

# The Gospel of Matthew

## 11. In the Holy City: Conflict, Death, and Resurrection

Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-39)

The Coming of the Son of Man and the Judgment of the World (24:1—25:46)

**Sunday, April 2, 2006**

**10 to 11 am in the Parlor.**

*Everyone is welcome!*

*St. John in the Wilderness*

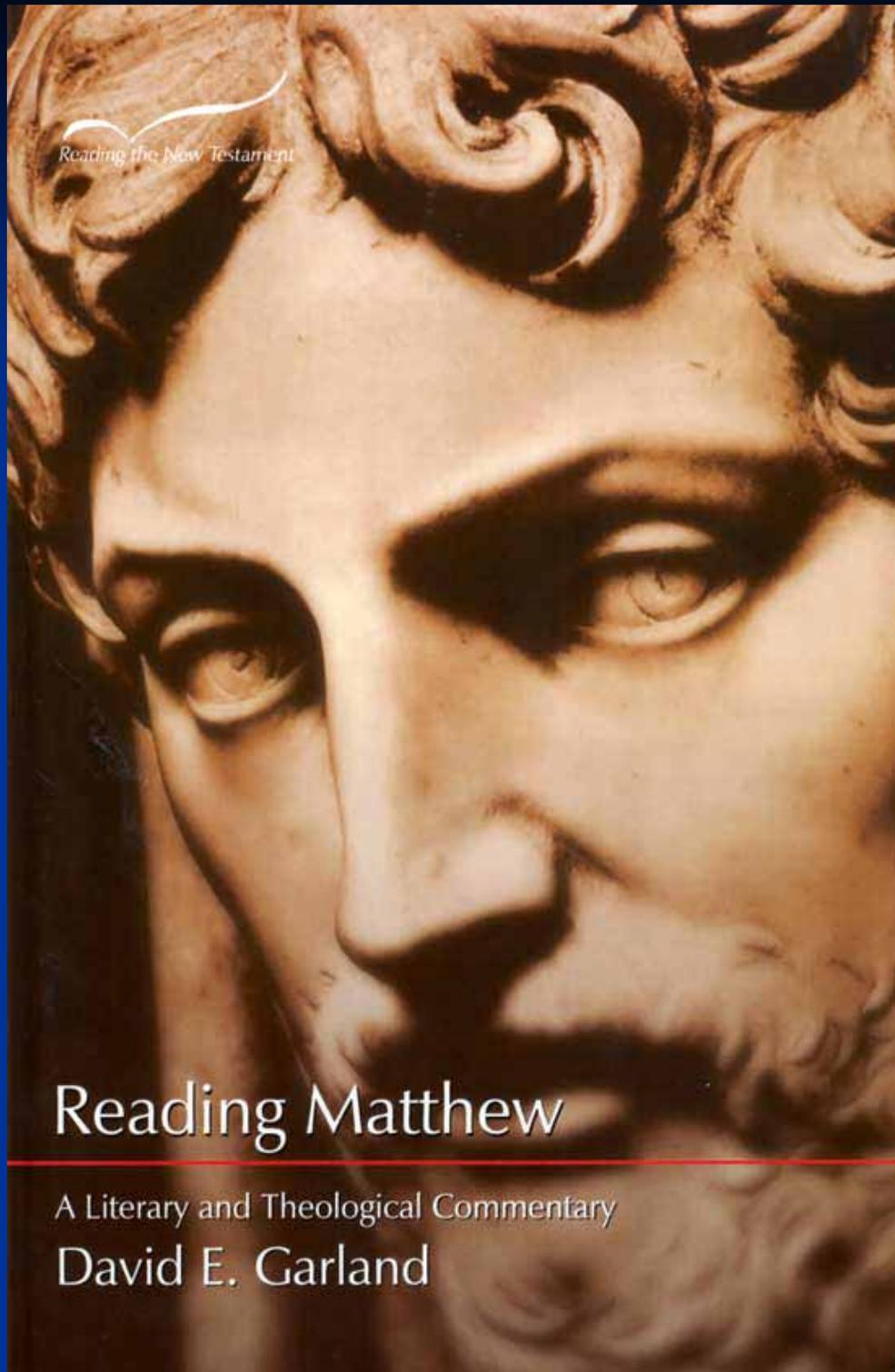
**Almighty and everliving God,  
in your tender love towards us  
you sent your Son to take our nature upon him,  
and to suffer death upon the cross;  
grant that we may follow the example of his great  
humility  
and share in his glorious resurrection;  
through him who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and for ever.**

INTERPRETING  
I · B · T  
BIBLICAL TEXTS

THE  
GOSPEL  
OF  
MATTHEW

Donald Senior

- **The Gospel of Matthew** (**Interpreting Biblical Texts Series**), Donald Senior, Abingdon Press, 1997, ISBN 0-687-00848-4
- **Dr. Senior** is Professor of New Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.



- **Reading Matthew. A Literary and Theological Commentary**, David E. Garland, Smyth & Helwys, 2001, ISBN 1-57312-274
- **David Garland** is Professor of Christian Scriptures and Associate Dean for Academic Services at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University

# SACRA PAGINA

*Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., Editor*



The Gospel of  
**MATTHEW**

*Daniel J. Harrington, S.J.*

- **Sacra Pagina. The Gospel of Matthew**  
Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1991, ISBN 0-8146-5803-2
- **Daniel Harrington** is Professor of New Testament at the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts

- **Introducing Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 1:1—4:16)**
  - The Birth of the Messiah: The Fulfillment of God's Promises (1:1-25)
  - From Judea of David to the Galilee of the Gentiles (2:1-23)
  - Getting Ready: God's Son in the Wilderness (3:1—4:11)
  - Dispelling the Darkness in Galilee (4:12-16)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 1. Teaching, Healing, and Calling the Lost Sheep (Matthew 4:17—10:42)**
  - Jesus' Debut: Authority and Compassion. Dawn in Galilee (4:17-25)
  - The Sermon on the Mount: Magisterial Teaching, A Charter for Discipleship (5:1—8:1)
  - Restoring Life to Others: Jesus the Healer (8:2—9:35)
  - Great Harvest and Great Dangers: The Mission Discourse (9:36—10:42)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 2. Rejection and Confession (Matthew 11:2—16:20)**
  - Doubt, Indifference, and Dissent (11:2—12:45)
  - The Parable Discourse: the Mysteries of the Kingdom Revealed (12:46—13:54)
  - The Mission Resumes (13:54—16:12)
    - Rejection in Nazareth (13:54-58)
    - The Death of John (14:1-12)
    - Two Great Signs (14:13-36)
    - A Dispute with Israel; An Opening to the Gentiles (15:1-28)
    - Healing and Feeding the Multitudes; Demand for a Sign (15:29—16:12)
- **Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (Matthew 16:21-28:20)**
  - The Journey to Jerusalem (16:13—20:34)
    - Confession at Caesarea Philippi (16:13-28)
    - Transfiguration (17:1-21)
    - Living Together as the Family of God: Life Within the Community of the Kingdom (17:22—18:35)
    - Teachings on the Journey (19:1—20:16)
      - Marriage and Divorce (19:3-12)
      - The Children (19:13-14)
      - Leaving Behind One's Possessions (19:16-30)
      - The Parable of the Laborers (20:1-16)
    - The Conclusion of the Journey (20:17-34)
  - In the Holy City: Conflict, Death, and Resurrection (21:1—28:15)
    - The Messiah in the Temple (21:1-17)
    - The Teacher and His Opponents (21:18—22:46)
    - **False Teachers Lead Others to Ruin: Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-39)**
    - **The Coming of the Son of Man and the Judgment of the World (24:1—25:46)**
    - The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. Finale (26:1—28:15)

# Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees

**Matthew 23:1-39**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Introduction

- After a string of attempts by the Jewish religious leaders to trap Jesus with questions about:
  - paying tribute to Caesar (some Pharisees and Herodians)
  - the resurrection (some Sadducees)
  - the greatest commandment (some Pharisees)

Jesus denounces the scribes and Pharisees

**Matthew 23:1-39**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Introduction

- The setting is in the Temple
- The disciples are the audience: Jesus intends this discourse as instruction for his disciples.

**Matthew 23:1-39**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Introduction

- Jesus' discourse falls in three parts:
  - Part 1 (23:1-12): the Jewish leaders are condemned for not practicing what they preached.
  - Part 2 (23:13-36): the Jewish leaders are further criticized, using the literary device of “prophetic woes.”
  - Part 3 (23:37-39): Jesus laments the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

**Matthew 23:1-39**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Part 1

- In Part 1 of the discourse, Jesus acknowledges the leaders authority as the teachers (they sit on Moses' seat) but denounces them for not practicing what they preach:
  - They don't act justly
  - They show a lack of compassion by putting heavy burdens on others
  - They are full of arrogant pride while they pretend to be pious

**Matthew 23:1-12**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Part 1

- Jesus presents a remarkably egalitarian vision for his own community:
- Jesus: **“But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father-- the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”** (NRSV 23:8-12)

**Matthew 23:1-12**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Part 2

- Jesus then further criticizes the scribes and Pharisees using the literary device of “prophetic woes.”
- Putting himself in the role of prophet, Jesus denounces the sins of the Jewish leaders, describing 7 sets of woes:
  - #1-2: Obstacles and corrupters of others (23:13, 23:15)
  - #3: Taking insincere oaths (23:16)
  - #4: Having wrong priorities when interpreting the law (23:23)
  - #5-7: Masking inner corruption with pious exterior (23:25, 23:27, 23:29)

**Matthew 23:13-36**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Part 2

- In 23:29-36, Jesus caps the list of woes with:
  - A reminder of the typical fate of prophets,
  - A dire prediction for the future:
  - **“I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town,...Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation.”** (NRSV 23:34)

**Matthew 23:13-36**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Part 3

- In 70 AD, the Temple will be destroyed by Roman armies.
- Jesus ends his discourse with a moving lament over the coming destruction of the Temple (= “your house”) because of its rejection of the Messiah:
- **Jesus: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you, desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (NRSV 23:37-39)**

**Matthew 23:37-39**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Part 3

- Jesus' quote: **“Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”**:
  - From Psalm 118:26
  - The same words with which Jesus was greeted when he first entered Jerusalem (21:9)

**Matthew 23:37-39**

# Condemnation Scribes, Pharisees

## Anti-Semitism

- Through the ages, this discourse of Jesus has been used to justify anti-Semitism. Such a “toxic” readings of Jesus’ words is unjustified:
  - 1. Jesus encountered opposition from Jewish leaders as did past prophets like Amos and Jeremiah, and the tone of his response is similar to the tone of the response of those past prophets.
  - 2. Jesus’ condemnation was *not* a condemnation of all Jews, but a stereotypic condemnation just of the Jewish *leaders* of *his* day. Not all Jewish leaders were corrupt or hypocritical.
  - 3. Matthew’s community was a Jewish-Christian community, so the conflict and tension in Jesus’ discourse reflected for Matthew an *intra-Jewish debate* between his community and Pharisaic Judaism that was forming after the destruction of Jerusalem.

**Matthew 23:1-39**

# The Coming of the Son of Man and the Judgment of the World

**Matthew 24:1—25:46**

# Judgment of the World

## Introduction

- The scene now switches to Jesus and his disciples alone, outside the city of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives.
- Jesus is about to begin his fifth and last great teaching discourse in Matthew's gospel, covering chapters 24-25, which will lead to the beginning of the Passion story in chapter 26.

**Matthew 24:1—25:46**

# Judgment of the World

## Introduction

- As Jesus and his disciples left the temple, Jesus noted: **“You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”** (24:2 NRSV)
- On the Mount of Olives, his disciples question Jesus about this prediction: **“Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”** (24:3 NRSV)

**Matthew 24:1—25:46**

# Judgment of the World

## Signs of the End Times

- The initial section (24:4-36) of Jesus' answer (parallel in Mark 13) is usually taken as a description of the signs of the end times and the coming of the Son of Man.
- The images draw from stock Jewish apocalyptic imagery, particularly images derived from the Book of Daniel.

**Matthew 24:4-36**

# Judgment of the World

## Dissonance on the Timing

- There seems to be a dissonance (indeed, a contradiction!) on the timing of the end time and the coming of the Son of Man:
  - Matthew 24:34 (NRSV): **“Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.”**
  - Matthew 24:36 (NRSV): **“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”**

**Matthew 24:4-36**

# Judgment of the World

## Dissonance on the Timing

- This dissonance may reflect the dissonance felt by many early Christians, who:
  - Sometimes envisaged themselves as living in an apocalyptic generation bridging Jesus' death and resurrection and the second coming of Jesus as the Son of Man.
  - Were likely repeatedly criticized by a non-apocalyptic Judaism (after 70 AD) and other scoffers:
    - **2 Peter 3:3-4: "First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!"**  
(NRSV)

**Matthew 24:4-36**

# Judgment of the World

## Dissonance on the Timing

- Some scholars (such as Garland) argue that Jesus was describing the signs of the impending destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and not the “end times” when he said: **“Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.”** 24:34 (NRSV).
- Other scholars argue that “this generation” (*genea*) should be understood as “this race” or “this people.”

# Judgment of the World

## Watchfulness

- At any rate, Jesus then begins an extended section in 24:37—25:30 on how we should be watchful, since no one knows or can predict when the end time will come.
- Includes several “Parables of Watchfulness:”
  - Parable of the Days of Noah (24:37-39)
  - Twin Parable of Two Men in the Field and Two Women at the Mill (24:40-41)
  - Parable of the Householder and the Thief (24:42-44)
  - Parable of the Two Servants (= Parable of the Faithful or Unfaithful Slave) (24:45-51)
  - Parable of the Ten Wise and Foolish Maidens (= Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids) (25:1-13)
  - Parable of the Talents (25:14-30)

**Matthew 24:37—25:30**

# Judgment of the World

## Watchfulness

- The general theme of all these parables is that “watchfulness” for the unknown end time requires:
  - Not speculating about the end time, but
  - Steadfastly using our blessings, talents and resources to proclaim the gospel to the world and to live doing the will of God as taught by Jesus.
    - Involves not passive watching and waiting, but active responsible service to others.

**Matthew 24:37—25:30**

# Judgment of the World

## Parable of the Sheep and Goats

- Jesus concludes this fifth major teaching discourse in the Gospel of Matthew with the famous **Parable of the Sheep and the Goats** describing a final judgment:
  - “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats ...” (25:31-32 NRSV)

**Matthew 25:31-46**

# Judgment of the World

## Parable of the Sheep and Goats

- Quote from Senior, p. 162:

“Popular interpretation of this Matthean parable sees it as an eloquent call for charity and justice to those most in need. We will be judged on how we respond to the “least.” Although this fundamental Christian message is by no means an invalid interpretation of Matthew’s parable, a close reading of Matthew text suggests that the evangelist may have had a more specific focus in mind.”

**Matthew 25:31-46**

# Judgment of the World

## Parable of the Sheep and Goats

- This “more specific focus” is an interpretation that all three commentators (Senior, Garland, Harrington) argue for as Matthew’s likely intention.
- The interpretation is based on following usage in Matthew:
  - Term “**all the nations**” is never used for members of the church, but only for the gentile nations that Christian disciples were sent to evangelize.
    - In his translation, Harrington makes this explicit: “**And all the Gentiles will be gathered before him...**” (25:32 Harrington p. 355)
  - Term “**brothers**” = reserved for Jesus’ disciples
  - Term “**little ones**” = used for those who believe in Jesus. “Least” is used for emphasis.

**Matthew 25:31-46**

# Judgment of the World

## Parable of the Sheep and Goats

- The parable is a parable about how the Gentiles (“the nations”) will be judged.
- “They will be judged on their instinctive application of Jesus’ teaching about compassion and justice to those apparently insignificant strangers who come to them with the message of the gospel.” (Senior p. 163)
- Implies a belief in a separate judgment for God’s chosen people.
  - See Matthew 19:28, Romans 2:9-10, 1 Peter 4:17

**Matthew 25:31-46**

# Judgment of the World

## Parable of the Sheep and Goats

- Thus for everyone (unbelievers included), the ultimate criteria for judgment is the command to love.

**Matthew 25:31-46**

# Judgment of the World

## Parable of the Sheep and Goats

- “This interpretation is sometimes rejected because it leaves Matt 25:31-46 with little relevance for contemporary ethics or homiletics. My response is that the usual or traditional interpretation deals with the wrong problem: the value of good works for the poor and needy at the final judgment. The right problem is: ‘By what criterion can non-Jews and non-Christians enter God’s kingdom?’ ... With regard to the ‘good works’ tradition ... If good works to Christians are so important for non-Christians (and non-Jews) to perform, how much more are they to be expected from Christians (and Jews)!”

- Harrington, p. 360

**Matthew 25:31-46**

*Next Session:*

**The Passion and  
Resurrection of Jesus.**

**Finale**

**(26:1—28:15)**