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 1:31-33)

*Quite rightly as experts in the Law, they understood Old Testament scripture to refer to the Messiah under the term "Son of David". So that is how they reply.*

21. What does Jesus confirm about His identity? Where does He quote from? (Psalm 110:1)  
*Jesus quotes from Psalm 110:1 and says that King David who wrote the Psalm is speaking by the Spirit when David says:*

*"The Lord (YHWH) said to my Lord (Adonai) "sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet".*

*Every orthodox Jewish scholar interpreted that this verse referred to the Messiah (God's chosen anointed ONE) and only the Messiah could sit at the right hand of God.*

*Jesus' question to them is "If the Messiah is David's son (as they answered) then how could the Messiah also be David's Lord?"*

*There is only one answer to that question: As God, the Messiah is David's Lord – and as Man, the Messiah is David's son!*

22. What is Jesus' reasoning in verse 45? (cf. Revelation 22:16; Romans 1:3-4)

*Psalm 110:1 teaches both the deity and humanity of the Messiah (Jesus). He is David's Lord AND He is David's son!*

*Revelation 22:16 – "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."*

*Romans 1:3-4 – Regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, <sup>4</sup> and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

23. What do Jesus' questioners do in verse 46? Why?

*They were silent. They dare not question Him again because He'd not only answered their testing questions with authority but had also revealed His true identity with His own question and explanation.*

24. Read the following passages - how do they relate to Matthew 22:1-14?

### **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**

*This the levirate marriage provision in the law for deceased man's name to continue by his widow marrying her deceased husband's brother. This is the law that the Sadducees were referring to, to try to trap Jesus and disprove the resurrection.*

**Exodus 3:6**

*Jesus refers to this verse when replying to the Sadducees to make the point that God is a God of the living, not the dead.*

**Deuteronomy 6:1-9**

*This passage introduces the “Shema” (Hear, O Israel). The Israelites are to impress the Shema on their children – talk about them at home, when walking on the road, when they lie down and get up; even tie them on their hands and foreheads; write them on their door frames and gates!*

*Jesus uses the Shema to answer the question from the Pharisees as to which is the greatest commandment in the Law; Jesus says the Law boils down to loving God completely.*

**Leviticus 19:18**

*Leviticus 19:18 says: love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.*

*Jesus uses the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and this verse to summarize the Law and the Prophets down to “loving God and loving others”*

**Psalms 110:1**

*The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”*

*This verse is the one Jesus refers to when He asks His question about whose son the Messiah is. By using this verse, Jesus shows that as the Messiah – He is both David’s Lord and David’s son. Jesus is both deity and human.*

**What’s the BIG IDEA of Matthew 22:15-46?**

*Jesus confirms His identity as the Messiah who is infallible and taught with authority  
A contrast between 2 Kingdoms – Heaven and Earth*



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

- ➔ How does this passage **apply to your life**?
- a. Christians must honour and obey God, first and foremost, before humans.*
  - b. Christians must honour and obey rulers/leaders/governments. See Romans 13; 1 Peter 2:13-17; 1 Timothy. We must pray for our government and those in authority over us.*
  - c. Humans bear God’s image and owe God everything. We must show that we are God’s image bearers.*
  - d. We must not speculate about our resurrected life in Heaven and rest on the authority of God’s Word. We must not think of our resurrected life in terms of our earthly life or as an extension on our earthly life; it is different!*

- e. We must live a life that loves God and loves our neighbours. That is the foundation to living a life that pleases God. If we love God, we will love our neighbour!*
- f. Jesus is not just King David's Lord; He is our Lord and must be Lord of our lives!*
- g. Jesus answers three difficult questions. He dealt with the relationships: between religion and government (church and state); between this life and the resurrected life; and between God and our neighbours.*
- h. In verse 46 "no one dared to ask Him any more questions". But neither did they have the courage to face the truth and act upon it! Making a decision for Jesus is literally a matter of life and death. The evidence is there for all to examine. We can examine it defensively and attackingly and miss the truth. Or we can examine it honestly and humbly, and discover the truth, believe and be saved. The religious leaders (and many today) were blinded by tradition, position, and selfish pride that they could not and would not see the truth and receive it.*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

<sup>32</sup> 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

**Finish in prayer:** Ask God to help us discern what is human and what is divine. Thank God that we believe in a living God. Ask God through His spirit to help us to keep His commandments and love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; and love our neighbour as ourself. Ask God to help us make Jesus the Lord of our life.

### Study 3 – A Warning Against Hypocrisy – Matthew 23:1-12

*(Sermon on 18-June-23)*

#### Read Matthew 23:1-4

1. Who is Jesus talking to and who is He talking about?

*Jesus is talking to the crowds and his disciples and is talking about the teachers of the law and the Pharisees.*

2. What does Jesus mean in verse 2 by “**Moses’ seat**”?

*Moses’ seat is a special seat of honor in the synagogue where the authoritative teacher of the law sat. The seat was used by the religious leaders to make judgments concerning spiritual and civil matters. The teacher in practice exercised the authority of Moses, in whom the written and the main lines of the oral law were regarded as originating.*

3. What does Jesus tell the crowd they **should do** and what they **shouldn’t do** in verse 3?

*The crowd must be careful to do everything the teachers of the law and Pharisees tell them to do but they must not do what they do.*

*This is a clear definition of hypocrisy: The teachers of the law and the Pharisees are saying one thing but doing another!*

4. What does Jesus say the problem is in verse 4? (cf. Luke 11:46; Acts 15:10; Galatians 6:13)

*The teachers of the law and the Pharisees weighed the people down with heavy burdened rules and expected more of others, than of themselves.*

*The MSG puts it this way: “Instead of giving you God’s Law as food and drink by which you can banquet on God, they package it in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They seem to take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn’t think of lifting a finger to help.”*

*Luke 11:46 - Jesus replied, “And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.*

*An example of this type of legalism occurred in the early church, some people insisted upon the Gentile believers “unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved”. But Peter said in Acts 15:10 – “Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?”*

*The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 6:13 – “Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh”*

5. **Ponder:** How is Jesus different to the Teachers of the Law and Pharisees? (cf. Matthew 11:28-30)

*Instead, Jesus offers grace in Matthew 11:28-30: <sup>28</sup>“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

*“‘Come’; he drives none away; he calls them to himself. His favorite word is ‘Come.’ Not, go to Moses — ‘Come unto me.’ To Jesus himself we must come, by a personal trust. Not to doctrine, ordinance, nor ministry are we to come first; but to the personal Saviour.” (Spurgeon)*

*Jesus directed His call to those who were burdened. He called those who sensed they must come to Him to relieve their need instead of living in self-sufficiency.*

*According to Carson, labor implies the burdens we take upon ourselves, and heavy laden implies the burdens others put upon us.*

*Heavy laden suggests the same thought as Matthew 23:4, where Jesus spoke against the religious leaders of His day as those who bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders.*

*Jesus made a wonderful offer, inviting us to take His yoke upon you and learn from Him. We must come as disciples to learn, willing to be guided by His yoke — not merely to receive something.*

### **Matthew 23:5-10**

6. How does Jesus describe the Teachers of the Law and Pharisees in verses 5 to 7? (cf. Luke 11:43; 14:7; 20:46)

*He describes them as “show-offs”*

*They want everyone to see them (v5)*

*They have wide phylacteries and long tassels, so people notice them (v5)*

*They love the best seats of honour at banquets and synagogues (v6)*

*They love to be greeted in the marketplace and called “Rabbi” (v7)*

7. What are they not to be called in verse 8? Why?

*They are not to be called Rabbi – because there is only one Teacher and because they are all brothers (i.e., equal)*

*“In the Church of Christ, all titles and honors which exalt men and give occasion for pride are here forbidden.” (Spurgeon)*

*From other parts of the Bible, we can see that Jesus did not intend this as an absolute prohibition, rather as speaking to the heart that loves, collects, and cherishes such titles. We know this because, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, godly men spoke of themselves with some of these titles.*

*Jesus was called Rabbi: Matthew 26:25 and 26:49; John 1:38 and 3:26.*

*Paul called himself a father but did not insist on being called that: 1 Corinthians 4:15, Philippians 2:22.*

*Paul called other Christians his children: Galatians 4:19.*

*Paul called himself a teacher: 1 Timothy 2:7, 2 Timothy 1:11.*

*What Jesus is teaching against is a) having great affection for titles and seeking after them; and b) using the title to have absolute power over others.*

*“We must say that the risen Christ is as displeased with those in his church who demand unquestioning submission to themselves and their opinions and confuse a reputation for showy piety with godly surrender to his teachings as he ever was with any Pharisee.” (Don Carson)*

8. What does Jesus say about our Heavenly Father in verse 9?

*We are not to call anyone “father” on Earth in such a way, as having the same spiritual authority as our Heavenly Father. We have only one spiritual father!*

9. What are they not to be called in verse 10? Why?

*One may have a father or teachers in a normal human sense, but should not regard them in a sense that gives them excessive spiritual honor or authority.*

*Why? Because there is only one supreme Father: God; and one supreme teacher: the Messiah.*

### **Read Matthew 23:11-12**

10. What’s the solution for the Teachers of the Law and Pharisees’ hypocrisy and false concept of greatness?

*V11 – the greatest among you must be a servant*

*V12 – those who exalt themselves will be humbled – and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

*The upside-down kingdom – first will be last, last will be first!*

*Normally, people estimate greatness by how many people serve and honor them. Jesus reminded His followers that in His kingdom it should be different, and that we should estimate greatness by how we serve and honor others.*

11. **Ponder:** Who are the Teachers of Law and Pharisees really serving?

*They were self-serving and self-righteous (they themselves declared they were right with God and approved by God)*



12. **Ponder:** What does true greatness look like? (cf. John 3:27-30 and John 13:12-17)

*In John 3:27-30 - John the Baptist clearly puts his ministry in perspective. John is a 'friend of the bridegroom' and Jesus is the "bridegroom". John finds great joy in knowing the "bridegroom" is here – and so John's ministry (like ours) is for Jesus to become greater (Jesus is to be elevated and promoted) and for us to become less. It's all about Jesus, not about us or about how good we look or who follows us or what titles or status or authority we have.*

*In John 13:12-17, Jesus washes His disciples' feet and sets them an example for them to follow. It's an example of servant hood. Jesus says "no servant is greater than the master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent Him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them".*

*Jesus' point is: So, if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. If it's good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for us!*

13. Read the following passages - how do they relate to Matthew 23:1-12?

#### **Exodus 13:9**

*This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that this law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand.*

*This verse refers to the phylacteries on their foreheads (Matthew 23:5) – but the law is to not just be on their foreheads for show; it must be on their lips too.*

#### **Deuteronomy 6:8**

*Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.*

*This verse refers to the phylacteries on their foreheads (Matthew 23:5)*

#### **Numbers 15:38-39**

*"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes."*

*This verse refers to the tassels on their garments (Matthew 23:5) – but the tassels were not for show and not meant to be made longer and longer; they were there so that the people would remember God's commands and OBEY them!*

#### **Deuteronomy 22:12**

*Make tassels on the four corners of the cloak you wear.*

*This verse also refers to the tassels on their garments (Matthew 23:5)*

### **Ezekiel 21:26**

Ezekiel is talking of how God will use Babylon as His sword of judgement and Ezekiel warns: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: The lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low."

*This verse also refers to Matthew 23:12 when Jesus says "those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted"*

### **Jeremiah 9:23-24**

This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

*Here, the Lord warns against boasting and showing off about our wisdom, strength or wealth. Instead, boast about the only thing that is important; that we have the understand to KNOW God and to know how kind, just and righteous He is!*

*This relates to Matthew 23:1-12 in that the teachers of the law were boasting and showing off about themselves and not about God.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 23:1-12**?

*A warning about hypocrisy and self-righteousness!*



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?



How does this passage **apply to your life**?

- a. *We must practice what we preach; if we say we are a Christian we must behave like one, in thought, word and deed.*
- b. *Instead of being burdened by heavy legalism, we must come to Jesus and take His yoke and learn from Him; and He is a gentle and humble in heart.*
- c. *The demands of God are greater than our ability to perform them; therefore, we need to abandon the idea we can do it on our own and come to depend on the one who can; our Lord Jesus! The Law exposes our sin – so that we come to the ONE who can help us – as Jesus says "apart from Me, you can do nothing!" (John 15:5).*
- d. *It is from Jesus we get rest for our "souls" – not legalism.*
- e. *We are not meant to be "boasting" and to be "show-offs" but humble like Jesus.*
- f. *We are to concentrate on being good not looking good*
- g. *We are not to have hearts that loves collects and cherishes titles as it only leads to pride and self-righteousness*

- h. We are to be humble servants seeking to serve others rather than putting ourselves on pedestals and expecting to be served. We must avoid self-serving and self-righteous behaviour.*
- i. We must become less and Jesus must become more. It's all about Jesus, not about us and about how good we look or who follows us or what titles or status or authority we have.*
- j. Instead of "saying" we are Christians – let's "do" it – let's go and wash some feet. Jesus' point is: if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. If it's good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for us!*
- k. Boast and show off about God; not ourselves!*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**V12 -** *The greatest among you will be your servant.*

**Finish in prayer:** Ask God to reveal any pride or arrogance in our hearts. Ask God to give us humble hearts and to give us opportunities to serve Him and serve others.

## Study 4 – Woe to you... – Matthew 23:13-39

*(Sermon on 25-June-23)*

### Read Matthew 23:13-14

1. Who is Jesus talking about? What is a woe?

*Jesus is talking to the **Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees**. He calls them hypocrites (literally actors playing a stage role).*

*Woe in Greek [οὐαί] means an exclamation of grief; alas!*

*In Dictionary: woe describes things that cause sorrow or distress. Can also mean troubles.*

2. Describe the first woe?

*Jesus calls them hypocrites. They are so proud and arrogant, as we saw last week, that they keep themselves out of the Kingdom and worse still keep others out. The sense of the Greek is that people are trying to get into the Kingdom and they cannot! It's bad enough to keep yourself out of the Kingdom but worse still when you stand in the way of others. By teaching their man-made traditions and human rules as being more important than God's Word, the religious leaders took away "the key of knowledge" and closed the door of salvation on people! (Luke 11:52)*

**Compare Matthew 5:3 – "blessed are those poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom"**

**The religious leaders see no need to repent and follow Jesus; they are proud in spirit and don't see their spiritual poverty. And so, they don't get in the kingdom and stop overs.**

**There's an extra woe** in V14 – which is not in most manuscripts but is found in Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47.

**Mark 12:40 – They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely**

**Luke 20:47 - They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely**

*Instead of mourning over their sins and mourning with needy widows, the Pharisees took advantage of people in order to rob them. They used their religion as a "cloak of covetousness" (1 Thes 2:5)*

*Also, their long, falsely spiritual prayers were used to build a false spiritual image.*

**Compare Matthew 5:4 – "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted". The religious leaders are not mourning over their sins or mourning with widows.**

### Read Matthew 23:15

3. Describe the second woe?

*Jesus again calls them they are hypocrites!*

*They are out to convert (proselytize) people to their legalistic system rather than introducing them to the Living God. Instead of saving souls, the Pharisees were condemning souls.*

*Their goal was not to turn people away from their sins against God but to convert them to their way/system.*

*They are like the Mormons/JW's of today, who are zealous messengers but with a false message!*

*A "child of hell" is equivalent of "child of the devil" which is what Jesus called the Pharisees (Matthew 12:34; 23:33; John 8:44). A "child of the devil" is a person who has rejected God's way of salvation (righteousness through faith in Jesus). Such a person parades their own self-righteousness through whatever religious system they belong to.*

*The point is the convert shows double the zeal if the converter/leader and this double devotion only leads to double the condemnation.*

*"Jesus did not criticize the fact of the Pharisees' extensive missionary effort but its results...they 'out-Phariseed' the Pharisees." (Don Carson)*

*How tragic that people can think they are going to Heaven when actually they are going to Hell.*

***Compare Matthew 5:5 – "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the Earth". Instead of being meek [quiet, gentle, submissive] and inheriting the Earth – the religious leaders are proud of their man-made self-righteous religious system and they are sending people to Hell!***

#### **Read Matthew 23:16-22**

4. Describe the third woe?

*This time, Jesus calls them "blind guides". In other words, they are leading people away the wrong way and away from God!*

*Jesus challenges them on the oaths/promises they make.*

*Out of obedience to God's Word they refused to swear by the name of God (Exodus 20:7). Yet they had an elaborate system of oaths; so that they can make promise whilst keeping their fingers crossed behind their back.*

*The Pharisees were blind to the true values of life. Their priorities were confused. These blind guides and blind men are arrogantly swearing by the gold of the temple rather than the temple which makes the gold sacred and swearing on the gift on the altar rather than the altar which makes the gift sacred. They are demonstrating their preoccupation with the man-made rather than the things of God.*

*The gold in the temple is moulded by man and has become their focus rather than the focus being on the Temple; the dwelling place of God.*

*Similarly, they focus on the gift at the altar; the human response, rather than the altar itself which represents God's interests.*

*The practice of Corban (Matthew 15:1-9 and Mark 7:10-13) – is a good example of this.*

***Compare Matthew 5:6 – "Blessed are those who hunger and first for righteousness" – the religious leaders were not seeking the righteousness of God; they were self-righteous. They were greedy for gain, they worked a "religious system" that permitted them to rob God (through things like Corban) and rob others (like widows) and still maintain their reputations?***

**Note too: Jesus already condemned swearing oaths and said that they should let their 'yes' be 'yes' and their 'no' be 'no' (Matthew 5:33-37)**

### **Read Matthew 23:23-24**

5. Describe the fourth woe?

*Again, Jesus calls them hypocrites.*

*The Pharisees majored on minors. They had rules for every minute area of life, whilst at the same time they forgot the important things. It's usually the case that legalists are sticklers for details but blind to major principles.*

*In their case, they are sticklers for giving a tenth [tithing – Leviticus 27:30 and Deuteronomy 14:22ff] of their spices – mint, dill and cumin – but blind to great principles like justice, mercy and faithfulness.*

*A good example of their hypocrisy. They thought nothing of condemning an innocent man, yet they were afraid to enter Pilate's judgment hall [Gentile home] lest they were defiled (John 18:28)*

*Jesus did not condemn their tithing – v23 – He said they should have practiced the latter (justice, mercy and faithfulness) without neglecting the former (the tithing).*

*Jesus in v24 uses the analogy of straining a gnat and swallowing a camel.*

*In Jewish culture wine was strained through a cloth to capture any unclean insects (like gnats). Jesus is saying they take great care in minor details – not to swallow an unclean gnat. But completely miss major principles like justice, mercy and faithfulness – and so in effect swallow a huge unclean camel!*

**Compare Matthew 5:7 – “Blessed are the merciful for they will for they will be shown mercy”. The religious leaders were not showing mercy. We've seen what they thought of the outcasts (sinners) of society – they were condemned as cursed by God; rather than sinners needing to be saved. They haven't shown mercy – so they won't be given any!**

### **Read Matthew 23:25-26**

6. Describe the fifth woe?

*Again, Jesus calls them hypocrites. They focus on the outside of the cup or dish being clean, but inside it's all dirty. Similarly, the religious leaders look good on the outside but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgent.*

**Compare with Matthew 5:8 – “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”. The religious leaders are defile in their heart, not pure.**

### **Read Matthew 23:27-28**

7. Describe the sixth woe?



*Jesus uses another illustration to demonstrate the state of the religious leaders' hearts. He calls them whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.*

*Jewish people were careful not to touch dead bodies or anything related to the dead, because that would make them ceremonially clean (Numbers 19:11ff). They would whitewash the tombs in case someone accidentally got defiled; this was especially done at Passover time.*

*As Proverbs 4:23 says – “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything flows from it”.*

*D.L. Moody used to say “If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself”. The religious leaders lived for their reputation; not their character.*

***Again, compare with Matthew 5:8 – “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”. The religious leaders are defile in their heart, not pure.***

### **Read Matthew 23:29-36**

9. Describe the seventh woe? What prophecy does Jesus make here? Who are the prophets and sages and teachers, Jesus refers to?

*Jesus again calls them hypocrites. He says they hypocritically build and embellish tombs for the very prophets that their spiritual forefathers killed and pretend that they are not like their forefathers; and that if they were alive back then, they wouldn't have killed those prophets. Jesus knows their hearts and that they will continue to reject and kill prophets; including Jesus Himself.*

***Compare Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be children of God”. Whereas the religious leaders are not peacemakers, they are murderers. They are not children of God, but children of the devil (see v15).***

*Jesus then goes on to call them snakes and vipers (remember Satan is the serpent!). And says they are not going to escape Hell. Jesus describes how in the past and present, prophets, sages and teachers have been sent and the religious leaders have had them killed, crucified or flogged (basically persecuted). The same spirit and disposition of those who murdered Abel to Zechariah (basically all the Old Testament martyrs) lives on in the religious leaders of Jesus' day!*

***Compare Matthew 5:10-12 – “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”.***

***The religious leaders were not the persecuted; they were the persecutors!***

### **Read Matthew 23:37-39**

10. How does Jesus feel about Jerusalem in verse 37? What have they done wrong?

*Jesus is very sad about Jerusalem; not angry.*

*They have killed the prophets and stoned those sent to them.*

*All Jesus has ever wanted is to gather His children (the people of Israel) together, like a hen gathers her chicks; but they were not willing to accept Him. As Jesus says in John 5:40 “yet you would not come to me to have life”*

11. What judgment does Jesus describe in verse 38? When did this promised judgment get fulfilled?

*The judgment is “their house will be left desolate”.*

*This judgment took place in AD70.*

12. What promise did Jesus make in verse 39? What event is He referring to?

*Jesus says that they will not see Him again until He returns, when they will say what they said on Palm Sunday “Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord”.*

*Jesus will return; see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. And there is still hope for Israel; see **Romans 11:25-27**.*

### **Read Isaiah 56:9-12**

13. How does this relate to Matthew 23:13-39

*Here in Isaiah 56:9-12 – we have a promise that God will judge the blind leaders of God’s people.*

*V9 – all the beasts are invited to this judgment to devour God’s enemies*

*V10-11 - The leaders of God’s people are blind; judgment is on the way, but they don’t see it and warn God’s people. They don’t fulfill their purpose as watchmen. They are ignorant, like dumb dogs, simply sleeping. These unfaithful shepherds only look after their own interests and look for their own gain.*

*V12 – These unfaithful shepherds have a terrible attitude. Worse than being passively ignorant and blind, they are actively wicked. As judgment approaches, they simply drink and get drunk. They say “Tomorrow will be like today or even better”. It’s all about self-indulgence. Their blind faith in progress has replaced a reasoned faith in God. They are ripe for judgment and unprepared for judgment. Since the picture of Isaiah 56:9 relates to the pictures in the Book of Revelation regarding the return of Jesus, we can see this as a **picture of the leaders of the unprepared world — perhaps even the unprepared church** — at the return of Jesus.*

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Matthew 23:13-39**?

**Beware of Spiritual Blindness**



Give a **light globe** moment you experienced in this passage?

- ➔ How does this passage **apply to your life?**
- a. *These woes (7 or 8) are direct contrast to the 8 beatitudes in Matthew 5:5-12*
  - b. *Do we see our spiritual poverty and need for Jesus – or do we think we’re okay?*
  - c. *Are we mourning over our sins? Are we mourning with those who grieve (weeping with those who weep – Romans 12:15)*
  - d. *Do we need to repent of any pride and humble ourselves before Jesus? As we evangelize are we making sure we are a sign-post to Jesus – and not a sign-post to ourselves?*
  - e. *Are we hungering and thirsting for God’s righteousness? Do we need to repent of any self-righteousness?*
  - f. *Are we majoring on minors and missing the big principles of justice, mercy and faithfulness?*
  - g. *As Proverbs 4:23 says – “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything flows from it”. Are we guarding our hearts – what we watch, what we read, what we hear, the company we keep?*
  - h. *As children of God, we must be peacemakers!*
  - i. *Do we pray for those who are persecuted for Jesus’ sake?*
  - j. *Do we lament over those who are lost from God or who reject Jesus; that God would change their hearts?*
  - k. ***In contrast to the blind shepherds of Israel – we have Jesus, the Good Shepherd!***
  - l. *Are we prepared or unprepared for Jesus’ return?*

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

*<sup>37</sup> “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.*

**Finish in prayer:** Ask God to reveal any spiritual blindness in our lives. Ask God to help us to cling to the Good Shepherd and follow Him.

**Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke**  
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**Resources:**

The MacArthur Study Bible

New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)

Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible (G. Campbell Morgan)

The Message of Matthew (Michael Green)

Focus on the Bible: Matthew (Charles Price)

Matthew Volume 1 (Barclay)

Be Loyal Following the King of Kings NT Commentary on Matthew (Warren W. Wiersbe)

**Notes/Prayer Points**