

Title: Matthew 23-24

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Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Craig Keener examines Matthew 23 and 24, where Jesus transitions from public debates to direct condemnation of the hypocrisy and superficial righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. He discusses the historical context of the temple's destruction in 70 AD as a specific, fulfilled prophecy resulting from the leadership's corruption, while emphasizing that these warnings serve as an ongoing challenge to modern religious leaders. Keener also addresses the disciples' questions regarding the timing of the temple's fall and the signs of Jesus' second coming, framing the entire discourse within God's sorrowful love and the hope of the Messiah's return.

Outline

I. Introduction to Matthew 23–24

- A. Shift from public debate to direct address of disciples and crowds
- B. Dual focus: impending judgment on the 1st-century religious establishment and universal warnings for today's leaders

II. Jesus' Critique of the Pharisees and Scribes (Matthew 23:1–12)

- A. Sitting in Moses's seat
 - Claiming the role of Moses's successors and meticulous interpreters of the law
 - Instructed to hear their correct teachings but not imitate their hypocritical actions
 - Accusation of laying heavy ethical burdens on others without assisting them
- B. Seeking marks of honor and public recognition

- Use of conspicuous phylacteries and tzitzit (fringes/tassels) to draw attention to their piety
 - Coveting the chief seats at banquets and prominent places of honor in synagogues
- C. Seeking honorary titles
 - Prohibition against using titles like "Rabbi" (my master), "Father," or "Leader" as tools of social superiority
 - Emphasis on mutual brotherhood among believers and humble, servant-hearted leadership
 - Prophetic reversal: whoever exalts themselves will be humbled, and the humble will be exalted
- **III. The Seven Woes Against Hypocrisy (Matthew 23:13–32)**
- A. Shutting the kingdom of heaven and making proselytes twice as fit for hell
- B. Blind guides and meaningless casuistry (oaths by temple gold, altar gifts, etc.)
- C. Missing the weightier matters of the law
 - Meticulous tithing of tiny agrarian spices (mint, dill, and cumin)
 - Neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness (the heart of the law)
 - Humorous illustration of "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel"
- D. External versus internal cleansing
 - Cleaning only the outside of cups and dishes while the inside remains full of greed and self-indulgence
 - Analogy of whitewashed tombs concealing inner corpse uncleanness and decay
- E. Building tombs for prophets and claiming moral superiority over ancestors
 - Self-condemnation as genetic and moral descendants of prophet-killers
 - Climaxing ancestral sins by plotting to reject and kill Jesus, the ultimate prophet

- **IV. Climax of Judgment and Lament (Matthew 23:33–39)**

- A. Accumulation of righteous blood (from Abel to Zechariah son of Berechiah) on "this generation"
- B. The historical context of Zechariah's martyrdom and Jewish traditions of crying blood
- C. Jesus' sorrowful lament over Jerusalem: God's desire to gather His children as a hen gathers her chicks
- D. Prophecy of the temple's desolation and eventual second coming ("Blessed is he who comes...")

- **V. The Destruction of the Temple (Matthew 24:1–2)**

- A. Magnificence of Herod's temple compared to other ancient world wonders
- B. Specific prophecy of complete desolation: not one stone left upon another
- C. Historical fulfillment in 70 AD under the Romans

- **VI. The Disciples' Questions and Signs of the End (Matthew 24:3–31)**

- A. The two grammatical questions asked by the disciples:
 - When will these things (destruction of the temple) take place?
 - What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?
- B. Prophetic blending of near and far judgments (locust plagues/wars as prisms of final judgment)
- C. Non-signs versus the prerequisite of global preaching and the ultimate sign of the Son of Man