

1 Peter 1:8. Whom [a reference to Christ] you have not seen [these Christians had never seen Christ], you love, and though you do not see Him now, but keep on believing [faith perception and application to maintain their love], you greatly rejoice with inexpressible happiness and with having received glory [that goes on forever: by glorifying God at spiritual maturity and at passing of Evidence Testing, you also receive glory both in time and in eternity],

ὃν οὐκ ἰδόντες ἀγαπᾶτε, εἰς ὃν ἄρτι μὴ ὁρῶντες πιστεύοντες δὲ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε χαρᾷ ἀνεκλαλήτῳ καὶ δεδοξασμένῃ,

Matthew Chapter 23

Verses 1-33: the indictment of religion namely the indictment of the scribes and Pharisees:

Verses 34-39: the Temple Discourse terminates with the curse on Jerusalem:

23:1. Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,

Τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐλάλησεν τοῖς ὄχλοις καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ

Having addressed the powerful groups in Judea namely the Herodians, Sadducees and the Pharisees, He now turns his attention to the people in general and to his disciples.

23:2. saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat [the seat of the highest professorship of the Mosaic Law and Old Testament theology]

λέγων, Ἐπὶ τῆς Μωϋσέως καθέδρας ἐκάθισαν οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι.

The scribes are the theologians and teachers of the Mosaic Law. The Pharisees are taken from the scribes to sit in the Sanhedrin. They are legalists who distort the Mosaic Law. The scribes write and teach this legalism, the Pharisees execute this religious legalistic system in both the Sanhedrin and elsewhere and teach as well.

23:3. Therefore, whatever they communicate [introducing a 3rd Class Conditional Sentence] **to you** [about the Mosaic Law which is accurate], **execute** [in your life] **and guard** [in your soul], **but stop executing on the basis of their works** [the legalistic distortions of the Mosaic Law]; **for they communicate** [the Mosaic Law], **and do not do** [they do not execute the Mosaic Law correctly because of their legalistic distortions].

πάντα οὖν ὅσα ἐὰν εἴπωσιν ὑμῖν ποιήσατε καὶ τηρεῖτε, κατὰ δὲ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν μὴ ποιεῖτε· λέγουσιν γὰρ καὶ οὐ ποιοῦσιν.

Obey the Mosaic Law, but don't obey the distortions of the Mosaic Law.

Eight points in connection with this verse:

1. The works and production of the scribes and the Pharisees will be described in chapter 23.
2. By way of summary, they include three things: legalism, religionism, externalism (ritual without reality).
3. These professors of theology had authority but this authority was accompanied by incompetence. They could not handle their subject, the Mosaic Law.
4. The only way to obey the Mosaic Law is to start with the cross. This can be seen from an analysis of the three parts of the Law namely Codex 1, Codex 2, and Codex 3.

5. When the unbeliever or the legalist teaches the Law, he simply distorts it into a system of religion and ritualism. This in turn causes hypocrisy.

6. These religious distortions of the Mosaic Law do not provide an excuse to ignore or reject the Law. It isn't the Law that is wrong, it is the legalists misinterpreting the Law.

7. While Jesus does not condone the legalistic perversions of the Pharisees, He does demand an observance of the Law in its true Biblical perspective. (Remember that Jesus lived in the age of the Law.)

8. The scribes distorted the Law into a system of salvation and spirituality by works, rather than putting the true emphasis on the Law namely that man is spiritually bankrupt and needs a savior.

23:4 For they [the scribes and Pharisees] **bind heavy and hard-to-carry burdens** [extra biblical taboos] **and lay them on men's shoulders** [they require everyone to observe these taboos]. **But they themselves will not move them** [the burdens] **with one of their fingers** [they make no effort to remove these legalistic burdens].

δεσμεύουσιν δὲ φορτία βαρέα καὶ ἐπιτιθέασιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὤμους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, αὐτοὶ δὲ τῷ δακτύλῳ αὐτῶν οὐ θέλουσιν κινῆσαι αὐτά.

The scribes and Pharisees, religious taskmasters, are being compared to the Egyptian taskmasters. They were just as callous and cruel as their former Egyptian taskmasters if not more so.

Illustrations of some of these burdens:

The Bible says, “Remember to keep holy [to set apart extra time for prayer, thanksgiving, Bible study and meditation] the Sabbath Day.” In other words, the Sabbath was instituted to spend one's extra time in meditation and in remembrance of the Lords' gracious provisions. However, this was distorted by all kinds of taboos which forbade doing

something. Keep in mind that there is no spiritual merit in not doing something. It is relationship with the members of the Godhead that is important. However, since these religious leaders had no relationship with God, they emphasized doing something or in this case not doing something. According to the Mishnah it was unlawful to carry food from one house to another on the Sabbath for that was construed as work. An egg could not be boiled on the Sabbath nor could it be put near a hot kettle, boiled in a hot cloth or placed in sand heated by the sun. (The Jews cleverly tried to get around the taboo of not boiling an egg) In the end, one had to eat his eggs raw. It was unlawful to light or extinguish lights on the Sabbath. So, if one needed to get around at night, he would have to stumble around in the dark. One could not wear ornaments on the Sabbath for they were considered burdens. One could not tie or untie sandals on the Sabbath- too much effort. It was illegal to fix a leaky barrow of water. You had to just watch your family's water disappear which water you had carried some distance. You could not stop the bleeding of a wound on the Sabbath. Just had to let the poor fellow die. False teeth or gold plugs could not be taken-out or put-in on the Sabbath – too much work. All weaving, dyeing of clothes, cooking etc. was forbidden. A radish could be dipped into salt, but not too long since that would imply pickling and pickling was forbidden on the Sabbath. Dried mud on a dress might be crushed once and shaken off, but the dress must not be cleaned or washed on the Sabbath. These are just a few of the ridiculous taboos that these religious legalists dreamed up.

We have our taboos regarding Sunday. You shall not work nor allow others to work on the Sunday-Sabbath. Children and families shall not play on the Sunday-Sabbath etc.

23:5. But they do all their works in order to be seen of men [motivated by approbation lust]. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders [hems] of their garments.

πάντα δὲ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν ποιοῦσιν πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· πλατύνουσιν γὰρ τὰ φυλακτήρια αὐτῶν καὶ μεγαλύνουσιν τὰ κράσπεδα,

What you wear doesn't make you a believer or spiritual as a believer. The phylactery was a leather pouch in which was put three pieces of paper with a Scripture verse on each piece written in very fine handwriting. The four Scripture verses were as follows: Exodus 13:1-10, 13:11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21. The pouch was tied with seven straps to the forehead, or wrist and less frequently on the ankle. Furthermore, they had a gold band around their robes with gold knots tied to it. Each gold knot represented a certain amount of merit points for prayer etc. By application, crosses, statues, amulets, pictures are no substitute for regeneration and spiritual growth.

23:6. And they love the first couch [a couch of most importance usually in the upper most rooms] **at feasts, and the chief seats** [the best seats at the best tables] **in the synagogues,**

φιλοῦσιν δὲ τὴν πρωτοκλισίαν ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις καὶ τὰς πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς

Religious people love the superficialities of life. They had big banquets where they all got up and said something nice about each other. When one first entered the banquet hall, the first room next to the door is where the peons sat, the non-religious leaders. Then you climbed a few steps and entered another room where the next social level sat namely those going up the chain. As one climbed, he would eventually get to the head table where the religious hierarchy sat. The same occurred in their synagogues. Thus, these religious leaders obtained prominence and approbation for a short time in life.

23:7. and they loved the greetings in the market-places, and to be called, Rabbi, by men.

καὶ τοὺς ἀσπασμοὺς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς καὶ καλεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, Ῥαββί.

How a Jewish Rabbi satisfied his lust for approbation and power. A Rabbi was a person who had graduated from one of the two theological seminaries and gained a degree equivalent to being a theological professor. These Rabbis liked to be recognized by people which again appealed to their approbation lust. Also, since the Rabbis had a lot of influence and power, it satisfied this lust as well.

Verses 8-10: a parenthesis.

23:8 But you [Jewish believers] **must not be called Rabbi** [the one with the final authority in Scripture], **for One is your professor** [Christ], **and you are all brothers.**

ὁμεῖς δὲ μὴ κληθῆτε, Ῥαββί, εἷς γάρ ἐστιν ὑμῶν ὁ διδάσκαλος, πάντες δὲ ὁμεῖς ἀδελφοί ἐστε.

Jesus Christ has the final authority regarding Scripture, not the Rabbi. Now since the Bible is the thinking of Christ, it is the final authority.

23:9. And call no one [no religious person] **your father on the earth,** **for One is your Father in Heaven.**

καὶ πατέρα μὴ καλέσητε ὑμῖν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, εἷς γάρ ἐστιν ὑμῶν ὁ πατὴρ ὁ οὐράνιος.

Since God the Father is the author of the plan, and the one to whom we address our prayers, we call him, Father. Father carries the concept of absolute authority.

23:10. Nor be called masters [to guide according to a norm or standard], **for One is your** [spiritual] **master, even Christ.**

μηδὲ κληθῆτε καθηγηταί, ὅτι καθηγητὴς ὑμῶν ἐστιν εἷς ὁ Χριστός.

Christ guided believers while he was on the earth; now the Word is our guide.

23:11. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant [one who provides help or comfort].

ὁ δὲ μείζων ὑμῶν ἔσται ὑμῶν διάκονος.

This is accomplished through teaching doctrine, administering in a Christian organization or by praying for others.

23:12. And whoever shall exalt himself, [religious hierarchy for the purpose of power, praise or approbation] **shall be abased** [receive disappointment and punishment], **and he who shall humble himself** [orientation to grace] **shall be exalted** [promoted].

ὅστις δὲ ὑψώσει ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, καὶ ὅστις ταπεινώσει ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται.

Verses 13-35: the Seven Woes: (the 1st in verse 13; the 2nd in verse 15; the 3rd in verses 16-22); the 4th in verses 23-24; the 5th in verses 25-26; the 6th in verses 27-28; the 7th in verses 29-35)

23:13. But woe to you (the 1st), **scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men** [teach the way of salvation incorrectly]. **For you neither go in** [they do not believe in Christ], **nor do you allow those entering** [a person positive at God consciousness] **to go in** [hindered and blinded by religion like Saul of Tarsus].

Οὐαὶ δὲ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι κλείετε τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων· ὑμεῖς γὰρ οὐκ εἰσέρχεσθε, οὐδὲ τοὺς εἰσερχομένους ἀφίετε εἰσελθεῖν.

There is no verse 14 in the original.

23:15. Woe to you (the 2nd), scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you traverse sea and the dry land [strong zeal, strongly motivated through works even in great difficulty and danger] to make one proselyte [a gentile who becomes a Jew through circumcision followed by the acceptance of Judaism], and when he becomes [a proselyte], you make him twofold more the child of Gehenna [Satan since he is associated with the Lake of Fire] than yourselves [the converts to Judaism are twice as zealous as their leaders].

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι περιάγετε τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν ξηρὰν ποιῆσαι ἓνα προσήλυτον, καὶ ὅταν γένηται ποιεῖτε αὐτὸν υἱὸν γεέννης διπλότερον ὑμῶν

Gehenna a Greek word for the Hebrew *hinnōm*. Hinnom was a deep, narrow glen to the South of Jerusalem. This narrow glen was called the valley of the Son of Hinnom (2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:2-6). In later times it served as a receptacle of all sorts of putrefying matter and all that defiled the holy city, and so became the representative or image of the place of everlasting punishment, especially on account of its ever-burning fires. Passages of the New Testament show plainly that the word ‘Gehenna’ was a popular expression for the Lake of Fire (Matthew 5:22, 29–30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5).

A bit more elaboration: Prior to the reign of Josiah, the Jews worshiped false gods such as Molech in the Valley of Gehenna. At times they even sacrificed their children. When Josiah became king, he wiped-out these evil demonic temples and turned this valley (glen) into a dump for all kinds of garbage. This garbage would then be burnt. So, whenever a Jew would look toward Gehenna, he would see these fires burning. Because of this, Gehenna became a synonym for the Lake of Fire.

Verses 16-22: the third woe:

23:16. Woe [interjection of calamity] **unto you** [dative of disadvantage], **blind guides** [the Pharisees as the religious leaders], **saying, whoever shall swear** [to take a solemn oath] **by the temple, it is nothing** [has no efficacy]; **but whoever shall swear by the gold of the temple** [must put down some money] **he is obligated** [to keep the vow, and if he should fail to keep his vow, he loses his gold.].

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, ὀδηγοὶ τυφλοὶ οἱ λέγοντες, Ὅς ἂν ὁμόσῃ ἐν τῷ ναῷ, οὐδὲν ἔστιν· ὃς δὲ ἂν ὁμόσῃ ἐν τῷ χρυσῷ τοῦ ναοῦ ὀφείλει.

This time the words “scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” is omitted and the reason is because the third woe emphasizes the influence of these religious leaders on their proselytes. So, this particular omission of “scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” has the purpose of emphasizing that there is only one thing worse than religious people and that is religious leaders with their influence. To have a guide who is blind is the epitome of stupidity. If you have eyesight and you select a blind guide there has to be something wrong with you.

At this particular point we have the word “swear” time after time after time. It doesn’t mean to swear in the sense of using profanity, it means to take a solemn oath in the name of God, in the name of the temple, or in the name of the altar. You could take an oath in the name of God, and if you did, you were saying, If I am telling a lie, then God should strike me dead or discipline me (which, of course, He would). The second was an oath in the name of the temple, in effect you were taking an oath in the name of Jesus Christ since the temple speaks of the person of Christ. If what you said was not true and you did not fulfill your obligation then Jesus Christ should put you under tremendous discipline, which of course He would. And then there was the third oath which you could take and this was in the name of the altar. The altar also speaks of Christ with emphasis on His work on the cross.

Oaths were bona fide in the Age of Israel until religion distorted the proper use. This oath taking was always in the name of someone who could punish you if you were not telling the truth, and it was used in the law courts of Israel, and in business arrangement. But once religion came along the emphasis changed. Since religion seeks money more than anything else, it says that it isn't enough to take an oath, you have to put down some money. Religion, of course, always places great emphasis on money and teaches that you can buy your way into blessing, that you can buy your way into heaven etc. This was the basis of the religious practice which we have in focus in the third woe.

Vows were allowed and practiced in the Old Testament, but not in the Church Age.

Numbers 30:1-2, "Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the citizens of Israel, saying, "This is what the Lord has commanded. (2) If a man makes a vow to the Lord or swears an oath to bind himself by a binding obligation, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."

Deuteronomy 23:21-23, "If you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. (22) But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. (23) You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth."

James 5:12, "And before all things, my brethren, stop making promises with a solemn oath neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yes be yes, and your no, no; that you do not fall under judgment [divine discipline]."

Matthew 5:33, "Again [another case regarding the Mosaic Law and giving its proper interpretation], you have heard [when the disciples were taught the Mosaic Law] that the ancients were told [a reference to the Old

Testament], ‘You shall not make false vows, but you shall fulfill [discharge your obligations] your vows to the Lord’ [a reference to Leviticus 19:12].”

Leviticus 19:12, “You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the Lord.”

Profaning God can involve a vow or just using God in some way for your cause. So, never make a statement in the name of something or someone that is reliable and try to make that something or someone that is reliable stand responsible for your statement. In other words, don’t use someone reliable [like God] to support your false statements or vows. That is tantamount to profaning God. For example, in a church business meeting some deacon, a pillar in the church as it were, may say regarding some matter, “I have prayed about this for a month and so, I know that it’s God’s will (or God has made known to me) that we should do it this way etc.” How does that person know that his plan is God’s will? It is pure arrogance for a deacon or anyone else to state that God supports his plans. Why does this type of profaning God, successful in so many churches? Well, Christians are generally so ignorant of God’s word that they are afraid to oppose anyone who brings in God as a co-signer to their plans.

A statement is no stronger than the person making it. If a person says I love you by God (by Jerusalem, by his dear departed mother etc.) it still is no stronger than the stability and responsibility of that person. If a person is unstable and irresponsible, his statement is meaningless.

Some don’ts: Don’t make a promise that you do not intend to keep. Don’t say you are going to do something because it is convenient to do so and then weasel out of it later. Don’t tell someone that you love them when you don’t. Don’t perjure yourself by attempting to cover up a lie with an oath by God “I swear by God etc.” On the other hand, a Christian should always keep his word no matter what it cost him, and to always be honest for it is part of his testimony as an ambassador of the Lord.

Matthew 5:34-37. “But I say to you, do not make a promise with an oath at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God [Christ enthroned at the right hand of the Father] (35) nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet [at the 2nd Advent, His enemies both fallen angels and unbelievers will be made his footstool; this subjection will be completed at the end of His Millennial reign], nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King [the Lord Jesus Christ will rule as the king of the world from Jerusalem during the Millennium]. (36) Nor shall you make an oath by your head [a Jewish system of taking an oath], for you cannot make one hair white or black [you cannot think red and suddenly have red hair etc.]. (37) But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no [let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no”; keep your word];’ anything beyond these is out from the evil one [lies are from the father of lies].”

23:17. Idiots, and blind ones: for which is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifies the gold [a rhetorical question]?

μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοί, τίς γὰρ μείζων ἐστίν, ὁ χρυσὸς ἢ ὁ ναὸς ὁ ἀγιάσας τὸν χρυσόν;

Jesus calls a spade a spade: religious people are morons. He attempted to awaken them to their true soul condition and to warn others about religion.

23:18. And whoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing [according to the scribes and Pharisees he is not obligated to keep his vow]; **but whoever swears by the gift** [in this case gold] **that is on it, he is obligated** [to keep his vow]!

καί, Ὅς ἂν ὁμόση ἐν τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ, οὐδέν ἐστίν· ὃς δὲ ἂν ὁμόση ἐν τῷ δώρῳ τῷ ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ ὀφείλει.

A few points:

1. To make a vow or to take an oath by offering money is tantamount to posting bond that you will keep your word.
2. For the religious leaders making an oath or taking a vow on the altar is not as strong as forfeiting one's money in the event the vow was not kept.
3. In other words, the money on the altar was of more value than the significance of the altar.
4. The gold that you brought to the temple was more important than the temple according to the teaching of these religious leaders.
5. Religion always emphasizes money; it emphasizes the materialistic rather than the spiritual.

23:19. You blind: which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

τυφλοί, τί γὰρ μείζον, τὸ δῶρον ἢ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ ἁγιάζον τὸ δῶρον;

By illustration, some businessman wanted to make clear that he would stick to his agreement to the person with whom he had entered into a business transaction. So, he would go to the temple to take an oath by the altar to demonstrate to the other man his honorable intentions. However, the Pharisees would say that the Altar has no significance, no value, but gold does. So, he would be coerced into paying for the vow.

A few points for clarification:

1. No one can gain the approbation of God by the use of their money.
2. Neither salvation nor spiritual blessing can be purchased.
3. This is contrary to the principle of grace.

4. In salvation Christ paid for our sins, in phase two God provides blessing on the basis of what He gives, on the basis of who and what He is. God is not a politician and so He cannot be bribed.

5. Man can only enter into relationship with God on the basis of grace, on the basis of who God is, on the basis of what He does, never on the basis of what we do.

23:20 Therefore, whoever shall swear by the altar swears by it, and by all things on it.

ὁ οὖν ὁμόσας ἐν τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ ὁμνύει ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ·

23:21 And whoever shall swear by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it [the Shekinah Glory dwelt in it up to 586 B.C.].

καὶ ὁ ὁμόσας ἐν τῷ ναῷ ὁμνύει ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ κατοικοῦντι αὐτόν·

23:22. And he who shall swear by Heaven swears by the throne of God, and by Him [God the Father] who sits on it.

καὶ ὁ ὁμόσας ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ὁμνύει ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ.

To swear by the Lord, Temple or Altar was a solemn oath and meaningful in that dispensation, on the other hand to swear by money was meaningless. The worst penalty one could suffer when taking an oath by money was the forfeiture of that money. To make the Lord your witness could end up in perjury and great discipline from the Lord. One gets discipline for his dishonesty and discipline for bringing the Lord into a dishonest deal, taking his name in vain.

23:23. Woe to you (the 4th), scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and you have left undone the weightier matters of the Law [Old Testament], judgment [the Pharisees sat in the Sanhedrin], mercy [grace in action: as theologians they should have been teaching grace], and faith [as related to salvation and the spiritual life]. You ought to have done these and not to leave the other undone [other matters related to their responsibilities].

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι ἀποδεκατοῦτε τὸ ἡδύοσμον καὶ τὸ ἄνηθον καὶ τὸ κύμινον, καὶ ἀφήκατε τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, τὴν κρίσιν καὶ τὸ ἔλεος καὶ τὴν πίστιν· ταῦτα [δὲ] ἔδει ποιῆσαι κάκεῖνα μὴ ἀφιέναι.

Religion does what they shouldn't do and doesn't do what they should. Religion always places great emphasis on collecting money from its people for they not only tithed money, but every kind of seed. On the other hand, they failed in their responsibilities in general and as supreme court-judges in particular.

23:24. You blind guides who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

ὁδηγοὶ τυφλοί, οἱ διῶλίζοντες τὸν κώνωπα τὴν δὲ κάμηλον καταπίνοντες.

The gnat represents all these legalistic requirements which they force upon the people. The camel refers to the weightier matters of the Law. A common saying, "He who has killed a flea on the Sabbath is just as guilty as if he had killed a camel."

23:25 Woe to you (the 5th), scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the serving dish [with high sides with a narrow opening to keep the food warm], but inside they are full of extortion [mental pillaging and plundering] and excess [lusts].

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι καθαρίζετε τὸ ἔξωθεν τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος, ἔσωθεν δὲ γέμουσιν ἐξ ἀρπαγῆς καὶ ἀκρασίας.

1. The Pharisees emphasized the external condition of a person and ignored the internal condition.
2. They emphasized taboos and outward morality, yet taboos and morality can neither provide salvation nor a spiritual life.
3. Internal sins make external appearances a sham. Their outside appearance is by morality and taboos, but their inside is filthy with mental sins and lusts.

23:26. Blind Pharisee [because of their rejection of truth]! **First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the dish** [analogous to pre-salvation sins forgiven at salvation and then after salvation Rebound when necessary.], **so that the outside of them may be clean also** [true experiential righteousness based on metabolized doctrine].

Φαρισαῖε τυφλέ, καθάρισον πρῶτον τὸ ἐντὸς τοῦ ποτηρίου, ἵνα γένηται καὶ τὸ ἐκτὸς αὐτοῦ καθαρόν.

With legalism man gets the glory; with grace God gets the glory.

The 6th Woe: verses 27, 28.

23:27. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tomb stones, which indeed appear beautiful outside, but inside they are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι παρομοιάζετε τάφοις κεκονιαμένοις, οἵτινες ἔξωθεν μὲν φαίνονται ὡραῖοι ἔσωθεν δὲ γέμουσιν ὀστέων νεκρῶν καὶ πάσης ἀκαθαρσίας.

Explaining ceremonial uncleanness: If a person walked over or on a tombstone before the Passover, he would be unclean and unable to participate in the Passover. Since a poor man's tombstone was small, faded and concealed, the hierarchy would have them whitewashed before the Festival Days. In this way people would not inadvertently touch them and become ceremonially unclean. Numbers 19:16, "Also anyone who in the open field touches one who has been slain with a sword [in battle] or who has died naturally or a human bone or a grave shall be unclean for seven days."

23:28. Even so you also appear outwardly righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔξωθεν μὲν φαίνεσθε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δίκαιοι, ἔσωθεν δὲ ἐστε μεστοὶ ὑποκρίσεως καὶ ἀνομίας.

The 7th Woe: verses 29-35.

23:29. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets, and decorate the tombs of the righteous,

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι οἰκοδομεῖτε τοὺς τάφους τῶν προφητῶν καὶ κοσμεῖτε τὰ μνημεῖα τῶν δικαίων,

They have the same anti-doctrine, hateful attitude as those who murdered these great men of the past. However, since these religious people do not understand what made these prophets and other men of God great, they build tombs for them and provide a lot of decorations.

23:30. and say, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets."

καὶ λέγετε, Εἰ ἡμεθα ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, οὐκ ἂν ἡμεθα αὐτῶν κοινωνοὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι τῶν προφητῶν.

These self-righteous scribes and Pharisees have the same arrogance of their forefathers who had put many prophets to death. These arrogant religious leaders will go one step further by putting the humanity of Christ on the cross.

23:31. Therefore, you are witnesses to yourselves [of the sentencing of Jesus to death], **that you** [with the same hatred and murder lust] **are the sons** [descendants] **of those who killed the prophets;**

ὥστε μαρτυρεῖτε ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι υἱοὶ ἐστε τῶν φονευσάντων τοὺς προφήτας.

These descendants are more religious and more hateful than their murdering forebearers.

23:32. and you, fill up the measure [up to the top] **of your fathers.**

καὶ ὑμεῖς πληρώσατε τὸ μέτρον τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν.

The killing of Isaiah, Zechariah and other prophets fills the glass a little, but the killing of Jesus completely fills the glass. Jesus was prophesizing something which would happen within a week. The prophets produced experiential righteous, but Jesus is the righteous one. So, by killing Him, they committed more evil than their forebears.

23:33. Serpents! Offspring of vipers [full of venom]! **How can you escape the judgment of Gehenna?** [They can escape the Lake of Fire only through faith in Christ which gospel message they have already rejected]

ὄφεις γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, πῶς φύγητε ἀπὸ τῆς κρίσεως τῆς γεέννης;

These religious scribes and Pharisees are full of religious venom which spews from their mouths every time they speak. They, like a viper, strike and destroy many people.

23:34. Therefore, behold, I send [futuristic present] **prophets** [in the Church Age] **and wise men** [teachers of the Word] **and scribes** [the theologians of the Church] **to you. And out of them, you will kill** [such as Thomas and James] **and crucify** [Jesus]. **And some of them you will scourge** [for example, Paul was scourged by religious Jews three times] **in your synagogues and persecute from city to city** [a prophecy regarding Paul];

διὰ τοῦτο ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω πρὸς ὑμᾶς προφήτας καὶ σοφοὺς καὶ γραμματεῖς· ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀποκτενεῖτε καὶ σταυρώσετε, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν μαστιγώσετε ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ὑμῶν καὶ διώξετε ἀπὸ πόλεως εἰς πόλιν·

23:35. so that it shall come upon you [the guilt] **of all the righteous blood poured out** [shed] **on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel** [by the self-righteous religious Cain] **to the blood of Zechariah whom you murdered between the temple and the altar** [2 Chronicles 24:20-22: in 836 B.C.].

ὅπως ἔλθῃ ἐφί ὑμᾶς πᾶν αἷμα δίκαιον ἐκχυννόμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος Ἀβελ τοῦ δικαίου ἕως τοῦ αἵματος Ζαχαρίου υἱοῦ Βαραχίου, ὃν ἐφονεύσατε μεταξὺ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου.

Abel was the first martyr in human history and was killed by Cain who was religious. The first murderer was a religious man, and the first martyr was a grace man. The words “son of Barachias” should not be in the verse above for it was added by a scribe. This is not referring to Zechariah the son of Barachias who wrote the book of Zechariah, but this refers to Zechariah the high priest, the son of Jehoiada who was slain in the temple itself. Jesus makes a comparison between the first martyr, Abel, and Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, who was the high priest in 836 B.C.

2 Chronicles 24:20-22, “Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood before the people and said, ‘This is what God says: ‘Why do you disobey the Lord’s commands? You will not prosper. Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has forsaken you.’ (21) But they plotted against him, and by order of the king they stoned him [Zechariah] to death in the courtyard of the Lord’s temple. (22) King Joash did not remember the kindness Zechariah’s father Jehoiada had shown him [Jehoiada had saved the life of Joash] but killed his son, who said as he lay dying, “May the Lord see this and call you to account.”

Luke 11:50-51, “Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, (51) from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.”

23:36. Truly I say to you, all these things [regarding the 5th cycle of discipline] **shall come on this generation.**

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἥξει ταῦτα πάντα ἐπὶ τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην.

23:37. “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who murders the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I [divine sovereignty] **wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling** [God respected their negative volition].

Ἱερουσαλὴμ Ἱερουσαλὴμ, ἡ ἀποκτείνουσα τοὺς προφῆτας καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα τοὺς ἀπεσταλμένους πρὸς αὐτήν, ποσάκις ἠθέλησα ἐπισυναγαγεῖν τὰ τέκνα σου, ὃν τρόπον ὄρνις ἐπισυνάγει τὰ νοσσία αὐτῆς ὑπὸ τὰς πτέρυγας, καὶ οὐκ ἠθελήσατε.

The sovereignty of God never violates the will of mankind. God decreed in eternity past that his will and man’s will would co-exist in human

history. Jesus is walking out of the city after the temple discourse. The prophets were those who taught doctrine. The sovereignty of God wanted to fulfill the four unconditional covenants to Israel, but the Jews, generation after generation rejected Jesus Christ. Instead of accepting the truth, they distorted the Mosaic Law into a system of legalism.

23:38. “Behold, your house [the temple, constructed by Herod the Great] is being left to you desolate [the witness was completely obscured, and the temple building was finally destroyed in 70 A.D.]!

ἰδοὺ ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν ἔρημος.

The purpose of the temple was to be a witness of Christ, “the tabernacle of witness” (Acts 7:44). Everything in the temple was to testify and teach something about Christ, but since Jesus Christ was not accepted as Savior, his thinking was not in their stream of consciousness. In their souls was only religious thinking; they had accepted the ritual but had rejected the reality.

Now to the disciples, the temple and the surrounding buildings were beautiful. They were not thinking of the true purpose of the temple. It’s not the beauty of the buildings which is important, rather it is the spiritual life of the believers occupying those buildings. Always when a people degenerate spiritually, they emphasize the building, or the number of people involved. ‘O look how beautiful our church is.’ ‘Fifty thousand Christians attend our church.’ Jesus Christ deemphasizes the buildings and emphasizes doctrine (Matthew 24:2).

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 [this very phrase regarding the 2nd Advent is what started the Temple Discourse]!’”

λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν, οὐ μή με ἴδητε ἀπὶ ἄρτι ἕως ἄν εἴπητε, Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου.

This is a quote from Psalm 118:26 which is a reference to the 2nd Advent. This explains the failure of the Jews on Palm Sunday when they shouted, “Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” They wanted a political deliverance from the Romans, but they were not interested in salvation. The Jews did not want the salvation of the 1st Advent, but the political deliverance of the 2nd Advent.

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Based on the scholarly work of R.B. Thieme Jr.

I recommend downloading 'THIEME'S BIBLE DOCTRINE DICTIONARY' from this website: rbthieme.org