

Introduction of Matthew 23

Matthew 23 occurs during Holy Week (the time between Palm Sunday; the Crucifixion and just before the Resurrection).

This is the last time that we will see the religious leaders mentioned in Matthew prior to Jesus' arrest by the soldiers. In Matthew 23, Jesus brings to an end the Question and Answer period (between the religious leaders and Himself). He now asks them questions. And, the questions that Jesus asks in Matthew 22:42 are the questions that really matter.

- This Q&A period started in Matthew 21:23, and it continued for an entire day.
- Jesus went straight to the "heart of the matter."
- This was their last chance for the scribes and Pharisees to worship and receive Jesus as the Messiah instead of challenging and rejecting Him.

The Q&A period of Matthew chapters 21 and 22, as well as Matthew 23 is in the context of:

- Jesus' cleansing of the temple. (Matthew 21:12 – 17)
- Jesus' cursing of the fig tree. (Matthew 21:18 – 21)

Matthew 23 has in it 8 woes (curses) pronounced upon the scribes and Pharisees. The chapter will end with:

- Jesus lamenting over Jerusalem. (Matthew 23:37 – 29)
- Jesus departing from the temple. (Matthew 24:1)
 - Compare the cursing of the fig tree. (Matthew 21:18 – 21)

Instead of speaking with the religious leaders, Matthew 23 opens with Jesus now speaking to the common people and to His disciples:

- He tells them that they should obey the law, but warns them not to be like the scribes and Pharisees. (Matthew 23:3)
- He tells them about the Pharisees. (Matthew 23:2 – 4)
- He gives instructions to them. (Matthew 23:8 – 12)

Jesus' woes upon the scribes and Pharisees. (Matthew 23:13 – 36)

- This is a warning to those who proclaim the Word of God (whether through preaching or teaching) in a manner in which it should not be represented to the world and/or to the people of God.
- This is a warning for all of us not to be hypocritical.

Matthew 23:2 – 10, Jesus addresses the true character of the Pharisees.

- They loved the law; their special garments; their titles; their chief seats and the praise of the people, but they did not know or love God.
- They burdened the people with their traditions. (Compare Matthew 12:1-14 and 15:1-9).

Matthew 23:8 – 10. We are admonished not to put any person in the position that is reserved only for God.