

Matthew 23:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

Analysis

And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues—the verb *philousin* (φιλοῦσιν, they love) reveals not mere acceptance but craving for honor. *Prōtoklisian* (πρωτοκλισίαν, first reclining place) at feasts and *prōtokathedrias* (πρωτοκαθεδρίας, first seats) in synagogues both emphasize *prōtos* (πρῶτος, first/chief)—the Pharisees' obsession with social rank and public recognition.

In ancient banquets, seating reflected social hierarchy; the closer to the host, the greater the honor. Synagogue seating likewise communicated status, with leaders facing the congregation. Jesus exposes how religious leaders leveraged spiritual authority for social prestige, converting ministry into self-promotion. This love of honor directly contradicts Jesus's teaching that the greatest among you shall be your servant (verse 11).

Historical Context

First-century Mediterranean culture was intensely honor-based, with seating arrangements communicating precise social standing. Roman banquets used triclinium arrangements where proximity to the host indicated status. Synagogues reserved prominent forward-facing seats for elders and teachers, making them visible to all worshipers during the service.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What modern equivalents exist to 'chief seats'—titles, positions, platforms that religious leaders crave?
2. How does the pursuit of honor and recognition corrupt authentic spiritual leadership?
3. Why is Jesus's kingdom characterized by inverse values where the least are greatest?

Interlinear Text

φιλοῦσιν τὲ τὴν πρωτοκλισίαν ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις καὶ
love **And** G3588 **the uppermost rooms** **at** G3588 **feasts** **and**
G5368 G5037 G4411 G1722 G1173 G2532

τὰς πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς
G3588 **the chief seats** **at** G3588 **the synagogues**
G4410 G1722 G4864

Additional Cross-References

3 John 1:9 (Love): I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.