

30 DAYS IN THE BIBLE

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Key Verse – Matthew 23:25–26

Matthew's twenty-third chapter is one of those passages of Scripture that has the potential to make us feel very uncomfortable. Most of us don't find much joy in being dressed down by someone else, especially publicly. We often don't take constructive criticism well, never mind direct confrontation. We like our lives to be comfortable, cozy and encouraging. I'm sure the Pharisees, being human as well, felt much the same. Unfortunately for them, Jesus had something specific in mind here. Pretty much the whole chapter is Jesus flinging a scathing rebuke at the Pharisees and the teachers of religious law. He openly confronts their hypocrisy, their arrogance, their foolishness, their greed and their impurity. It doesn't make for pleasant reading. It's possible, even tempting, to read this rebuke as a detached observer, philosophically examining the criticisms Jesus puts forward from a safe distance. If we do so, we miss an opportunity to grow.

By examining this passage closely, we can learn what grieves God's heart. We see, in very explicit terms, what matters to Jesus. Jesus brings up things like false piety, grandstanding, the humility required in leadership, social justice and the teaching of accurate doctrine. He hits topics one by one, and succinctly lays out His feelings on each. It can be easy, as Christians, to always relate to the heroes of Scripture, to wistfully imagine that we would certainly be the "good guys" if we were personally present in these stories. There is much to be learned, however, if we try to see ourselves in the camp of the rebuked, and examine our hearts through that lens. We have the opportunity to confront the weakness and greed and impurity within ourselves if we do.



Large swaths of this particular rebuke point out a stark difference between the outward presentation of these religious leaders and their internal reality. If we are honest with ourselves, we will likely find ourselves in a similar situation, to varying degrees. No matter how fervent our desire for God, we are human, and prone to missteps and lapses of judgement. What's important is that we don't dress up the exterior to hide the issues on the interior. Jesus is challenging us to deal with our mess. To open the door and allow Him to clean us and wash, so that we don't need to be like how He describes the Pharisees in verse 28; "Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness." Let's allow ourselves to acknowledge our weakness and seek righteousness instead of a religious veneer.

What Scripture can I meditate on today?

What did God speak to me today?

How can I respond in obedience?

How can I pray?