

Matthew 23:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

Analysis

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples—the Greek verb elalēsen (ἐλάλησεν) indicates a formal, authoritative discourse. This transitional verse introduces Jesus's most searing public denunciation of religious hypocrisy, delivered not privately but before ochlos (ὄχλος, the crowds) and mathētais (μαθηταῖς, disciples). The dual audience is strategic: Jesus warns believers while unmasking the scribes and Pharisees' corruption before those they misled.

This discourse (Matthew 23:1-39) represents Jesus's final public teaching before the Passion narrative, positioned immediately after His silencing of the religious leaders in debate (Matthew 21-22). The timing underscores the irrevocable breach between Jesus and the Temple establishment—they will respond by crucifying Him within days.

Historical Context

This address occurred during Passion Week (Tuesday, April AD 30) in the Temple courts, where Jesus had been teaching daily. The scribes (Torah scholars) and Pharisees (lay religious party emphasizing oral tradition) held immense social and religious authority, though they lacked the Sadducees' political power.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus deliver this harsh critique publicly rather than privately correcting the leaders?
2. How does addressing both crowds and disciples simultaneously serve different purposes?
3. What does Jesus's willingness to confront powerful religious authorities teach about prophetic courage?

Interlinear Text

Τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐλάλησεν τοῖς ὥχλοις καὶ τοῖς
Then G3588 Jesus G2424 spoke G3588 to the multitude G3793 and G3588
G5119 G2980 G3101 G846

μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ
disciples G846
G3101

Additional Cross-References

Luke 12:1 (Parallel theme): In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Luke 12:57 (Parallel theme): Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?