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~ **The Hypocrites, the Widow, and the End** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Matthew 23 and Mark 12:41-44 and Matthew 24:1-34.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Matthew 23 NASB	Matthew 23 NLT
<p>Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, ² saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; ³ therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say <i>things</i> and do not do <i>them</i>. ⁴ They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with <i>so much as</i> a finger. ⁵ But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels <i>of their garments</i>. ⁶ They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷ and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. ⁸ But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ Do not call <i>anyone</i> on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, <i>that is</i>, Christ. ¹¹ But the greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.</p> <p>¹³ “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. ¹⁴ [Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.]</p> <p>¹⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make</p>	<p>Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² “The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. ³ So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don’t follow their example. For they don’t practice what they teach. ⁴ They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.</p> <p>⁵ “Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels. ⁶ And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. ⁷ They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi.’</p> <p>⁸ “Don’t let anyone call you ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters. ⁹ And don’t address anyone here on earth as ‘Father,’ for only God in heaven is your spiritual Father. ¹⁰ And don’t let anyone call you ‘Teacher,’ for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. ¹¹ The greatest among you must be a servant. ¹² But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.</p> <p>¹³ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people’s faces. You won’t go in yourselves, and you don’t let others enter either.</p> <p>¹⁵ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you cross land and sea to make one convert, and then you turn that person</p>

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him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

¹⁶ “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, *that* is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’ ¹⁷ You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? ¹⁸ And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, *that* is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.’ ¹⁹ You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? ²⁰ Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears *both* by the altar and by everything on it. ²¹ And whoever swears by the temple, swears *both* by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. ²² And whoever swears by heaven, swears *both* by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ and say, ‘If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹ So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure *of the guilt* of your fathers. ³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

into twice the child of hell you yourselves are!

¹⁶ “Blind guides! What sorrow awaits you! For you say that it means nothing to swear ‘by God’s Temple,’ but that it is binding to swear ‘by the gold in the Temple.’ ¹⁷ Blind fools! Which is more important—the gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? ¹⁸ And you say that to swear ‘by the altar’ is not binding, but to swear ‘by the gifts on the altar’ is binding. ¹⁹ How blind! For which is more important—the gift on the altar or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ When you swear ‘by the altar,’ you are swearing by it and by everything on it. ²¹ And when you swear ‘by the Temple,’ you are swearing by it and by God, who lives in it. ²² And when you swear ‘by heaven,’ you are swearing by the throne of God and by God, who sits on the throne.

²³ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. ²⁴ Blind guides! You strain your water so you won’t accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!

²⁵ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too.

²⁷ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people’s bones and all sorts of impurity. ²⁸ Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you build tombs for the prophets your ancestors killed, and you decorate the monuments of the godly people your ancestors destroyed. ³⁰ Then you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would never have joined them in killing the prophets.’

³¹ “But in saying that, you testify against yourselves that

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<p>³⁴ “Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, ³⁵ so that upon you may fall <i>the guilt of</i> all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶ Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.</p> <p>³⁷ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸ Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! ³⁹ For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”</p>	<p>you are indeed the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Go ahead and finish what your ancestors started. ³³ Snakes! Sons of vipers! How will you escape the judgment of hell?</p> <p>³⁴ “Therefore, I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers of religious law. But you will kill some by crucifixion, and you will flog others with whips in your synagogues, chasing them from city to city. ³⁵ As a result, you will be held responsible for the murder of all godly people of all time—from the murder of righteous Abel to the murder of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you killed in the Temple between the sanctuary and the altar. ³⁶ I tell you the truth, this judgment will fall on this very generation.</p> <p>³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me. ³⁸ And now, look, your house is abandoned and desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you this, you will never see me again until you say, ‘Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!’”</p>
Mark 12:41-44 NASB	Mark 12:41-44 NLT
<p>And He sat down opposite the treasury, and <i>began</i> observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. ⁴³ Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; ⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.</p>	<p>⁴¹ Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. ⁴² Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.</p> <p>⁴³ Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. ⁴⁴ For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.”</p>
Matthew 24:1-34 NASB	Matthew 24:1-34 NLT
<p>Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. ² And He said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”</p> <p>³ As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what <i>will be</i> the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”</p>	<p>As Jesus was leaving the Temple grounds, his disciples pointed out to him the various Temple buildings. ² But he responded, “Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth, they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!”</p> <p>³ Later, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives. His disciples came to him privately and said, “Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?”</p> <p>⁴ Jesus told them, “Don’t let anyone mislead you, ⁵ for</p>

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⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. ⁶ You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for *those things* must take place, but *that* is not yet the end. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ⁸ But all these things are *merely* the beginning of birth pangs.

⁹ “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰ At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. ¹¹ Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. ¹² Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. ¹⁴ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵ “Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. ¹⁸ Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. ¹⁹ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. ²² Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. ²³ Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There *He is*,’ do not believe *him*. ²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ Behold, I have told you in advance. ²⁶ So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, *or*, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe *them*. ²⁷ For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹ “But immediately after the tribulation of those

many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah.’ They will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won’t follow immediately. ⁷ Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. ⁸ But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come.

⁹ “Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. ¹⁰ And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. ¹¹ And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. ¹² Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.

¹⁵ “The day is coming when you will see what Daniel the prophet spoke about—the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing in the Holy Place.” (Reader, pay attention!) ¹⁶ “Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. ¹⁷ A person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. ¹⁸ A person out in the field must not return even to get a coat. ¹⁹ How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. ²⁰ And pray that your flight will not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. ²² In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God’s chosen ones.

²³ “Then if anyone tells you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah,’ or ‘There he is,’ don’t believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones. ²⁵ See, I have warned you about this ahead of time.

²⁶ “So if someone tells you, ‘Look, the Messiah is out in the desert,’ don’t bother to go and look. Or, ‘Look, he is hiding here,’ don’t believe it! ²⁷ For as the lightning flashes in the east and shines to the west, so it will be when the Son of Man comes. ²⁸ Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs

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days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

³² “Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; ³³ so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. ³⁴ Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

indicate that the end is near.

²⁹ “Immediately after the anguish of those days,

the sun will be darkened,
the moon will give no light,
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

³⁰ And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.

³² “Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. ³³ In the same way, when you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, *right* at the door. ³⁴ I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

These insights are from Bruce J. Malina – *A Social Science Commentary on the Synoptics 116-119*

1. Phylacteries are small black leather boxes containing four passages from Scripture.
-Shema – Deut 6:4ff
Exod 13:1-10
Exod 13:11-16
Deut 11:13-21
They were worn on the forehead or on the left arm.
2. These scribes were the forerunners of rabbinism which created Judaism as we know it today
3. Early rabbinic custom required a greeting where the inferior in the knowledge of the Torah initiated toward a superior.
4. In a court, seating was according to wisdom. In a synagogue the best seats were for the Torah experts. At a meal, seating was according to age or eminence. All of this was a public way of acknowledging status or honor.
5. Devouring widow’s houses refers to cheating widows while serving as a legal guardian under the terms of the husband’s will.

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6. Tithing provided for those who were landless.
7. Three monument tombs can be seen today in the Kidron Valley opposite the SW corner of the Temple grounds. One of them is 30 feet high carved out of the rock of the cliff.
8. A gnat strainer – there were not good corks or caps to cover jugs and jars and liquids were exposed to insects which would make the beverage unclean. Thus, there would be a need to cleanse the liquid including straining wine at every meal.

Malina – 204

1. The widow's two copper coins were lepta, the smallest coins in use in first-century Palestine.
2. The Hebrew for widow means one who is silent and unable to speak. In a society where males played the public role and women did not speak, the position of a widow, especially if she had no son would be vulnerable.
3. Scripture on widows – Deut 22:22-23; Job 22:9; 24:3,31:16; Psa 94:6; Isa 1:23; 10:; Mal 3:5.
4. Protected by God – Deut 10:18; Jer 49:11; Ps 68:5; Deut 14:29; 24:17, 19-21; 26:12; Luke 20:47; James 1:27

Burge – Encounters with Jesus, 46-47

1. In Israel, men wore ankle length robes or tunics. Religious men were distinguished by the bottom fringe of their tunic which would have tassels as a reminder to keep the Law of God. These were strings that hung from the four corners of the garment and they would have one blue thread as a reminder to obey the Law. Jesus wore such a garment.
2. Reaching for the fringe of the garment is to reach for this part that symbolizes his authority as a religious man with spiritual authority and Matthew 9:20 indicates that this is what she touched.

Pentecost – The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 392-395

1. The seat of Moses – Moses was not only the lawgiver but the law interpreter. Sitting in his seat, the posture of teaching was implying they were the official interpreters.
2. The phylactery was based on Deut 6:6-8
3. The oaths – “By making such distinctions the Pharisees were able to take an oath, but then absolve themselves of responsibility for fulfilling the oath. The one uninitiated in the distinctions would accept the oath of the Pharisee, not knowing that the oath had been couched in such phraseology that the Pharisee did not consider himself bound by it. Christ condemned such duplicity.”

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Answer these reflective questions.

Jesus said, the greatest among you shall be your servant and whoever exalts himself shall be humbled and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. In what ways can we be humble and be servants?

Jesus identified several examples of hypocrisy. Read Matthew 23:13-33 and list some of them.

Have you seen any of these in your life? If so, have you confessed them to God?

What is the main lesson we learn from the widow in Mark 12:41-44? How can we imitate her example?

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Jesus gave many signs that preceded the judgment on Jerusalem in the first century in Matthew 24.
List some of these signs.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Do you see any signs of judgment for our time?

In Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”
How does this verse bring comfort and assurance to our lives?
