

23:1-12

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes about those who had questioned him in all of chapter 22. and to His disciples, 2 saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. A special seat from which the teacher of the day would expound the Scripture text just read from the podium. One can see both the reading and the sitting demonstrated in Luke 4 by Jesus.

3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. 4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men’s shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do to ^dbe seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad from the Old Testament requirement to put the Scriptures between one’s eyes. Perhaps the literal exaggeration of a hyperbole. Little scrolls would have a portion of Scripture in this little box strapped on the arms and foreheads. and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, Too bad they didn’t listen to Solomon (Proverbs 25:6). Jesus spoke more about this in Luke 14 when giving advice on how to handle “seating” special places. 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ A Hebrew word meaning “great one.” 8 But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, ⁴the Christ, and you are all brethren. Apparently there are no higher titles than “brother.” 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Jeremiah 31:35-40 will speak to us again when we deal with 23:39, but here we see Jeremiah 31:9 speaks of God’s Fatherhood to Israel. By the way, Jeremiah 31:15 was already quoted by Matthew in his 2nd chapter. It seems, then, that Jeremiah 31:9 is certainly on Matthew’s mind here with this recording of Jesus’ words.

This isn’t an blanket prohibition of children calling their male parent **Father** since Jesus Himself uses this title for the “dad” in this very book. This is for those who are aching to have this title but do not reflect the character of the **Father** (it seems that we cannot improve on the story in the last half of Luke 15).

Not only that, but we find out from this passage that the hearts of these “scribes and Pharisees” (23:2) was about being noticed as a life-giver. In other words, these were your early sacerdotalists.¹ They really felt as though they gave life through their actions as religious leaders. So when these people wanted to be called **Father** that wanted to be known as those who give life. In other words, they are going to usurp the true **Father** of His notoriety. Since this was so abused by those in that setting, the injunction was in using this “life-giving” title to refer to these “scribes and Pharisees.”

If this were not so, Jesus’ first indictment includes a charge that they will not have any life themselves (23:13).

10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. He says it twice in three verses. **11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**

23:13-14

“But woe to you, He is done talking about them and is now turned to them and speaks to them. scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for

^dMatt. 6:1–6, 16–18

⁴NU omits *the Christ*

¹Those who believe you gain life by partaking the sacraments by particularly sanctioned peoples.

you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. This first distress pronounced on these people is for their confusing of the way to Heaven for others.

14⁷**Woe** awful distress. This should be seen with the backdrop of the opening verses of Matthew 22 and should be instructive to the awful fate awaiting that group of people: the burning up of their city and the destruction of a nation, but then came all the questions from those who were really not seeking illumination or inspiration or information; they were seeking to trap a man to kill Him—and they do so some 72 hours later. They were wanting God to approve of their current condition—both they and their temple and its system. **to you,** There are 8 **woe** statements in this passage. **scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.**

⁷ NU omits v. 14.