

WITNESS – Reaching out to others
(Aim for 20 – 30 minutes)

Giving Thanks to God

What has struck you about God today? Thank Him

Praying for one another

Share what you think God has been saying to you as we have looked at this study? Or is there something else that you would like us to pray for you? Pray for the person on your right.

Praying for our community

If you relate this study to Hungerford. What do you think God is saying? Let us pray for our community.

MATTHEW

Matthew 23.1 - 39

8

The King Condemns the Rebels

Purpose: To consider the commands and demands that Jesus makes of opponents and followers.

In this chapter Jesus delivers the final judgment on the religious leaders. There are seven woes. The number seven has biblical significance: it means complete and full. After this chapter Jesus will have nothing more to say to the religious leaders. Their rejection of Jesus is total and results in their condemnation by Jesus.

WELCOME – Breaking the ice *(Aim for 10 minutes)*

Give examples of leaders who have used their influence for good or bad.

WORSHIP – Meeting the Lord *(Aim for 10 – 15 minutes)*

THE EXAMEN

1. **Become aware of God's presence** - take some time to remember that God is present with us in our everyday lives. He has been near to you and with you throughout the events of your day. Invite the Holy Spirit.
2. **Review the day with gratitude** - what are you thankful for?
3. **Pay attention to your emotions** - St. Ignatius emphasised how our emotions can point to the presence of God. Reflect upon how you felt throughout your day. What might God be saying to you through these emotions?
4. **Choose one thing from the day and pray for it**

WORD – Applying the truth
(Aim for 40 – 45 minutes)

Influence is a powerful force. Those who influence others are able to change minds and to direct actions.

The religious leaders in Israel possessed the power of influence. After they decided to oppose Jesus, they tried to lead others to do the same. In Matthew 23 Jesus condemns them point blank. They should have been the first to enter the kingdom of God because of their knowledge of Scripture and their standing in the Jewish community. Because they refused, Jesus calls them to judgment. This passage exposes the guilt of those who do not practice what they preach.

1. Read Matthew 23. What attitude does Jesus teach the people to have towards the religious leaders, and why (vv. 1–4)?

2. Compare the motives of the religious leaders (vv. 5–7) with the motives and attitudes Jesus requires of his followers (vv. 8–12).

3. As followers of Jesus, how can we avoid these pitfalls of the religious leaders?

4. Jesus pronounces seven woes (judgments) against the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (vv. 13–32). Summarize each one.

5. Why do you think it was necessary to condemn the religious leaders before the whole community?

6. Jesus condemns the religious leaders for confusing inward and outward righteousness (vv. 25–28). In what ways are we inclined to do that today?

7. The entire generation to whom Jesus is speaking is held accountable for the righteous blood shed in all previous generations” (vv. 33–36). Why do you think they received such a terrible sentence?

8. What responses do you have as you observe Jesus as a judge?

9. In the midst of this overwhelming condemnation, how is the tender compassion of Jesus also evident (vv. 33–39)?

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