

Matthew 23 Observations and Interpretive Questions

Jesus is talking to the crowds and to the disciples, but it does not mention where he is.	Most believe that Jesus is at the Temple, but it is never said for certain
Jesus tells the people to obey the Pharisees and to do everything they tell them to, then goes on to criticize them.	Is there something that Jesus thinks the Pharisees are doing right that would lead him to tell the people to obey them?
The Pharisees love to be elegantly dressed and to be looked upon and revered.	What is the role exactly of the Pharisees that they would be thought of so highly?
Jesus is talking to the people and telling them things like do not call people Rabbi, teacher, and father.	What is Jesus' tone of voice when he is talking to the people? Is he upset with the people as well as the leaders, or just solely the leaders?
Jesus says that they only have one Master and that they are all brothers.	Is this Jesus saying that the Pharisees do not deserve or even truly have more power than the other people? Are the interpreters of the law of the same importance as the people they are interpreting to?
Jesus starts 6 of the 7 woes by addressing the teachers of the law and Pharisees as hypocrites.	Does Jesus repeat this statement in order to signify how important calling them hypocrites is? Is hypocrisy the biggest crime that the Pharisees are guilty of according to Jesus?
The first woe says that the Pharisees are shutting the kingdom of Heaven in men's faces.	Do the Pharisees realize that they are in effect keeping people from heaven by their actions? Do they intend this or are they just blinded by their greed?
The Pharisees travel over land and sea to gain one convert.	Is this a literal statement? Did the Pharisees actually travel to gain the conversion of one (specific?) person? Or is it just a metaphor?
In the third woe, Jesus addresses the Pharisees as "blind guides".	Why the change of address? What significance does this play?
Verses 17-22 talk about the temple and its gold, and the altar and the gifts placed upon it.	Do they Pharisees actually value the gold and the gifts more than the temple and the altar themselves? What is the Pharisees view on the temple and the altar?
The Pharisees give a tenth of their spices	Is the fact that they give spices as opposed to other sacrifices significant? Are spices a higher or lesser offering?
The statement "you strain out a gnat but swallow a camel".	What is Jesus trying to say here?
They clean the outside of the cup and dish but the inside is dirty.	Does this metaphor have something to do with the Jewish culture of that time? Does the fact that Jesus mentions a cup and dish make the statement mean more than if he had used another object?
Outside is like a whitewashed tomb but the inside is full of bones and unclean	Again, does the use of a tomb in this metaphor make the statement mean more than it would in another case? Is this connected to the culture of the time?

<p>The Pharisees say that they would not have partaken in the killing of prophets like their forefathers did.</p>	<p>Who were the Pharisees forefathers? What prophets did they kill and why?</p>
<p>They Pharisees testified to being the descendents of men who killed prophets.</p>	<p>Culturally, does having ancestors that were murderous give a bad connotation to the descendents? Are the Pharisees looked at differently because of their forefathers' actions?</p>
<p>Jesus says "fill up then, the measures of your forefathers."</p>	<p>What is Jesus saying here? Is he saying that they are just like their forefathers? Do they have to make up for their forefathers' actions?</p>
<p>Jesus calls the Pharisees snakes and broods of vipers.</p>	<p>Is this connection to snakes a harsh connotation? What was the view on snakes in that culture that Jesus would use those terms?</p>
<p>Jesus says that "your house is left to you desolate."</p>	<p>Is Jesus referring to the Temple here?</p>
<p>Jesus ends saying that, "I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"</p>	<p>Is Jesus talking about when he will arise from the dead? Or maybe he is referring to the second coming?</p>