

MATTHEW 23

CHRIST CONDEMNS RELIGIOUS ABUSE AND HYPOCRISY (23:1-36)

An early commentary on Matthew on not imitating bad priests:

What does He say then to the people? 'Whatever you have been told to do, obey and do; just do not imitate their deeds.' For you are sitting in the church not only as listeners but also as judges of the priests. You may be learning strange things that would be considered inappropriate. You are judging the priests in comparison with yourself. You should listen to everything they say, but do not do everything which you hear. Yes, all priests teach, but not all practice what they teach.

St. Hilary of Poitiers on religious hypocrites being condemned:

These are poisoners of truth. They are reluctant to undertake the salvation of others. They bolt shut the kingdom of heaven. In their ambition they 'devour widows' houses and for pretense make long prayers.' By this acquaintance with heaven (achieved with those long prayers), they expect they will persevere in the merits of grace quietly, just as a rich person expects to receive treasure stored up for him. However, they will receive ample judgment and punishment for their particular sins. They will be called to account for their strange and ignorant practices.

Blessed Theophylact on Christ sending prophets, wise men and scribes:

He reproves (the scribes and Pharisees) for saying falsely, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have killed the prophets.' For 'Behold,' He says, 'I send unto you prophets and wise men, and scribes,' but you will kill them. He is speaking of the apostles, for the Holy Spirit adorned the apostles with teachings and made them scribes, that is, teachers of the people, and prophets filled with wisdom. 'I send,' He says, thus showing His divine authority.

JERUSALEM'S FATE (23:37-39)

St. Cyril of Alexandria on seeing Christ:

That which has been spoken possesses an interpretation that comes through the vision of faith. For when 'the fullness of the nations come in' and they believe in Christ, then the Jews who believe after these things see the beauty of the divine nature of Christ. They behold the Father in the Son and declare Him to be the Redeemer proclaimed through the prophets, whom the prophets previously mentioned as coming in the name of the Lord.

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Quote Sources: Manlio Simonetti, editor. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Matthew Ia and Ib* (IVP)
Blessed Theophylact. *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Chrysostom Press)

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