

Bible Study 2023-2024

Class #21

3/12/24

Synoptics 23 – 24

- Matthew 23 (Cont)

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- **Matthew 23:13-22** *“But who to you,...swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it”*
 - This is the passage containing the classic “woes” against the Pharisees (This is how most people think of the Pharisees)
 - Father discussed what the term Pharisee really meant
 - They were **not** all hypocrites or blind guides
 - Nicodemus, a Pharisee, helped bury Jesus
 - Gamliel, a Pharisee, defended Peter before the council
 - As discussed earlier, in the original context, Pharisee meant someone who was a member of a particular sect of Judaism

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- He was someone very serious about living the Law of Moses
- Tragically, some taught things that they themselves failed to do (Thus, Jesus called the hypocrites)
- When Jesus was in Galilee, they would dialogue with Him
- Now, in Jerusalem, they were doing everything possible to kill Him because they believed that He was a heretic
- Thus, it is at this point that Jesus calls them (along with the scribes) a bunch of hypocrites
- He was condemning them for what they were trying to do to Him
- This does not mean that every individual Pharisee was a hypocrite

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- **Matthew 23:23-24** *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,...and swallowing a camel”*
 - Nowhere did the Law require tithing one’s mint, dill, or cumin (they were not crops to be harvested)
 - Jesus told the Scribes that they were ignoring the big stuff (that was in the Law) including: faith, charity, and loving your brother while focusing on the minutia (implying that one had to tithe everything)
 - He said they were straining out a gnat, while at the same time swallowing a camel
 - Their teaching was completely inconsistent with the Law

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- **Matthew 23:25-26** *“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees,...First clean the inside of the cup and the plate as the outside also may be clean”*
 - Jesus was not literally talking about the Law’s discussion on the washing of cups, but about what was contained in whitewashed tombs
 - The Pharisees were worried about the exterior of things, that is what men will think, but not about the interior of the Law
 - They were worried about the circumcision of the flesh, but not the circumcision of the heart

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- **Matthew 23:27-28** *“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees,...but within they are full of hypocrisy and Iniquity”*
 - Father pointed out that both of these last paragraphs there is some very interesting commentary
 - He told them that they should be concerned about the weightier things, while not neglecting the others
 - He was not condemning the idea that the Pharisees wanted to be seen as pious (they obviously did not want to be seen as sinners)
 - He was calling on them to first focus on the interior so that the exterior became real (because the exterior reflected the interior)

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- He told them that if they were pure on the inside, the outside would come on its own
- Father pointed out that there was nothing wrong with tithing on mint and dill, as long as they were not failing to tithe on their barley and wheat (which most likely they were doing)
- Jesus was speaking these words **within the Temple precinct**
- From there, all could see the Mount of Olives, the Kidron and Gehenna valleys, and the other high points of Jerusalem

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- They could also see the tombs of the prophets located in the Kidron Valley, as well as the multitude of whitewashed limestone tombs on the Mount of Olives, filled with “unclean” bodies

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- **Matthew 23:29-32** *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers”*
 - Father pointed out that archaeologists have determined that some of those tombs in the Kidron Valley were of the prophets
 - According to a local tradition, one of them contained the remains of *Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi*
 - All of the Kidron Valles was the ancient cemetery of Jerusalem

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- Father asked that we imagine the context of Jesus speaking to those Jewish authorities while overlooking their ancestral burying place
- Remember, almost all of the prophets were killed by the people of Israel
- The terms “sons of” and “fathers of ” meant imitator or descendant of
- This was a foreshadowing of what was coming after they completed their decision of putting Jesus to death
- He called them a witness against themselves since they were the sons of those who killed the prophets

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- **Matthew 23:33** *“You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?”*
 - The valley of *Gehenna* was nearby
 - Jesus might have pointed to the tombs in the *Kidron*, or to the valley of *Gehenna* which was the garbage dump of Jerusalem and would stink, be smoke filled, and full of fire
 - It was then, and remains today the garbage dump of the city

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- **Matthew 23:34-36** *“Therefore I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes,...all this will come upon this generation”*
 - Father asked that we make a note here to **Matthew 10:16-23*** (Jesus’ warning before He sent out His disciples)
 - We are not sure who this *“Zechariah the son of Barachiah”* is
 - The *proto-evangeliun* describes him as the father of John the Baptist
 - It could also be the prophet Zechariah, or someone else
 - It was someone who was murdered between the altar and the sanctuary (thus, he had to have been a priest)

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- It could be someone from the past, or someone up to the time of Jesus
- Father discussed this question because of what will come up in **Matthew 24**, where we will find language that some will interpret as being about the end of the world
- If we look at it in that way, we will get ourselves into a historical conundrum, when we see Jesus refer these situations as happening to “this generation”
- Father has stressed this several times, so we should understand that it is a reference to those living at the time of Jesus

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- **Matthew 23:37-39** *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!...Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”*
 - At this point, we should have a reference to **1st Kings 9:2-3***; and **Jeremiah 22:4-9***
 - This is another example of Jesus splicing to passages together
 - For a long time, scholars thought”
 - Jesus was not using the passages correctly

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- Maybe Jesus was mixing them up, or was confused
- Some suggested that He made the story up
- He did not know the scripture well enough to have to manipulate the texts
- However, it was discovered in the Dead Sea scrolls that almost everything we got from the Old Testament was like this
- We would read a quote from Isaiah, and in the next part, would be a quote from Jerimiah
- We might read something in one Psalm and find the rest from another Psalm
- This was a style of exegesis used in many Old Testament manuscripts

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- Scholars would take a text and splice in another text to help interpret the first text
- Here, we see Jesus and other New Testament authors using the same technique
- We can see an example of this in **Mark 1:2***, where the first part is from **Malachi 3:1***, and the rest from Isaiah 40:3* (since the two text were related, one could be used to interpret the other)
- Father then went back and looked at the statement:
“Behold your house is forsaken and desolate”

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- Solomon built the temple, dedicated it to the Lord, and prayed on it in a beautiful prayer asking the Lord to always protect this place (Solomon 8)
- When Solomon finished this prayer, God responded in **1st Kings 9:1-9 ***
- Further, God speaks in **Jeremiah 22:1-9**
 - Father reminded us of the woes against the Pharisees (again, in both these texts)
- With this in mind, we can hear what Jesus was prophesying when He discussed the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that **1st Kings** and **Jeremiah 22** are all about the coming destruction of the temple that Solomon had built in the city that contained it
- It is obvious that Jesus wanted them to understand these prophecies
- This is **not about the end of the world!**
- Father stated that he once heard a homily by a Catholic priest on the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus, based on **Matthew 24**, **Mark 13**, and **Luke 21**
- This will become clearer in our study of **Matthew 24**

Matthew 23 (Cont)

- Jesus concludes this passage by saying: *“For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”*
- Once again, this is a quote from **Psalm 118:26***