

MATTHEW 23 vs 1

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In this unique chapter, Matthew, and eyewitness of Jesus recalls the Teacher clarifying lots of spiritual sounding vocabulary... that has created an atmosphere of confusion to the present.

¹ **Then Jesus spoke to the multitude,**

and to His disciples / His mathetes; those doing the math. Jesus is a good Teacher: every time He speaks, He provides students with a **metanoia moment**... a moment to rethink... until they think correctly. Jesus wants His students to think correctly about those who claim to be installed in the seat of religious authority; especially those who speak with lots of fancy super-spiritual language, not like Jesus, who speaks clearly.



² **saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses** / to sit where Moses sat... or where any Old Testament prophets sat: is a proper profession; and a proper duty; as Native American Indians would say: walking in their shoes; Jesus is talking about walking in Moses and the prophets' shoes:

³ **Therefore all that they tell you do and observe** / this word is: **tereo**; whatever they request or invite you to do sitting in Moses' seat... recalling what Moses or the prophets of old taught, **keep, meaning... guard, to protect.** Jesus uses this very important word 12 times... the night He was betrayed...

do it! / okay. ✓ when they teach from Moses and the prophets, do what Moses and the prophets say...**but do not follow after their works** / **the works and deeds of the scribes and Pharisees;** and others like them! Do not follow what they do:

Do not think they do... what they say / rarely do leaders do what they say... although regularly, they love to tell others what to do.

⁴ **For they tie up heavy loads too difficult to carry** / the pharisaical leaders... are like merciless camel drivers; who give you insufferable loads impossible to carry,

and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers / those two-faced religious hypocrites, will not lift a little finger to help carry that burden.

What church is this?

⁵ **But ALL their works they do are to be seen by men** / no exception, everything these hypocrites do is merely for a lousy performance -- no better than a Hollywood flop, they simply love the theatrics! **they broaden their phylacteries** / they widen their ornamental amulet, imagined to protect from evil. **Why?** **God wanted His people to mark His Words and commands on their hands, and on their minds and hearts,** **not** in little boxes tied on their foreheads, **and enlarge their fringe** / everything is exaggerated... to be seen by others. It's all drama, flamboyant and outlandish for appearance. It's all for the freak show!

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What church is this? Certainly not the church Jesus is building! Remember: Jesus is talking to the multitude and His disciples... about very odd religious leaders and their very strange practices.

6 And they love the chief place at feasts, and the chief... front row seats in the synagogues / head table, center of attention in all the worship centers,

7 And the customary greetings in the markets, and to be especially called by men, Rabbi / which means: **the great one!** In the book of Daniel, we read... **rab**; or **rab rab** = **very great!** Jesus is talking about those who love their spiritual sounding titles! We see these people... usually dressed in white, as if they were purer, cleaner, and more perfect than others, even today!

8 But... do not be called Rabbi / okay. ✓ for One is your Master / the word is: **kathagetes; your Counselor, your Guide;** and who is it? The good Teacher has the answer: **Christ the Messiah;** in Greek: **christos;** used 555 in the NT **Jesus the Christ; no substitute for Christ is needed;**

and you are all brothers / Jesus says all who gathered around Him are **spiritual brothers.** In other words: Jesus says to the students in His class, you can call each other: **brothers**... which sounds better than: classmates... or congregants!

9 And call no one on earth your spiritual father / okay. ✓ Jesus is talking about our Father in Heaven; He is talking to the multitude that gathered... about those religious folks who sit in the seat of Moses, who are supposed to pass forward the instruction of Moses and the prophets to all the students.

This verse has nothing to do with honoring our father and mother. Jesus is correcting the religious sounding vocabulary; that resembles the same confusion of our day! Those who ignore what Jesus said, but prefer their tired traditions with their many admirers... who do not allow the clergy to marry, **yet they are called fathers?** Strange isn't it! Here, Jesus says **there are NO church fathers.** At best, they were **church brothers.**

for One is your Father, who is in heaven / and though HE is very kind; our FATHER in heaven might not like those who kidnap His adopted family, dividing loyalty to His family of faith that HE parents. **Call no one father, for One is your Father, who is in heaven /** not very complicated is it?

10 Do not be called counselors / okay. ✓ for a second time Jesus says **counselors** and **guides;** even **life coaches: for one is your Counselor** and if there is a question who that is, He left us with no doubt:

Christ / the only Messiah that ever was and ever will be; **Jesus Christ, the wonderful Counselor; the good Pastor to guide.**

11 And he who is greatest among you is your deacon / the word is: **diakonos;** deacon; in the NT... deacons wash tables and clean toilets and do other great stuff like that. That is great work, end of subject.

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Next Jesus, our great Teacher and Guide... gives a lesson that His students can do... using words His students understand.

¹² And whoever exalts himself / whoever promotes, elevates, or even wastes time praising himself... all words that even the dumbest kid in the class can understand,

whoever exalts himself... will be humbled / will be humiliated, subjugated and brought low; they will be like a basement... not the highest place in the house, right?

and whoever humbles himself... will be exalted / Jesus gives another assignment that His students clearly understand and can do. I know lots of people who oddly enjoy when the hammer of discipline falls on them. I guess they always need others to kick them in the ass. Here, Jesus says, Kick your own ass! You kick yours; I'll kick mine!

And notice: Jesus was teaching the multitudes,

but apparently, the envious busybodies also gathered; so, being a good Teacher, Jesus talks directly to them... of course, shattering their religious hocus pocus which only caused confusion; but will they listen?

This is the last discourse Jesus has with the Pharisees.

¹³ Woe to you / how terrible it will be for you, **scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** / highly educated, zealously devoted, both lovers of manmade traditions... who conceal what is; while practicing what is not!

for you all shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you all do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow them who are entering to go in / and like ornery, recalcitrant jackasses and obstructionists; I imagine the Lord to say of these that it would have been better if they had not been born.



¹⁴ Woe to you / how terrible it will be for you, **scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** / imposters,

for you all devour the houses of widows / still a funding strategy of some of these religious institutions today – probably those who took this verse out of their bible... who prey on the unsuspecting and vulnerable,

and for a pretense make long prayer / when they pray it's a hoax:
So, you all will receive the greater damnation



what church is this? Obviously, not the one that Jesus is building!

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¹⁵ Woe to you / how terrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

for you all travel sea and land to make one proselyte / one convert,

and when he is made, you all make him twice the son of hell than yourselves / said a little differently: your convert becomes a worse pervert... of the ways of God...than you!

¹⁶ Woe to you blind guides / how terrible it will be for every one of you; all you leaders who can't see,

who say / now Jesus is going to quote some of their popular, religious hocus pocus of the day which might sound spiritual, but it isn't. Remember: this is pharisaical BS; their own bovine scatology!

Whoever swears / to vow, to promise; to pledge, to make an oath.

Whoever pledges by the sacred place / this Greek word is: **naos**. By the way: this word is **NOT hieron**... the word used for the many buildings of the religious hierarchy... used only in the **gospels** and **Book of Acts**... when we read: Jesus went to the **temple** to teach; or the priests in the **temple**; or the people who pray in the **temple**; the children singing Hosanna in the **temple**; or even, the money changers, and sellers of doves in the **temple**;

Jesus is correcting familiar, sloppy spiritual sounding expressions: much like all the empty words we hear... when people who change holy days into holidays; or those who say things like: she is such **a little angel**; or if you sneeze, **Gaw ble-cha**; or say: I **go to church**; what? I thought: the people of God are the church!

Stephen correcting faulty thinking, concluded his martyrdom by quoting the prophets, **The most High does not dwell in naos / sacred places made with hands.**

Whoever pledges by the sacred place it is nothing / remember, these are legalistic people, who no longer spoke God's name; who thought it was too holy, so they invented names to use. It seems they taught: even if a promise invokes some holy place, he is not obligated; that oath can be ignored!

but whoever pledges by the gold of the naos... he is a debtor / but if his vow somehow touches the golden utensils and vessels... suddenly they said: he is obligated; that pledge counts! Whatever hocus pocus they taught... Jesus says: think differently! Because Jesus knows people make sacred vows... in sacred places, like marriage vows... which they do not intend to keep... Jesus says, to the religious leaders:

¹⁷ Are you all fools? or are you blind?

for which is greater, the gold dishes and vessels,



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or the **naos** that sanctifies the gold? / as if that sacred place... where you think God lives: somehow magically designates and sets apart what you pledge. Jesus asks the multitude: Do you hear their crazy, confusing... superstitious reasoning?

¹⁸ **And you say** / probably further mimicking the Pharisees,

Whoever pledges by the altar, Oh... it is nothing; but whoever pledges by the gift that is on it, he is guilty / he is indebted; he is obligated.

¹⁹ **Are you fools and blind?**

for which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? / what mysteriously sets apart the gift for God's purposes.

Honestly, if you didn't exactly understand these verses, don't worry. Jesus is showing His disciples how pretenders, like used car salesmen... use lots of hocus pocus speech. The proper answer is: **neither**. Since when do inanimate objects give witness to an oath?

The blind leaders suggested: some solemn pledges were binding; but some pledges can be broken -- more of their legalistic, hocus pocus prattle. Jesus knew what Solomon wrote 1,000 years earlier: Ecclesiastes 5: [When you pledge to God, defer not to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools; pay what you have pledged](#). It is better not to pledge, than to pledge, and not pay.

Now, Jesus, the good Teacher takes the words of these blind guides... and uses their own words, to refocus the multitude which gathered... to think correctly about what matters most...

²⁰ **So... whoever pledges by the altar, pledges by it, and by all the things on it.**

²¹ **And whoever pledges by the **naos** / by some sacred place in Jerusalem, Athens, or your own heart, pledges by it, and by Him who dwells in it.**

²² **And he who pledges by heaven, pledges by the throne of God, and by Him who sits on it.**

Jesus sets the record straight and says... **solemn pledges are to God**, so get our eyes on Him. If you are going to make a pledge... keep your word! let your yes, be yes; and your no, be no! Say what you mean; mean what you say: just like God our Father in heaven does... and He is listening.

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