

Dr. David Turner, Matthew

Lecture 10A – Matthew 23: Jesus' Final Words to the Jerusalem Establishment

NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, FAQs

1) Abstract

The provided text, "Turner_Matthew_Lect10A_English.pdf," offers a detailed analysis of **Matthew 23**, emphasizing its significance as **Jesus' final words to the Jerusalem establishment**. The lecture first positions Matthew 23 within the broader Gospel narrative, highlighting its distinct audience and tone compared to subsequent chapters, while acknowledging thematic connections. It then **breaks down Matthew 23 into three key sections**: Jesus' warnings against the scribes and Pharisees' errors, His prophetic denunciations of their sins, and His lament over Jerusalem. Crucially, the lecture addresses **modern concerns regarding anti-Semitism**, arguing that Matthew's critique is an **intramural Jewish critique of hypocrisy and the rejection of prophets**, not an external attack on Judaism. The discussion also **explores the historical context of "woe oracles" and the concept of hypocrisy** in ancient Jewish thought, concluding with a call for **Christian self-reflection and humility** in light of the text.

2) Briefing Document:

This detailed briefing document reviews the main themes and important ideas or facts from the provided source, "Turner_Matthew_Lect10A_English.pdf," which analyzes **Matthew 23**.

Detailed Briefing: Matthew 23 - Jesus' Final Words to the Jerusalem Establishment

Source: Excerpts from "Turner_Matthew_Lect10A_English.pdf" by Dr. David Turner, Matthew Lecture 10A – Matthew 23: Jesus' Final Words to the Jerusalem Establishment.

Overview: Dr. David Turner's lecture on Matthew 23 explores Jesus' solemn rebuke of the Jerusalem religious establishment. This chapter serves as a climax to Jesus' confrontations with Jewish leaders, acting as both a final denunciation and an introduction to the eschatological discourse of Matthew 24-25. The lecture emphasizes the deeply Jewish context of Matthew's writing and Jesus' critique, cautioning against anachronistic interpretations that foster antisemitism.

I. Contextual Understanding of Matthew 23

- **Placement within Matthew's Argument:** While tempting to connect Matthew 23 with 24-25 as a single discourse (like Matthew 13), Turner argues it's "probably better to view Matthew 23 as the climax of Jesus' confrontations with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, which began in 21:15."
 - **Connection to Matthew 24-25:** Despite being distinct, there are clear connections:
 - References to the persecution of Jesus' disciples (23:29-36 vs. 24:9-13, 24:21-22, 25:34-40).
 - Desolation of the Temple (23:38 vs. 24:1-3, 24:15).
 - Return of Jesus (23:39 vs. chapters 24 and 25).
 - **Purpose:** Matthew 23 "justified" the judgment of Jerusalem, its leaders, and its temple, *before* it is predicted in Matthew 24 and 25.
1. **Literary Structure of Matthew 23: Warning to Crowds and Disciples (23:1-12):** Jesus warns against the errors of the scribes and Pharisees.
 2. **Prophetic Woe Oracles (23:13-36):** Jesus denounces the scribes and Pharisees, linking their rebellion to their ancestors.
 3. **Lament over Jerusalem (23:37-39):** Jesus expresses sorrow and longing for Jerusalem, alongside its deserved judgment.

II. Matthew 23 and Modern Issues: Jewish-Christian Relations and Antisemitism

- **Historical Misuse:** Matthew 23 has been historically "used... as a confirmation of anti-Semitic attitudes and, worse yet, inquisitions, pogroms, and even the Holocaust of Germany."
- **"Invective" Language:** Jewish scholar Samuel Sandmel called Matthew 23 "a unique, unparalleled specimen of invective." However, "heated rhetoric in the service of religious disputes was quite the norm in ancient times" within Jewish circles, dating back to biblical prophets.
- **Matthew's Audience and Intent:** Matthew writes to a community "still identified to a great extent with the Jewish community before the tragic parting of the ways between the church and Judaism."
- Christianity was "still a sect of diverse Judaisms."
- Matthew should not be seen "anachronistically as a Christian critic of the Jewish people, but as a Christian Jew who is engaged in a vigorous intramural, that is to say, within the walls dispute, with other Jews over the identity of the Jew Jesus."
- Matthew's critique is "a thoroughly Jewish prophetic critique of the Jerusalem religious establishment, which calls for a return to the values of the Torah."
- The stringent critique is *not* "an attack on the Jewish people of all times or even of Jesus' day" but "directed against certain scribes and Pharisees who were prominent in the religious establishment of Jerusalem during the days of Jesus."
- **Alleviating Misunderstanding:** A "Judaized understanding" that stresses the Jewishness of the woe oracles and the concerns about hypocrisy and rejection of prophets can help. However, this intellectual understanding must be "conveyed with a sensitive and loving spirit" and a willingness to "love the Jewish people and grieve for the sad state of Jewish-Christian relations."

III. Two Models of Leadership (Matthew 23:1-12)

- **Audience:** Directed to "the crowds and the disciples," not primarily the Jewish leaders.

- **Legitimacy of Authority:** Jesus acknowledges the Jewish leaders' "legitimate position to guide and lead the people of Israel" (23:2-3a). He "does not dispute their status as leaders."
- **Critique of Leaders:** Jesus attacks:
 - Their "hypocrisy" (23:3b, 4).
 - Their "oppressive demands" that they do not follow themselves (23:4).
 - Their "love of prestige and power" (23:5-7), similar to the warnings in Matthew 6:1-18.
- **Jesus' Model for Disciples:** Disciples are to "reverence only the Father and the Messiah" (23:8-10).
 - They are not to "go around flaunting their titles." This applies to modern Christian circles too, cautioning against arrogance in academic or ordination titles (e.g., "senior pastor").
 - The disciples' community should imitate an "egalitarian model of the family," not a "hierarchical model" (compared to 20:25).
 - Jesus implicitly models humility (20:28).
- **Inconsistency and Authority:** The scribes and Pharisees "did not practice what they preached." Jesus warns disciples against this inconsistency, but still tells them "to follow their exposition of the Torah and the Halakha" (23:3a, 23:23), suggesting an ongoing intramural dispute within Judaism.

IV. Prophetic Oracles of Woe (Matthew 23:13-36)

- **Number of Woes:** Typically seven woes (excluding verse 14, often considered an interpolation).
- **Themes of the Woes:**
 - First Two (23:13, 15):** Jewish relationship to Gentiles and proselytization.
 - Second Pair (23:16, 23):** Halakha (interpretations of the law, legal rulings).
 - Third Pair (23:25, 27):** True cleanliness and purity.

- **Final Oracle (23:29ff):** The "root cause of all of it" – "the oracle against the Jews for rejecting the prophets and the culmination of this coming in Jesus' life and ministry."
 - **Old Testament Background of Woe Oracles: Common Prophetic Form:** OT prophets frequently "cried woe against Israel's sins" (e.g., Isaiah 5, Amos 5-6, Habakkuk 2).
 - **Content:** Oracles express "a blend of anger, grief, and alarm about the excruciating consequences" of sin. They state the conclusion (woe) then the reasons it's merited.
 - **Origin:** May have developed from "covenant curses" (Deuteronomy 27:15) or "funeral lamentations" (Jeremiah 22:18).
 - **New Testament and Jewish Literature:** Found elsewhere in NT (Luke 6, Revelation 18), Qumran literature (Dead Sea Scrolls), pseudepigraphical books (1 & 2 Enoch), and the Talmud.
 - **Prophet's Attitude:** "Not simply one of anger." Anger at sin is "tempered at times by his grief and alarm." The prophet speaks for God *against sin* (anger) but also for *his own people* (grief).
1. **Conclusions about Jesus' Woes: Not Innovative:** Jesus' "severe language must have sounded familiar to the Jewish leaders."
 2. **Not Spiteful:** Jesus' words "come at least as much from grief as they do from anger" (23:37).

V. Charge of Hypocrisy

- **Frequency in Matthew:** Matthew uses "hypocrites" fourteen times; nearly all woes in Matthew 23 identify scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites.
- **Definition:** From the Greco-Roman world, describing someone who "acts out a part in a dramatic production" or "pretends in order to deceive."
- **Matthew's Specific Meaning:** Hypocrites are those who "live for fleeting human applause rather than for eternal divine approval" (Matthew 6:1-18). They "honor God outwardly, but their hearts may be far from him" (15:7-8).

This involves "religious fraud, a basic discrepancy or inconsistency between one's outwardly godly behavior and one's inner evil thoughts or motives."

- **Old Testament Basis:** Deeply rooted in the Old Testament, especially Isaiah 29:13, cited by Jesus in Matthew 15:7-9. This concerns religious leaders who prioritize external observances over genuine piety and God's law (e.g., Korban practice).
- **Second Temple Literature:** Similar rebukes against hypocrisy are found in other Jewish texts (Psalms of Solomon, Assumption of Moses, Community Rule from Qumran, Rabbinic literature). Jesus was not alone in critiquing this.

VI. Central Charge: Israel's Rejection of Prophets

- **Most Serious Accusation:** "The charge that Israel has rejected its own prophets in 23:29-31 is perhaps the most serious accusation found in Matthew 23 since it addresses the root cause of other problems confronted there."
- **Consequences of Rejection:** If Israel had listened to its prophets:
 - Pharisees wouldn't have prevented entry into the kingdom.
 - Casuistry and trivial duties wouldn't have superseded basic ones.
 - Matters of the heart would have remained primary.
- **Culmination of Rejection:** This historical rejection of prophets "would reach its horrible culmination in the rejection of its Messiah, 23:32, and his messengers, 23:34."
- **Guilt of Innocent Blood:** This rejection brings guilt for "innocent blood shed from the first to the last book of the Old Testament, from Cain in Genesis to Zechariah in 2 Chronicles."
- **Repeated Theme in Matthew:** Jesus' genealogy highlights the Babylonian exile due to prophetic rejection.
- John the Baptist's rejection as an Elijah-like figure.
- Persecution of Jesus' disciples likened to the persecution of prophets (5:12, 10:41-42, 23:35-45).

- **Echoes OT and Second Temple Literature:** Jesus' charge aligns with similar accusations in the OT (2 Chronicles 36:15-16, Daniel 9:6, Deuteronomy 28:15) and Second Temple Jewish literature (Book of Jubilees, Lives of the Prophets, Qumran materials).

VII. Jesus' Lament Over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39)

- **Sympathetic Conclusion:** This lament is a "remarkably sympathetic conclusion to his antipathetic denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees."
- **Jesus' Compassion:** His compassion for his people and city is "palpable" despite how its leaders treated him and the suffering he knows is ahead.
- **Christian Reflection:** Christians today "must ponder the Lord's compassion for the Jewish people and reflect on their own level of concern." An arrogant attitude towards the lost, especially the Jewish people, is "despicable" (Romans 11:16-24).
- **Divine Sovereignty vs. Human Responsibility:** The lament illustrates this mystery: "How many times I wish to gather you, but you would not or you wouldn't let me" (23:37). The same Greek word is used for Jesus' desire and Jerusalem's refusal.
- **Future Hope:** Despite judgment (23:38), the condition continues until "the people of Jerusalem utter in faith the words of Psalm 118:26" ("Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"). The implication is that if they do, "they will ultimately receive the kingdom blessings they have rejected up to this point."

VIII. Application and Transition to Matthew 24

- **Warning for Disciples:** Matthew 23 is *not* only a critique of ancient Jewish leaders. "It is also intended to warn Jesus' disciples, both ancient and modern, not to follow the example of the scribes and Pharisees." (1 Peter 2:1).
- **Universal Vices:** "All of the vices here attributed to the scribes and Pharisees have attached themselves to Christians, and that in abundance."
- **Call for Christian Character:** "The integrity and humility of Christians, modeled on that of the Jewish Messiah, can alleviate the damage done by the attitudes and atrocities which mar Jewish-Christian relations yet today."

Matthew 23:8-12 serves as "a good place to start a much-needed check of Christian character."

- **Irony of Prophecy:** Jesus' judgment in 23:39 uses the very words the crowds shouted at his entry ("Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"), which the leaders angrily rejected. This highlights the "monstrous" nature of the leaders' "sinful rebellion" given their "official capacity" ("they are those who sit in Moses' seat").
- **Impending Destruction:** The lecture concludes by foreshadowing the destruction of the Temple, a central theme of Matthew 24-25, which Jesus predicts will occur before his return and the nation's genuine turning to him with the Psalm 118:26 confession.

3) Study Guide:

Study Guide: Matthew 23 – Jesus' Final Words to the Jerusalem Establishment

This study guide is designed to help you review and deepen your understanding of Matthew 23, focusing on Jesus' final words to the Jerusalem establishment as presented in the lecture.

I. Context and Placement of Matthew 23

- **Matthew 23 as a Climax:** Understand why Matthew 23 is best viewed as the culmination of Jesus' confrontations with Jewish leaders, beginning in Matthew 21:15.
- **Relationship to Matthew 24-25:** Discuss the arguments for and against connecting Matthew 23 with the eschatological discourse in Matthew 24-25, highlighting differences in audience, content, and tone.
- **Thematically Linked Passages:** Identify and explain the clear connections between Matthew 23 and Matthew 24-25, specifically regarding the persecution of disciples, the desolation of the temple, and Jesus' return.
- **Overall Structure:** Outline the three major sections of Matthew 23 as presented:
 1. Warning to crowds and disciples against scribes and Pharisees (vv. 1-12).

2. Denunciation of scribes and Pharisees via woe oracles (vv. 13-36).
3. Lament over Jerusalem (vv. 37-39).
- **Progression of Jesus' Engagements:** Trace the sequence of events from Jesus' running disputes with Jewish leaders (Matthew 21-22) to the impasse (22:46), the warning to followers (23:1-12), the woe oracles (23:13-36), and the lament (23:37-39), leading into the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25).

II. Matthew 23 and Modern Issues: Jewish-Christian Relations & Antisemitism

- **The "Invective" Charge:** Explain why Matthew 23 has been called "a unique, unparalleled specimen of invective" by some scholars and how the lecture addresses this.
- **Ancient Rhetoric:** Discuss the context of "heated rhetoric" in ancient religious disputes, including its use within Jewish circles and Second Temple sectarian literature.
- **Matthew's Audience and Intent:** Explain why Matthew's community is understood as still largely identified with Judaism and how this impacts the interpretation of Matthew 23.
- **"Intramural Dispute":** Define and explain the concept of Matthew as a "Christian Jew" engaged in an "intramural dispute" with "non-Messianic Jews." How does this perspective counter anachronistic interpretations of Matthew as an outsider attacking Judaism?
- **Torah Values:** Understand how Jesus' critique is presented not as an attack on the Jewish people or Judaism itself, but as a "thoroughly Jewish prophetic critique" calling for a return to Torah values.
- **Misunderstanding by the Gentile Church:** Discuss how Matthew 23 has been tragically misunderstood and misused by the Gentile church throughout history, leading to antisemitism.
- **"Judaized Understanding":** Explain what a "Judaized understanding" of Matthew 23 entails and how it might alleviate historical misunderstandings.

- **Christian Character:** Emphasize the lecture's call for Christians to apply Matthew 23 (especially vv. 8-12) as a warning against hypocrisy and vanity in their own lives, modeling humility and integrity.

III. Major Sections of Matthew 23 in Detail

- **A. Two Models of Leadership (23:1-12)**
- **Audience:** Who is Jesus addressing in this section?
- **Legitimacy vs. Hypocrisy:** Explain Jesus' stance on the authority of the Jewish leaders (Moses' seat) versus his condemnation of their hypocrisy, oppressive demands, and love of prestige/power.
- **Jesus' Model for Disciples:** Describe the "egalitarian model of the family" that disciples are to imitate, contrasting it with the hierarchical model of the Jewish leaders.
- **Relevance Today:** How do Jesus' words about titles and prestige apply to Christian circles today?
- **Torah and Halakha:** Clarify Jesus' instruction to follow the leaders' exposition of the Torah and Halakha, and how this relates to the idea of an "intramural dispute."
- **B. Prophetic Oracles of Woe (23:13-36)**
- **Number of Woes:** Discuss the variation in the number of woe oracles (seven or eight) and the textual issue with verse 14.
- **Themes of the Woes:** Identify the thematic pairings of the woe oracles as presented (Gentiles/proselytes, Halakha/law interpretations, cleanliness/purity, rejection of prophets).
- **Old Testament Background:Nature of Woe Oracles:** Describe the characteristics of Old Testament woe oracles, including their blend of anger, grief, and alarm, and how they state conclusions before premises.
- **Prophet's Attitude:** Explain the "dual solidarities" of the prophet, which lead to both anger against sin and grief for their own people.

- **Jesus' Innovation:** Discuss why Jesus' pronouncements were not innovative, but familiar to his Jewish audience from both Old Testament and Second Temple literature.
- **Charge of Hypocrisy: Definition in Matthew:** How does Matthew define "hypocrite" (living for human applause, outwardly honoring God but heart far, religious fraud, inconsistency)?
- **Greco-Roman vs. Matthew:** Contrast the general Greco-Roman meaning of "hypocrite" with its specific negative connotation in Matthew.
- **Isaiah 29:13:** Explain the significance of this Old Testament passage as a key text condemning religious fraud and its application by Jesus.
- **"Korban" Practice:** Give an example of a specific practice (Korban) that Jesus condemned as hypocritical, violating God's law.
- **External vs. Internal Purity:** Explain Jesus' teaching on defilement coming from internal problems (evil heart) rather than external sources.
- **Wider Jewish Context:** Discuss the presence of similar rebukes against hypocrisy in other Second Temple Jewish literature.
- **Rejection of Prophets (23:29-31): "Root Cause":** Why is the charge of rejecting prophets considered the "most serious accusation" and the "root cause" of other problems in Matthew 23?
- **Consequences of Rejection:** How did rejecting prophets lead to issues like preventing entry into the kingdom, casuistry, and elevating trivial duties?
- **Culmination in Messiah:** Explain how the rejection of prophets culminated in the rejection of Jesus and his messengers.
- **Innocent Blood:** Understand the significance of "innocent blood shed from the first to the last book of the Old Testament" (Cain to Zechariah).
- **Matthew's Recurring Theme:** Identify other instances in Matthew where the rejection of prophets is highlighted (genealogy, John the Baptist, persecution of disciples).
- **Old Testament Echoes:** Provide examples of Old Testament passages and figures (Ahab, Jezebel, Amos) that echo the charge of rejecting prophets.

- **Second Temple Literature:** Note the theme of prophet rejection in Second Temple Jewish literature.
- **C. Jesus' Lament Over Jerusalem (23:37-39)**
- **Sympathetic Conclusion:** How does this lament serve as a "remarkably sympathetic conclusion" to the denunciations?
- **Jesus' Compassion:** Describe the palpable compassion of Jesus for his people and city despite their treatment of him and the coming suffering.
- **Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility:** Explain how verses 23:37-39 illustrate the tension between Jesus' desire to gather Jerusalem and their refusal to be gathered, using the repeated Greek word.
- **Future Hope:** Discuss the implication of Psalm 118:26 and the condition for Jerusalem's future seeing of Jesus and receiving kingdom blessings.
- **Irony of Psalm 118:26:** Explain the irony of Jesus using the same words shouted by the crowds at his entry (from Psalm 118:26) to pronounce judgment on the leaders.

IV. Summary and Transition to Matthew 24

- **Sinful Rebellion and Official Capacity:** Reiterate how the leaders' sin was aggravated by their official capacity ("sit in Moses' seat").
- **Temple Destruction:** Connect Matthew 23's justification of judgment to the prediction of the temple's total destruction in Matthew 24.

Quiz: Matthew 23 – Jesus' Final Words to the Jerusalem Establishment

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. How does the lecture propose that Matthew 23 should be primarily viewed in relation to the preceding chapters in Matthew?
2. What are the three major sections or parts into which Matthew 23 is divided according to the lecture?
3. Why does the lecture argue that Matthew is not anachronistically portraying Jesus as a "Christian critic of the Jewish people"?

4. In Matthew 23:1-12, Jesus acknowledges the legitimate position of the Jewish leaders but condemns their hypocrisy. What specific aspects of their hypocrisy does he criticize?
5. What is the significance of the "seven woe oracles" in Matthew 23, and what Old Testament literary form do they echo?
6. Explain Matthew's definition of "hypocrite" as it applies to the Jewish leaders, drawing on the lecture's explanation.
7. According to the lecture, what is the "most serious accusation" and the "root cause" of other problems addressed in Matthew 23?
8. How does Jesus' charge that Israel rejected its prophets culminate in the context of his own ministry and the subsequent persecution of his messengers?
9. Describe the "dual solidarities" of the prophet that explain the blend of anger and grief in Old Testament woe oracles and, by extension, in Jesus' lament.
10. How does Jesus' lament over Jerusalem (23:37-39) surprisingly conclude his strong denunciations, and what does it reveal about his character?

Answer Key for Quiz

1. The lecture argues that Matthew 23 is best viewed as the climax of Jesus' confrontations with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, which began in 21:15. While it connects to chapters 24-25, it serves as the justification for the judgment predicted later.
2. The three major sections of Matthew 23 are: Jesus warning the crowds and his disciples against the errors of the scribes and Pharisees (vv. 1-12), his denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees with prophetic woe oracles (vv. 13-36), and his poignant lament over rebellious Jerusalem (vv. 37-39).
3. Matthew is understood as a Messianic Jew writing to convince non-Messianic Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, making it an "intramural dispute." Therefore, Matthew is not attacking Jews or Judaism as an outsider, but offering a thoroughly Jewish prophetic critique.

4. Jesus criticizes the Jewish leaders' hypocrisy in not practicing what they preach, their oppressive demands on the people which they don't bear themselves, and their love of prestige, power, and outward show rather than true piety.
5. The seven (or eight) woe oracles are prophetic denunciations against the Jewish leaders for their sins, echoing a common literary form used by Old Testament prophets. They speak with a blend of anger, grief, and alarm about the consequences of Israel's sin.
6. In Matthew, a "hypocrite" is defined as someone who lives for fleeting human applause rather than divine approval, honors God outwardly but has a heart far from Him, pretends sincere religious interest, and says one thing but does another, indicating religious fraud.
7. The "most serious accusation" and "root cause" in Matthew 23 is that Israel has rejected its own prophets (23:29-31). This fundamental rejection is seen as leading to other problems like hindering entry into the kingdom and prioritizing trivial duties.
8. The lecture explains that Israel's historical rejection of its prophets reaches its horrible culmination in their rejection of Jesus, the Messiah, and subsequently, his messengers/disciples. This brings upon them the guilt of all innocent blood shed throughout Israel's history.
9. The prophet's "dual solidarities" refer to their speaking for God against sin, which explains their anger, but also their solidarity with their own people, which explains their grief and alarm at the consequences of sin. This pathos is evident in woe oracles.
10. Jesus' lament over Jerusalem serves as a remarkably sympathetic conclusion to his denunciations, revealing his palpable compassion for his people and city despite their treatment of him. It illustrates a mysterious relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, where he desires to gather them but they refuse.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the lecture's argument that Matthew 23 should be understood as an "intramural dispute" within Judaism, rather than an anachronistic attack by a "Christian" against "Judaism." Discuss how this perspective re-frames Jesus' critique and its implications for modern Jewish-Christian relations.
2. Examine the significance of the "woe oracles" in Matthew 23, detailing their Old Testament background and the two primary attitudes (anger and grief) they convey. How does Jesus' use of these oracles align with or depart from traditional prophetic usage, and what does this reveal about his identity and message?
3. Discuss the central charge of "hypocrisy" against the Jewish leaders in Matthew 23. Provide specific examples from the text and the lecture's explanation of Matthew's definition of hypocrisy. How does Jesus' critique of hypocrisy connect to earlier teachings in Matthew and to the broader Old Testament prophetic tradition?
4. The lecture identifies the charge that "Israel has rejected its prophets" as the "most serious accusation" in Matthew 23. Trace how this theme is developed throughout Matthew's Gospel, culminating in this chapter. Explain the theological implications of this rejection for Jerusalem's fate and the coming of the Messiah.
5. Analyze the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility as illustrated in Jesus' lament over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39). How does the repetition of a key Greek word highlight this tension? Discuss how this passage, despite its sorrowful tone, also offers a conditional hope for Jerusalem's future.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Anachronistically:** Interpreting or understanding something as if it belongs to a different time period than it actually does; in this context, applying later understandings of "Christianity" and "Judaism" to Matthew's time.
- **Antisemitism:** Hostility to, prejudice toward, or discrimination against Jews. The lecture addresses how Matthew 23 has been misused to promote antisemitism.

- **Casuistry:** The use of clever but unsound reasoning, especially in relation to moral questions; in Matthew 23, it refers to the Jewish leaders' elevation of trivial duties or legal technicalities over basic moral commands.
- **Discourse:** A lengthy formal speech or written communication; Matthew 23, 24, and 25 are referred to as discourses.
- **Dual Solidarities:** The concept that an Old Testament prophet (and by extension, Jesus) experiences both anger (in speaking for God against sin) and grief (due to their solidarity with their own people who are suffering judgment).
- **Egalitarian Model of the Family:** The idea of a community structure based on equality, where members are considered brothers and sisters, rather than a hierarchical system with rigid titles and power structures.
- **Eschatological Discourse:** Jesus' teaching concerning the "end of the age" or last things, primarily found in Matthew 24-25.
- **Halakha:** Jewish law, derived from the Torah, which provides legal rulings for everyday life; the interpretations and applications of biblical law.
- **Hypocrisy:** In Matthew, specifically defined as religious fraud; a basic discrepancy or inconsistency between one's outwardly godly behavior and one's inner evil thoughts or motives, often motivated by a desire for human applause rather than divine approval.
- **Impasse:** A situation in which no progress is possible, especially because of disagreement; a deadlock. Refers to the end of Jesus' disputes with the Jewish leaders in Matthew 22:46.
- **Intramural Dispute:** A dispute occurring "within the walls" or within a single community or group; in this context, a theological debate between Messianic Jews (like Matthew and his community) and other Jewish groups of the time.
- **Invective:** Insulting, abusive, or highly critical language. Matthew 23 has been described as a "specimen of invective."
- **Korban Practice:** A Jewish practice, mentioned in Matthew 15, where one might dedicate property to God, thereby avoiding the obligation to use it to

support one's parents. Jesus condemned this as a fraudulent claim that set aside God's law.

- **Messianic Jew:** A Jew who believes Jesus is the Messiah. The lecture posits Matthew as a Messianic Jew.
- **Olivet Discourse:** Another name for the eschatological discourse of Matthew 24-25, named after the Mount of Olives where Jesus delivered it.
- **Pogroms:** Organized massacres of a particular ethnic group, in particular, Jews in Eastern Europe.
- **Prophetic Woe Oracles:** A literary form found in the Old Testament prophets and other Jewish literature, characterized by the exclamation "Woe!" followed by a description of the persons or actions deserving judgment, often expressing both anger and grief.
- **Pseudepigraphical Books:** Ancient Jewish or early Christian writings that are falsely attributed to biblical figures (e.g., 1 and 2 Enoch).
- **Qumran Literature:** The body of texts discovered at Qumran, most notably the Dead Sea Scrolls, which represent the writings of a Jewish sectarian community from the Second Temple period.
- **Second Temple Sectarian Literature:** Writings from various Jewish groups during the period of the Second Temple (approx. 516 BCE - 70 CE), often critical of the Jerusalem religious establishment.
- **Shekhinah Glory:** In Jewish tradition, the visible manifestation of God's presence, often associated with the Temple. Jesus' departure from the temple is compared to the departure of the Shekhinah.
- **Sovereignty (Divine):** The supreme authority and control of God.
- **Talmud:** A central text of Rabbinic Judaism, consisting of rabbinic discussions of Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history.
- **Torah:** The central reference of the religious Judaic tradition, primarily referring to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Pentateuch) and encompassing the entire body of Jewish laws and teachings.

4) FAQs

- 1. What is the main theme of Matthew 23 and how does it relate to Jesus' broader interactions with Jewish leaders in Jerusalem?
 - Matthew 23 represents the solemn climax of Jesus' confrontations with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, which began in Matthew 21:15. In this chapter, Jesus delivers his final, prophetic words to the Jerusalem establishment. The main theme is Jesus' strong rebuke and denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees, primarily for their hypocrisy and their historical rejection of God's prophets. This discourse serves as a justification for the judgment of Jerusalem and its leaders before the predictions of the temple's destruction and Jesus' return in Matthew 24 and 25.
- 2. How should Matthew 23 be understood in the context of Jewish-Christian relations and the issue of antisemitism today?
 - Matthew 23 has unfortunately been misused throughout history to fuel antisemitism. However, it's crucial to understand it not as an attack on Jewish people or Judaism as a whole, but as an "intramural dispute" within Judaism. Matthew was written by a "Messianic Jew" attempting to persuade "non-Messianic Jews" that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. Jesus' critique is directed specifically against certain scribes and Pharisees who were prominent in the Jerusalem religious establishment of his day, not against all Jewish people across time. The severe language, common in ancient religious disputes and prophetic tradition, should not be misconstrued as promoting antagonism towards Jews, but rather as a call for a return to the values of the Torah and a warning against hypocrisy for all religious leaders, including Christians.
- 3. What are the two contrasting models of leadership presented by Jesus in Matthew 23:1-12?
 - Jesus presents two contrasting models of leadership. The first is exemplified by the scribes and Pharisees, whom Jesus acknowledges hold a legitimate position of authority (sitting in Moses' seat), but whose leadership is characterized by hypocrisy, oppressive demands on others that they do not follow themselves, and a love of prestige and power. This model is driven by a desire for human applause. In stark contrast, Jesus instructs his disciples to adopt an egalitarian model, akin to a family, where reverence is due only to the Father and the Messiah. Disciples are warned against flaunting titles or seeking prestige, emphasizing humility and mutual respect (e.g., calling each other "brother" or "sister") over hierarchical structures.

- 4. What are the "woe oracles" in Matthew 23 and what is their Old Testament background?

- The "woe oracles" are a series of severe denunciations Jesus pronounces against the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:13-36 (seven oracles in most modern versions). These oracles are not innovative but are deeply rooted in the Old Testament prophetic tradition, where prophets frequently cried "woe" against Israel's sins (e.g., Isaiah 5, Amos 5-6, Habakkuk 2). Such oracles convey a blend of anger, grief, and alarm over the devastating consequences of sin. They typically state the conclusion of judgment before providing the reasons why the "woe" is merited. Jesus' use of this language highlights his role as a prophet speaking for God, and his grief, as seen in 23:37, tempers his anger, reflecting the prophet's solidarity with his own people even as he announces their impending doom.

- 5. What is the nature of "hypocrisy" as condemned by Jesus in Matthew 23?

- In Matthew, hypocrisy goes beyond merely pretending; it signifies "religious fraud" and a fundamental discrepancy between one's outward godly behavior and one's inner evil thoughts or motives. Jesus condemns those who perform religious acts for fleeting human applause rather than for eternal divine approval. They may honor God outwardly, but their hearts are far from Him. A hypocrite might feign sincere religious interest while questioning Jesus with malicious intent, or say one thing but do another (e.g., demanding others follow rules they themselves ignore). This critique aligns with Old Testament condemnations of religious fraud, particularly Isaiah 29:13, cited by Jesus, which speaks of pious words and traditional rulings disguising hearts far from God.

- 6. What is the "most serious accusation" made by Jesus in Matthew 23?

- The most serious accusation in Matthew 23 is that Israel has rejected its prophets, culminating in the rejection of the Messiah (23:29-32). This charge is considered the root cause of many other problems Jesus confronts. Throughout its history, Israel consistently failed to listen to God's prophets, leading to the distortion of the Torah, the elevation of trivial duties over essential ones, and a focus on external appearances rather than internal righteousness. This historical pattern of rejecting prophetic messengers would reach its tragic peak with the rejection of Jesus himself and his disciples, bringing the guilt of all innocent blood shed from Abel to Zechariah.

- 7. How does Jesus' lament over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37-39

provide a sympathetic conclusion to his denunciation?

- Jesus' lament over Jerusalem offers a profoundly sympathetic and compassionate conclusion to his otherwise harsh denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. In this poignant passage, Jesus expresses his deep desire to gather Jerusalem's people like a hen gathers her chicks, but laments their unwillingness to be gathered. This illustrates the mysterious interplay between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Despite the imminent judgment on the city and its leaders, Jesus holds out hope for a future restoration if the people ultimately turn to him and utter the words of Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." This lament reveals Jesus' profound grief and love for his people, even in the face of their rejection.

- 8. What practical lessons can Christians today draw from

Matthew 23, especially regarding their own conduct and

Jewish-Christian relations?

- Christians must avoid reading Matthew 23 solely as a historical critique of ancient Jewish leaders. Instead, it serves as a powerful warning to Jesus' disciples, both ancient and modern, not to imitate the hypocrisy and vanity of the scribes and Pharisees. The vices attributed to them can easily manifest within Christian communities today, such as flaunting titles, seeking prestige, or exhibiting a discrepancy between outward piety and inner motives. Matthew 23, particularly verses 8-12, calls for a self-check of Christian character, emphasizing integrity, humility, and service. Furthermore, understanding Matthew 23 as an intramural Jewish dispute, rather than an anti-Jewish polemic, is crucial for Christians to cultivate a sensitive and loving spirit toward the Jewish people, striving to alleviate the historical damage of antisemitism and foster reconciliation.