



# The Kingdom Coming

## Admonition and Anguish: Jesus' Rebuke of the Religious Leaders

Sunday, November 26/23 --- Matthew 23:13 – 39

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So, you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

- Matthew 23:27 – 28

*All of Jesus' interactions with the religious leaders in chapters 21 – 23 took place in the Temple. Jesus has already signaled to them that He is replacing the Temple and that His Father was holding them responsible for their abuse of authority over God's House. His final words to them are an admonition of how grossly they had erred, and an expression of the anguish Jesus felt.*

*At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He pronounced blessings over the righteous (5:3 – 10); and now at the end of His ministry He pronounces seven woes over the unrighteous (23:13 – 39).*

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### Sermon Outline:

1. Admonition over what they do to others seeking a right relationship with God (23:13 – 22)
  - a. Shutting the door of heaven and opening the door of hell (vs. 13 – 15)
  - b. Swearing on oath instead of letting your yes be yes (vs. 16 – 22; cf. 5:33 – 37)
2. Admonition over what they do themselves, in seeking a right relationship with God (23:23 – 36)
  - a. Majoring on the minors and minoring on the majors (vs. 23 – 24)
  - b. Obsessing on the outward while ignoring the inward (vs. 25 – 28)
  - c. Appearing to honour the prophets while still persecuting them (vs. 29 – 36)
3. Anguish over Jerusalem and their refusal to take shelter under Christ's wings (23:37 – 39)
  - a. As a hen gathers her brood under her wings (vs. 37)
  - b. As a house is left desolate and vacant (vs. 38 – 39)



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## Discussion Questions:

- i. This chapter contains some of the strongest language Jesus ever used with people. Does this side of Jesus shock you? Are you surprised at who He is angry with?
- ii. What elements of the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees do we see today in our world? In other religions? In the Church that claims to follow Jesus? In you and I personally?
- iii. What part of Jesus' rebuke lands on you the hardest? Can you share it? What could you do to correct this area in your discipleship?
- iv. What do you think Jesus was feeling in verses 37 – 39? (Clue: See Luke 19:41 – 44)  
Does Jesus still weep over Jerusalem? Does He weep over His people on earth today?

## Application:

*The Beatitudes that Jesus pronounces at the beginning of His ministry (Mt. 5:3 – 10) are the opposite of the Woes that He pronounces at the end of His ministry (Mt. 23:13 – 39). One has to do with what pleases God and opens the way to Him. The other has to do with what displeases God and closes the way to Him.*

*Review Mt. 5:1 – 12 and ask the Lord to 'bless' you in these ways. Then go out and live it.*