



Angels do not marry!

It is useful to note that verse 30 says that angels do not marry. Many people wrongly believe that a wicked angel came to the earth and married a human, and they call this being 'satan' or the 'devil'. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that this happened, although they often think Genesis 6:2 provides the idea because the phrase 'sons of God' is used.

But believers are called sons, or children, of God in places like 1 John 3:1, 2. Genesis 6 tells us that the godly line of Seth's descendants (called 'the sons of God') intermarried with the wicked descendants of Cain (called 'the daughters of man') and so the earth became corrupt and full of violence and God sent the great flood.

People who think that 'Lucifer' or the 'Day Star' of Isaiah 14:12 is a supernatural evil being should read all of Isaiah 14 which clearly shows it is about the king of Babylon (see verse 4) and calls him a man (verse 16).

Ezekiel 28 is also sometimes used to support this wrong idea but this chapter is about the king of Tyre.

We should not accept what people tell us about the Bible without checking for ourselves!

Chapter 23: Woe to you Hypocrites!

Jesus Condemns the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-15)

After Jesus had silenced the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, he turned to his disciples and the common people and showed how wrong their spiritual leaders were.

They wanted people to follow their strict rules but did not keep them themselves. They completely failed to show compassion and to help those who found it difficult to keep these rules. They were proud and wanted people to think they were good and important.

They liked to be called 'Rabbi', a Hebrew word meaning 'my great one' or 'master'.

The phylacteries (verse 5) were little boxes containing scripture verses, worn on the forehead and arm when praying. The Jews were very proud of these.

The contrast between what the leaders did and what God wanted is shown in Deuteronomy 6:8 where we see what this custom should have meant to them. God showed Israel that they should remember Him in all they did and talk to their children about Him.



"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

(Deuteronomy 6:4-9)



More about the Religious Leaders (23:16-24)

The scribes and Pharisees were more concerned with material things and with trying to look righteous, rather than showing the qualities that God requires. Verse 23 shows how they liked people to know that they kept the Law even in small matters, such as giving God a tithe (a tenth) of their herbs and spices, but they ignored the more important things. They were just like the Old Testament Jewish leaders who had opposed and killed God's prophets.

Jesus repeatedly called them hypocrites because they pretended to serve God and give Him glory, but really they wanted others to give them glory. We should be careful that we do not behave like them.

CHECK LIST	
Do we:	OR do we:
Fail to do what we know is right (verses 3, 4)?	Serve others (verse 11)?
Do things 'to be seen of men' (verse 5)?	Behave humbly (verse 12)?
Want to be important (verses 6, 7, 10)?	Show faith (verse 23)?
Seek money (verses 14, 25)?	Show mercy (verse 23)?
Make pretence of our religion (verses 14, 25, 28)?	Try to have 'clean' thoughts (verse 26)?

Appearing 'Clean' on the Outside (23:25-36)

These religious leaders made every effort to appear 'clean', or righteous, but inside they were full of wickedness. They were greedy and wanted to please themselves, and were even lawless. It is easy to fall into the same trap of wanting people to know all the good things we do. Jesus spoke out about this in Matthew 6:1:

"Beware of practising your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."

The Law that God gave to Moses taught that people should not touch dead bodies or graves:

"Whoever in the open field touches someone who was killed with a sword or who died naturally, or touches a human bone or a grave, shall be unclean seven days." (Numbers 19:16)

For centuries people did not realise that this simple rule kept the people of Israel healthy by saving them from harmful bacteria associated with disease and decay. A person who touched a dead body could not take part in a feast. Because of this, graves near Jerusalem were often painted white so that travellers to the Passover feast could avoid them. Jesus told the religious leaders that they were just like these graves – they looked good on the outside but were full of all uncleanness!

Jesus warned them of the destruction that would come. He knew they would persecute those who were true worshippers. It is interesting to note that Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul, was a Pharisee. Some Pharisees were sincere and willing to change their thinking.

The Loving Concern of Jesus for Jerusalem (23:37-39)

The hard-hearted, hypocritical attitude of most Pharisees contrasts with the love and concern of Jesus for Jerusalem and its people in verse 37. Like his Father, Jesus wanted to save the people, but they would not listen to his warnings. The city where God had chosen to set His throne did not accept His Son and soon afterwards its people demanded his death.

As a result of this, Jerusalem would be destroyed and its people either killed or taken away as slaves as we shall see in the next lesson.

However Jesus will indeed return to Jerusalem and make it the capital of God's kingdom, yet this will not happen until the Jewish people are ready to acknowledge him as their Messiah and welcome him as their king.

