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APOSTOLIC VERSE BY VERSE BIBLE STUDY

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“WEIGHTIER [MATTERS] OF THE LAW”

Mathew 23:23-39

Matthew 23:23 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier [matters] of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Matthew 23:24 "[Ye] blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

The scribes and Pharisees proudly paid a tenth of their possessions even of tiny things like spices. However, while focusing on these minute details, they would neglect the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. They would major on the minors, and minor on the majors. Jesus's illustration is vivid: You strain out a gnat, but gulp down a camel. Mint, anise, and cummin are various spices. Some of them were used for fragrance from time to time. They were also ground up and used for medicine. This really was not what God had in mind when He spoke of the tithe, but they had gotten so technical with their performance they had forgotten the purpose behind it. They were so caught up in technicalities that they no longer were functional as a church. It would be like us getting so caught up in watching the clock and making sure we did not run a service overtime, that we took no time to minister to the needs of the people. How can someone who is blind lead someone? What Jesus was trying to tell them was, stop worrying about formality and get people into the kingdom. Don't worry about who does it or how, just get them saved, and then minister to them. This is the fifth "woe".

Matthew 23:25 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."

Matthew 23:26 "[Thou] blind Pharisee, cleanse first that [which is] within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

The men were consumed with external appearances and rituals but not with the internal condition of their hearts. They cleaned their outsides, but inside they were full of greed and self-indulgence. Be warned: when your chief concern is being seen and accepted by men, you'll concentrate on making a good outward impression while ignoring the corruption inside of you. But if you seek to please God above all by cleaning the dirt from your heart, clean actions will follow. Here, Jesus was speaking of cleaning up the heart of man. Out of the issue of the heart, the mouth speaketh. Some churches today, believe that just being baptized in water gets you saved. This is not true. There are many people who have been baptized in water that are lost. To be saved, A person must have a change of heart. His heart must be washed in the blood of the Lamb and cleansed from all unrighteousness. He must truly believe that Jesus died on the cross for his sins, and that He rose again. When a person is cleaned up from within, his old desire to sin is washed away, and the desire of his heart is to follow Jesus. You can quickly notice a

change in his conversation, his habits, and his goals. In fact, the change will be so great everyone will notice. The bible commands being baptized in water, but the baptism of the heart must take place first. Truly the order of baptisms is baptism of repentance, baptism of heart, baptism of water, baptism of fire of the Holy Spirit, and baptism of suffering. You see, these pharisees appeared from the outside to be living for God, but their hearts and spirits were not in it.

Matthew 3:1-8

1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Matthew 23:27 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead [men's] bones, and of all uncleanness."

Matthew 23:28 "Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Once a year, about the fifteenth of the month of Adar, the Jews painted their tombs with whitewash to denote where the dead bodies were. Jesus, in this statement, was accusing these scribes and Pharisees to be dead inwardly but whitewashed on the outside. Probably, from the world's point of view (the outside), they were super religious, but it was all on the outside. Inside there were dead men's bones. They were covering up their lust of the flesh with this whitewash. To whitewash something today means, to attempt to cover up something very evil. In our society today, we see this in preachers who lead two lives; one for the public to view, and another private life that cannot stand up under the light. It is explained in verse 28. Whitewashed tombs refer to the practice of painting tombs white so that they looked beautiful. On the inside, though, pretty tombs were still full of bones. No matter how much you decorate the exterior of a grave, the interior still contains death. Similarly, the Pharisees seemed righteous to people on the outside, but on the inside, they had wicked motives and desires.

Matthew 23:29 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,"

Matthew 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."

Matthew 23:31 "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets."

Matthew 23:32 "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

The scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites. They built tombs of the prophets and decorated the graves of the righteous, quickly claiming that they wouldn't have joined with their forefathers who killed the Old Testament-era prophets. Yet, at the same time, they were rejecting the Messiah and planning to murder him! In truth, they were just like those who had gone before them and murdered the prophets. It seems that these scribes and Pharisees made large graves and mausoleums to say to the world that they were opposed to the killing of the prophets. In essence, they were saying had they been living instead of their ancestors, they would not have killed them. These scribes and Pharisees had not only rejected the prophets, but they had gone even further and had rejected the very Son of God. It is so easy to say what you would do, if you do not have the decision facing you. These scribes and Pharisees were quick to criticize, but they would make a much more serious denial when they participated in the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ the Son of God. Their cup of iniquity would be more than full.

Matthew 23:33 "[Ye] serpents, [ye] generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

These phony scribes and Pharisees were like the ones Jesus was speaking of that stand before Him at the end and say, Lord have we not done all these wonderful things in your name? Jesus will tell them to get away from Him, that He never knew them. You see, having a form of religion is just not enough. Our hearts are the judge. Were our hearts right with God; was it the desire of our hearts to please God more than mankind. There are only two ways to go. Those who Jesus does not accept go to hell. To answer the question of Jesus above, there is a way to avoid hell. Turn from this whitewashed outward religion, repent, and make Jesus Lord of our lives.

Matthew 23:34 "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and [some] of them ye shall kill and crucify; and [some] of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute [them] from city to city:"

Matthew 23:35 "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

Matthew 23:36 "Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

Jesus, here, was speaking of them rejecting the Savior of the world (Jesus Christ). In spite of all that he'd said against the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus wasn't done: Snakes! Brood of vipers! How can you escape being condemned to hell? Since the scribes and Pharisees continued to reject the truth, their destiny would be eternal judgment. Jesus predicted that they would kill those whom he would send. In the same way that Abel and Zechariah were martyred by unbelievers, so the Pharisees would martyr the righteous believers in Jesus Christ. Remember, these were the religious people of their day, but it was an outward religion for show. They had nothing good going on inside them. They (as a whole) would not accept Jesus. In not accepting Him, who was the perfect Lamb of God the perfect sacrifice, it was as if they themselves had killed the prophets that led up to Jesus. Their message was of His coming. In not accepting Him, they did not accept their message, as well.

Matthew 23:37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, [thou] that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under [her] wings, and ye would not!"

Matthew 23:38 "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

Matthew 23:39 "For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed [is] he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Jesus' desire was that the Hebrews would accept His free gift of salvation. They were the chosen of God. Jesus, like a hen that sees a storm coming and gathers her little chickens and covers them with her wings to protect them, wanted to protect them by covering them with His shed blood. They would not accept Him. They went so far as to crucify the Son of God. Jesus knew this when He made this statement and mourned for Jerusalem. "O Jerusalem." Jesus' foreknowledge helped Him see the desperate thing they would do and become totally separated from God. Verse 39 means that Jesus did not appear to these particular people after the resurrection. At the second coming of Christ (when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord), these people will realize that Jesus is Messiah. The Israelites have always looked for a Messiah that would be a physical king and save them from their neighbors. Jesus will be LORD OF lords and KING OF kings when He returns to earth. They truly will say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

QUESTIONS

1. These woes were spoken to whom?
2. What were they tithing?
3. What were they omitting?
4. What did Jesus call them when He said they strain at a gnat and swallow a camel?
5. These blind leaders could be paralleled to whom today?
6. What did He tell them to do about it?
7. What was Jesus really telling them to cleanse?
8. What two things must happen for you to be saved?
9. What is the order of baptisms?
10. What were they likened to in verse 27?
11. How often did the Jews whitewash the tombs?
12. What does whitewash mean today?
13. How did these scribes and Pharisees think they were better than their ancestors?
14. What was worse about the scribes and Pharisees?
15. What two names did Jesus call them, when He asked them how they could miss hell?
16. What did Jesus compare His desiring to protect them with?
17. What 3 words indicate Jesus mourning for this people?
18. What did verse 39 mean about when they would see Jesus again?
19. What name would they call Him?
20. What will they do to show that they recognize Him?