

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 35 – February 4th – Matthew 23:13-39

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Matthew

- Hagner, Donald A *Word Biblical Commentary Vols.33a & 33b: Matthew 1-13 & Matthew 14-28*, Word Books, Dallas, 1993 & 1995
- Morris, Leon *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992

Verses 13-33

Cf. Luke 11:39-52. Matthew has seven woes against the scribes and Pharisees rather than the six in Luke. Hagner says that this is "significant symbolism, pointing to a fulness of corruption." He adds, "The first six woes appear to be linked in pairs, with the seventh serving as a climax: the first and second (vv 13–15) concern the effect of the scribes and Pharisees on their disciples; the third and fourth (vv 16–24) concern their teaching; the fifth and sixth (vv 25–28) concern the problem of externalism; the seventh the rejection of those sent by God."

On the application of these woes, Hagner comments, "There is today only one proper Christian use of the woe sayings of this pericope. It is found not primarily in the application of the passage to the historical Pharisees, and even less to modern Judaism as a religion, but in the application of the passage to members of the church. Hypocrisy is the real enemy of this pericope, not the scribes, the Pharisees, or the Jews. If, on the model of this pericope, a bitter woe is to be pronounced against anyone today, it must be directed *solely* against hypocrisy in the church (cf. 1 Peter 2:1)."

Verse 13

Οὐαὶ δὲ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι κλείετε τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων· ὑμεῖς γὰρ οὐκ εἰσέρχεσθε, οὐδὲ τοὺς εἰσερχομένους ἀφίετε εἰσελθεῖν.

οὐαὶ woe! how horrible it will be!

"The woe saying is a painful statement of displeasure involving an implied judgment ... hence it serves as the opposite of the beatitude. Woe sayings are found elsewhere in Matthew (11:21; 18:7; 24:19; 26:24), but the seven woes of the present pericope form a distinctive set (all are identical with the present formula [cf. vv 15, 23, 25, 27, 29] except for v. 16). Woe sayings are not uncommon in the OT, and a piling up of a succession of woe oracles is occasionally also found (cf. Isa 5:8–22 for a series of six; Hab 2:6–20 for five)." Hagner.

ὑποκριτής, ου m hypocrite
κλειω shut, shut up, lock
ἐμπροσθεν before, in front
εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in
ἀφίημι allow, tolerate

Verse 14

Most ancient MSS omit this verse. It would appear to be an interpolation from Mk 12:40 or Lk 20:47.

Verse 15

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι περιάγετε τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν ξηρὰν ποιῆσαι ἓνα προσήλυτον, καὶ ὅταν γένηται ποιεῖτε αὐτὸν υἱὸν γεέννης διπλοτέρου ὑμῶν.

περιαγω go around, travel over
θαλασσα, ης f sea
ξηρος, α, ον dry
ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιω
εἷς, μια, ἓν one, a, an, single
προσηλυτος, ου m proselyte (a convert to Judaism)
ὅταν when, whenever
γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι
γεεννα, ης f hell
διπλοτερος, α, ον twice as much, much more (comp. of διπλος)

Verse 16

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, ὀδηγοὶ τυφλοὶ οἱ λέγοντες· Ὅς ἂν ὁμόση ἐν τῷ ναῷ, οὐδέν ἐστιν, ὅς δ' ἂν ὁμόση ἐν τῷ χρυσῷ τοῦ ναοῦ ὀφείλει.

ὀδηγος, ου m guide, leader

τυφλος, η, ον blind

ὅς ἂν whoever

ὁμόση Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ὀμνω and

ὀμνυμι swear, vow, make an oath

ναος, ου m temple, sanctuary

οὐδέν Adjective, n nom & acc s οὐδεις,

οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing

χρυσος, ου m gold, gold coin, gold image

ὀφείλω be bound or obligated

Verse 17

μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοὶ, τίς γὰρ μείζων ἐστίν, ὁ χρυσὸς ἢ ὁ ναὸς ὁ ἀγιασας τὸν χρυσόν;

μωρος, α, ον foolish

μείζων, ον greater, greatest

ἢ or

ἀγιαζω sanctify, make holy

"The point is not that the Pharisees simply had matters reversed but that an oath must in every case be regarded as binding... The supposed exceptions allowed by the Pharisees were deceiving and as such were disallowed by Jesus." Hagner.

Verse 18

καί· Ὅς ἂν ὁμόση ἐν τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ, οὐδέν ἐστιν, ὅς δ' ἂν ὁμόση ἐν τῷ δώρῳ τῷ ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ ὀφείλει.

θυσιαστηριον, ου n altar (of incense)

δωρον, ου n gift, offering

ἐπάνω prep with gen. on, upon

Verse 19

τυφλοὶ, τί γὰρ μείζων, τὸ δῶρον ἢ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ ἀγιάζον τὸ δῶρον;

Many MSS read μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοὶ after the pattern of v 17. Metzger comments, "No good reason can be found to account for their deletion if they had been original."

Verse 20

ὁ οὖν ὁμόσας ἐν τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ ὀμνύει ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ·

ὁμόσας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s ὀμνω

Verse 21

καὶ ὁ ὁμόσας ἐν τῷ ναῷ ὀμνύει ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ κατοικοῦντι αὐτόν·

κατοικεω live, inhabit

Verse 22

καὶ ὁ ὁμόσας ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ὀμνύει ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ.

οὐρανος, ου m heaven

θρονος, ου m throne

καθημαι sit, sit down

Verse 23

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι ἀποδεκατοῦτε τὸ ἡδύοσμον καὶ τὸ ἄνηθον καὶ τὸ κύμινον, καὶ ἀφήκατε τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, τὴν κρίσιν καὶ τὸ ἔλεος καὶ τὴν πίστιν· ταῦτα ἔδει ποιῆσαι κάκεῖνα μὴ ἀφιέναι.

For opening phrase, see v.13

ἀποδεκατω give a tenth, tithe

ἡδυοσμον, ου n mint

ἀνηθον, ου n dill (a seasoning plant)

κύμινον, ου n cummin (aromatic plant)

Cf. Lev 27:30; Deut 14:22-23 also Luke 11:42 and 18:12.

ἀφήκατε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl ἀφημι
leave, forsake

βαρύτερος, α, ον more weighty, more serious, more important

νομος, ου m law

"The context favours translating τὴν πίστιν as 'faithfulness' rather than 'faith'." Hagner. Cf. Mic 6:8.

κρίσις, εως f judgement, justice

ἐλεος, ους n mercy, compassion

πίστις, εως f faith

ἔδει Verb, imperf indic, 3 s (impers) δεῖ
impersonal verb it is necessary, must, should, ought

ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιεω

κάκενος, η, ο contraction of καὶ ἐκενος
and that one, and those

ἀφιέναι Verb, pres act infin ἀφημι

There is nothing wrong with attention to the minute details of the law – detailed obedience is to be commended. "The trouble was that in their concern that these small matters be properly attended to, the Pharisees neglected weightier matters that were much more important. These more important duties were made much more plain in Scripture than the minutiae on which the Pharisees concentrated their attention." Morris.

"His reasoning appears to be: If the Pharisees wish to tithe even the smallest herbs, well and good – let them, as long as they give attention at the same time to the most important items of the law, items that bear directly on the welfare of others around them. Here Jesus strikingly resembles the OT prophets." Hagner.

Verse 24

ὀδηγοὶ τυφλοὶ, οἱ διῦλιζοντες τὸν κώνωπα τὴν δὲ κάμηλον καταπίνοντες.

ὀδηγος, ου m guide, leader
τυφλος, η, ον blind

Cf. v.16.

διῦλιζω strain out, filter out
κωνωψ, ωπος m gnat, mosquito

Such insects would have been considered unclean, cf. Lev 11:23 – as also is the camel, Lev 11:4!

καμηλος, ου m & f camel
καταπινω swallow, swallow up

Verse 25

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι καθαρίζετε τὸ ἐξωθεν τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος, ἔσωθεν δὲ γέμουσιν ἐξ ἀρπαγῆς καὶ ἀκρασίας.

καθαρίζω cleanse, make clean
ἐξωθεν adv outside; το ἐ. the outside
ποτηριον, ου n cup
παροψις, ιδος f plate, dish
ἐσωθεν adv. within, inside
γεμω be full, be covered with
ἀρπαγη, ης f greed, violence, robbery
ἀκρασια, ας f self-indulgence, lack of self-control

Morris thinks this refers literally to what they ate and drank, as GNB "full of what you have obtained by violence and selfishness."
"These people ate and drank luxuriously things which they secured by acts of violence and wrong. What they put in their cups was contaminated by the source from which it had come, and it was useless to polish the outside of the vessel, and so meet the demands of the traditional law." Robinson.
Hagner thinks that Jesus is using the cup as a picture of their persons.

Verse 26

Φαρισαῖε τυφλέ, καθάρισον πρῶτον τὸ ἐντὸς τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος, ἵνα γένηται καὶ τὸ ἐκτὸς αὐτοῦ καθαρὸν.

τυφλος, η, ον see v.24
καθάρισον Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s
καθαρίζω
πρωτον first, in the first place, first of all
ἐντος prep within; το ἐ. what is inside
γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι
ἐκτος prep outside; το ἐ. the outside

Many MSS (⋈ B C L W ^f13 TR lat sy^{p,h} co) add καὶ τῆς παροψίδος, perhaps influenced by the words in the preceding verse. Omitting the words are D Θ ^f1 sy^s. Despite the relatively weak attestation of the shorter text, the UBS editors favour it because of the instances supporting the singular αὐτοῦ in the following clause. In favour of the singular αὐτοῦ are B* D Θ ^f1,13 sy^s; many MSS (⋈ B² C L W TR sy^{p,h}) have the plural αὐτῶν agreeing with an immediately preceding reference to both the cup and the dish (X lat mae lack any pronoun).

καθαρος, α, ον pure, clean

"The Pharisees are being taught that their method is all wrong. In the case of a person, to concentrate on the outward does nothing for the inward, whereas to make sure that the inward is clean means that the outward will also be clean. That follows inevitably." Morris.

Verse 27

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι παρομοιάζετε τάφοις κεκονιαμένοις, οἵτινες ἐξωθεν μὲν φαίνονται ὡραῖοι ἔσωθεν δὲ γέμουσιν ὀστέων νεκρῶν καὶ πάσης ἀκαθαρσίας.

For opening phrase, see v.13

παρομοιάζω be like, resemble
ταφος, ου m grave, tomb
κεκονιαμένοις Verb, perf pass ptc, m & n dat pl κονιαω whitewash

The only other NT occurrence is in Acts 23:3.

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἥτις, ὅ τι who, which
ἐξωθεν see v.25
φαινω shine; midd. and pass. appear
ὡραιος, α, ον beautiful, attractive, pleasant
ἐσωθεν see v.25
γεμω see v.25
ὀστεον, ου and ὀστουν, ου n bone
νεκρος, α, ον dead
ἀκαθαρσια, ας f impurity, uncleanness

"People were not necessarily buried together in cemeteries; isolated graves might be found in all sorts of places. A grave might not be well kept after a lapse of time... and the grave could easily become inconspicuous. People not familiar with the locality but passing through on the way up to Jerusalem for a feast might well accidentally make contact with such a grave, and the contact would make them ceremonially unclean (see Num 19:11-22 ...). As help for such pilgrims (and others), tombs were whitewashed on the fifteenth of the month Adar, a month before Passover; the tombs would then be conspicuous and anyone passing through would be warned (see Mishnah *Ma'as* Sh 5:1; *Sheqal* 1:1 etc.), even though they had little local knowledge. The care with which such tombs were whitewashed made them *beautiful*, but it did nothing for the fact that inside such tombs were *dead people's bones and all uncleanness*." Morris.

Verse 28

οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔξωθεν μὲν φαίνεσθε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δίκαιοι, ἔσωθεν δὲ ἐστε μεστοὶ ὑποκρίσεως καὶ ἀνομίας.

οὕτως adv. thus, in this way
δικαίος, α, ον righteous
μεστός, η, ον full
ὑποκρισις, εως f hypocrisy, pretence
ἀνομία, ας f wickedness, lawlessness, sin

Despite their emphasis on detailed law-keeping, inside they are lawless. They fail to keep the heart of the matter – justice, mercy and love. Cf. Mic 6:8.

Verse 29

Οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί, ὅτι οἰκοδομεῖτε τοὺς τάφους τῶν προφητῶν καὶ κοσμεῖτε τὰ μνημεῖα τῶν δικαίων,

οἰκοδομεῶ build, build up, encourage
τάφος, ου m see v.27
κοσμεῶ adorn, decorate, put in order
μνημεῖον, ου n grave, tomb, monument

Verse 30

καὶ λέγετε· Εἰ ἤμεθα ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, οὐκ ἂν ἤμεθα αὐτῶν κοινωνοὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι τῶν προφητῶν·

ἂν particle indicating contingency
κοινωνός, ου m partner, sharer
αἷμα, ατος f blood

Verse 31

ὥστε μαρτυρεῖτε ἑαυτοῖς ὅτι υἱοὶ ἐστε τῶν φονευσάντων τοὺς προφήτας.

ὥστε so that, with the result that

μαρτυρεῶ bear witness, testify
ἑαυτός, ἑαυτή, ἑαυτόν reflexive pronoun,
himself, herself, itself
φονευσάντων Verb, aor act ptc, gen pl
φονεῶ murder, put to death

Cf. Lk 11:47,48. Though they thought to align themselves with the prophets yet their hypocrisy, and their rejection of God's message, is just such as the prophets denounced. Hence in their maintenance of the tombs of the prophets they are demonstrating their solidarity with those who killed them, not with the prophets themselves. "No rejection of God's messengers is more grievous than the Pharisees' rejection of God's supreme messenger, Jesus." Hagner. Cf. Matt 21:35-39.

Verse 32

καὶ ὑμεῖς πληρώσατε τὸ μέτρον τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν.

πληρώσατε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl
πληρῶω fill, make full
μέτρον, ου n measure, quantity

This is seen particularly in the Pharisees opposition to Jesus, the word made flesh, and in their plots to kill him.

Verse 33

ὄφεις γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, πῶς φύγητε ἀπὸ τῆς κρίσεως τῆς γεέννης;

ὄφις, εως m snake, serpent
γεννημα, τος n offspring
ἐχίδνα, ης f snake, viper

Cf. 3:7. "The whole expression means 'snakes and sons of snakes'; the words and works of the Pharisees of Jesus' day show their genuine kinship with the *vipers* who had put the prophets to death in earlier days." Morris. "The application of this kind of language to the representatives of Israel is shocking in the highest degree." Hagner.

φύγητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl φευγῶ flee,
avoid
πῶς how(?)
κρίσις, εως f judgement, condemnation
γεέννα, ης f hell

Verses 34-36

Cf. Luke 11:49-51.

Verse 34

διὰ τοῦτο ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω πρὸς ὑμᾶς
προφήτας καὶ σοφοὺς καὶ γραμματεῖς· ἐξ
αὐτῶν ἀποκτενεῖτε καὶ σταυρώσετε, καὶ ἐξ
αὐτῶν μαστιγώσετε ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ὑμῶν
καὶ διώξετε ἀπὸ πόλεως εἰς πόλιν·

δια τουτο here probably 'accordingly' or 'in
keeping with this.'

ἀποστελλω send, send out
σοφος, η, ον wise

"Given the future tenses that follow, προφήτας
καὶ σοφοὺς καὶ γραμματεῖς must refer to
Christian 'prophets and wise men and scribes'
(the model of the sending of God's messengers
and their rejection is, to be sure, the same as in
the OT; cf. Jer 7:25–26; 25:4 among many
passages). In view are those 'sent' by Jesus to
carry on his work, that is, his 'apostles' and
their associates, the leadership of the new
community." Hagner.

γραμματευς, εως m scribe, expert in
Jewish law, scholar

ἀποκτενεῖτε Verb, fut act indic, 2 pl
ἀποκτεινω kill, put to death

σταυρωω crucify

μαστιγωω beat with a whip

διωκω persecute, pursue

πολις, εως f city, town

Verse 35

ὅπως ἔλθῃ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς πᾶν αἷμα δίκαιον
ἐκχυννόμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος
Ἄβελ τοῦ δικαίου ἕως τοῦ αἵματος Ζαχαρίου
υἱοῦ Βαραχίου, ὃν ἐφρονεύσατε μεταξὺ τοῦ
ναοῦ καὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου.

ὅπως (or ὅπως ἂν) that, in order that

"Indicates that the divine purpose will be
worked out in and through this human
rejection of God's messengers." Morris.

αἷμα, ατος f see v.30

δικαιος, α, ον see v.28

ἐκχεω and ἐκχυννω pour out, shed (blood)

"Through the ages God has sent his prophets,
sages, and the like, and he will continue this
through the ministry of the apostles and other
Spirit-led people in the church. But the high
point of it all is in the sending of his Son. This
means that those who reject him will be guilty
of an especially serious sin; this is the climax
of all the opposition to the messengers of
God." Morris.

Βαραχίας, ου m Barachiah

φρονεω see v.31

μεταξυ prep with gen between

ναος, ου m temple, sanctuary, inner part
of Jewish Temple

θυσιαστηριον, ου n altar (of incense)

This would appear to be the death recorded in
2 Chron 24:20,21. Thus Jesus is citing the first
and last of such recorded deaths in the Hebrew
Bible (in which 2 Chronicles is the last book).
"There is a difficulty in that in 2 Chronicles
Zechariah is said to be the son of Jehoiada;
therefore a number of other Zechariahs have
been suggested. But none of them has any
plausibility. It seems better to think of this
Zechariah as being named from his grandfather
rather than his father. That this was sometimes
done is clear from the fact that the prophet
Zechariah is called 'the son of Berachiah, son
of Iddo' in Zechariah 1:1, but the same man is
also named from his grandfather; he is 'the son
of Iddo' in Ezra 6:14. Apparently the same
procedure is followed in the case of the
Zechariah of this passage also." Morris.
Another view is that Jehoiada also had the
name Barachiah (Luther, Lenski, Ryle).

Verse 36

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἥξει ταῦτα πάντα ἐπὶ τὴν
γενεὰν ταύτην.

ἥκω come

γενεα, ας f generation, age

Verses 37-39

Cf. Luke 13:34-35.

Verse 37

Ἰερουσαλήμ Ἰερουσαλήμ, ἣ ἀποκτείνουσα
τοὺς προφήτας καὶ λιθοβολοῦσα τοὺς
ἀπεσταλμένους πρὸς αὐτήν – ποσάκις
ἠθέλησα ἐπισυναγαγεῖν τὰ τέκνα σου, ὃν
τρόπον ὄρνις ἐπισυνάγει τὰ νοσσία αὐτῆς ὑπὸ
τὰς πτέρυγας, καὶ οὐκ ἠθελήσατε;

"In the opening of the lament, the poignant
repetition 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem' is directed
primarily to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (cf.
Luke 19:41–44), represented especially by the
religious leadership criticized earlier in the
chapter. By extension the lament may point
also to Jerusalem as representative of the
Jewish nation." Hagner.

ἀποκτεινω see v.34

λιθοβολεω stone, throw stones at

Cf. 21:35. "The present participle points not to
an occasional aberration, but to the continuing
practice." Morris.

ποσάκις adv how often?

θελω wish, will

ἐπισυναγαγεῖν Verb, 2nd aor act infin

ἐπισυναγω gather, gather together

"Jesus' longing can only belong to Israel's
Saviour, not to one of her prophets." Carson.

τεκνον, ου n child

τροπος, ου m way, manner; ὁν τ. in the same way as, as, like
 ὄρνις, ιθος f hen
 νοσσιον, ου n young bird (pl brood)
 πτερυξ, υγος f wing

"The image of a mothering bird who gathers her young under her wings suggests such things as security, nurture, and well-being (cf. Ruth 2:12; Pss 17:8; 36:7; Isa 31:5 among many OT examples). It points to the experience of fulfillment and salvation." Hagner.
 "When matters got serious they did not will to seek the shelter that he offered them. They preferred to send him to the cross." Morris.

Verse 38

ἰδοὺ ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν ἔρημος.
 ἀφίημι leave, forsake

"ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν refers in the first instance to the temple (for 'house' meaning the temple, cf. 1 Kgs 9:7–8; Isa 64:10–11; Jer 12:7) as the center of the people's religious faith but may also allude to the city (cf. Tob 14:4) and the nation, i.e., the people themselves. The statement is based on OT models (see esp. Jer 22:5 [cf. Jer 12:7], with its references to the house becoming a 'desolation'; LXX uses the cognate noun ἐρημωσιν). The passive verb ἀφίεται ... both connotes abandonment by God and alludes to the future destruction of the temple. Very similar language occurs in Ezekiel anticipating the destruction of the first temple (e.g., Ezek 8:6, 12; 9:3, 9; 11:23; cf. Bar 4:12). The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple becomes a major subject in the discourse that follows (cf. 24:2, 15; Acts 6:14)." Hagner.

ἐρημος, ου f desert; also ἐρημος, ου adj deserted, uninhabited, desolate

"That it is *desolate* means more than that there is widespread desolation; it means that God has forsaken it. He no longer dwells with a people who persistently refused him." Morris.

A few MSS (B L sy^s sa bo^{pl}) omit ἐρημος perhaps through the influence of the parallel in Luke 13:35 or because the word was thought redundant following ἀφίεται. It is possible, but less likely, that ἐρημος was added to produce agreement with Jer 22:5; the external evidence overwhelmingly supports the presence of the word.

Verse 39

λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν, οὐ μή με ἴδητε ἀπ' ἄρτι ἕως ἂν εἴπητε· Εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου.

ἴδητε Verb, aor act subj ὄραω see
 ἀρτι now, at the present
 ἕως ἂν until
 εὐλογεω speak well of, bless
 ὄνομα, τος n name

Morris argues that it is best to take these words as referring to some future happening, "an eschatological reality. When the final kingdom is set up in all its glory."