

FULL BREAKDOWN MATTHEW 7:21-23

Refuting OSAS, Free grace,
Eternal Security &
Perseverance of the Saints

By Michael Ray Garvin



Matthew 7:21-23

21 “**Not everyone** who says to me, ‘**Lord, Lord,**’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only** the one **who does the will** of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day **many** will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not **prophecy** in **your name**, and **cast out demons** in **your name**, and do **many mighty works** in **your name**?’ 23 Then I will declare to them, ‘***I never knew you***; go away from me, you **who behave lawlessly.**’

Matthew 7:21

“Not everyone who says Lord, Lord”
“but **only** the one **who does** the **will of my**
Father in heaven.”

Will of the Father is to listen & obey His Son

7 And a cloud threw a shadow upon them, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, **This is My Son**, the [most dearworthy] Beloved One. **Be constantly listening to and obeying Him!**

Mark 9:7 AMPC

35 Then there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, **This is My Son, My Chosen One** or My Beloved; **listen to and yield to and obey Him!**

Luke 9:35 AMPC

Listen & Obey The Son

7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; **listen to him!**”

Mark 9:7 NRSV

35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “**This is my Son**, my Chosen; **listen to him!**”

Luke 9:35 NRSV



Thayer's Greek Lexicon



γ. to yield to, hear and obey, **hear to one**, (German *auf einen hören*):

Matthew 17:5 (Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35); John 3:29; John 10:8; Acts 3:22; Acts 4:19; Acts 7:37 [R G]; 1 John 4:5f. Hence,

Matthew 7:22



Judgement Day

22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not **prophecy** in **your name**, and **cast out demons** in **your name**, and do **many mighty works** in **your name**?’

17 And these signs will accompany those **who believe**: **by using my name** they will **cast out demons**; they will **speak in new tongues**; 18 they will pick up snakes, and if they drink any deadly thing, **it will not hurt them**; they will **lay their hands on the sick**, and they will recover.”

Mark 16:17-18 NRSV

Matthew 7:23

23 Then I will declare to them, ‘**I never knew you**; go away from me, you **who behave lawlessly**.’

“I never knew you”

This was a recognized formula of repudiation and excommunication in the Jewish community. A rabbi would say these words to a disobedient disciple.

resources: Erub. 53a; Mo’ed. Qat. 16a; Mo’ed Qat. 3:8; Carson 1984b: 193; Lachs 1987: 150

well aware that some prophets were false; indeed, on multiple occasions, in the decades following Jesus’ ministry, alleged prophets led followers to destruction at the hands of Rome’s armies.

7:16 See note on Jas 3:12.

7:21 – 22 Although Greek and Jewish accounts sometimes delegated judgment to an exalted human, the ultimate judge in Jewish belief was God. Some Jewish exorcists invoked Solomon’s name to try to expel demons (Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.47), but the sense here may exalt Jesus more: Jewish people more often could speak of acting (e.g., 1Sa 17:45; Ps 118:11 – 12) or prophesying (e.g., Dt 18:22; 1 Esdras 6:1) in the name of God.

7:23 *I never knew you.* This was a recognized formula of repudiation and rejection.



Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible
Craig S Keener New Testament Editor

Eruvin 53a:10

The Gemara asks: And according to the one who said that his decrees were new, isn't it written: "**Who knew not Joseph**"? If it were the same king, *how could he not know Joseph*? The Gemara explains: What is the meaning of the phrase: "Who knew not Joseph"? It means that he **conducted himself like one who did not know Joseph at all**.

Moed Katan 16a:22

Rabbi Shimon went and told his father, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, what bar Kappara had said, and Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi became angry with him. When bar Kappara came at some later point to visit, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said to him: Bar Kappara, **I do not know you at all**. Bar Kappara understood that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi had taken his statement to heart, i.e., was insulted. He subsequently **behaved** as if he had been admonished, as a self-imposed punishment, for thirty days.

Resources List: **France, R.T 1985** *Matthew*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Carson, D. A 1984b “Matthew.” 8:3-599 in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank Gaebelein. Grand Rapids: Zondervan

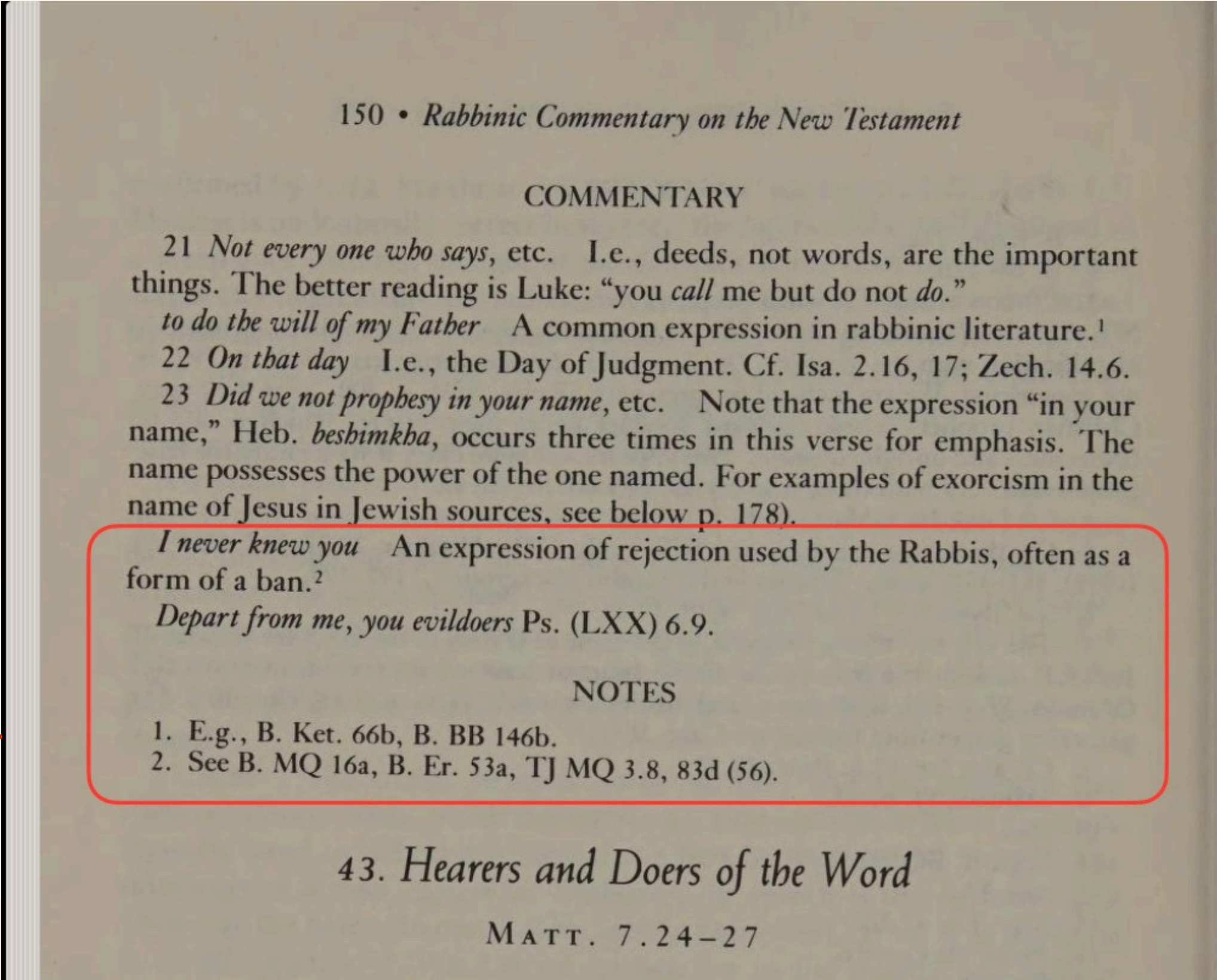
Lachs, Samuel Tobias. 1987 *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV; New York: Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith.

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23. Notice that in vv. 21–23 Jesus presents *himself* as the judge at ‘that day’, when his hearers would have expected *God* to be mentioned. The claim is all the more striking for being assumed, not argued. Moreover, the criterion of judgment is their relationship with *him*. For *I never knew you* as a formula of repudiation see also 25:12, and cf. Peter’s denial, 26:70, 72, 74. *Depart from me, you evildoers* is a quotation from Psalm 6:8, where it is the words of the pious sufferer to his persecutors.



Resource & Quote:

"Two final observations can be made. **First, although “I have nothing to do with you” is the mildest of rabbinic bans** (SBK, 4:293), the words used here are clearly final and eschatological in a solemn context of “that day” and entrance into the kingdom.

D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 193.

Yes, in **Matthew 7:23**, when Jesus says:

“And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (ESV)

He is very likely invoking a **rabbinic-style ban or excommunication**, drawing on a Jewish tradition of formally expelling someone from the community. Here’s how this works:

Context: Rabbinic Ban (Hebrew: *herem*)

- In **Second Temple Judaism**, a rabbi or religious leader could pronounce a **ban** (Hebrew: *herem*) on someone who violated the law or endangered the community spiritually or morally.
- This was a **formal act of disassociation**, often using phrases like:
 - “Depart from me”
 - “I do not know you”
 - “You are cut off from the assembly”

These phrases were understood as **legal and relational severance**—not just personal disappointment.

📖 Jesus' Words in That Light

"Depart from me... I never knew you..."

- The phrase "**Depart from me**" echoes **Psalm 6:8**:
 | "*Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity...*" — a judgment against evildoers.
- "**I never knew you**" is a **legal disavowal**—He is declaring **no covenantal or communal relationship** with them.
- "**Workers of lawlessness**" (Greek: *anomia*) suggests Torah-violation, reinforcing a **Jewish legal context**.

🧠 Why This Matters:

- Jesus, speaking to a Jewish audience, uses **rabbinic judicial language**.
- His words **mirror** how **rabbis or judges** would exclude someone from the assembly for **lawlessness or false teaching**.
- This isn't just rejection—it's a **public declaration of covenant exclusion**, very much in line with rabbinic *herem* practices.

✅ Conclusion:

Yes, **Matthew 7:23** strongly reflects the language and concept of a **rabbinic ban or excommunication**. Jesus is making a **formal judgment**, using Jewish legal language to emphasize that false disciples are **outside the true kingdom community**.

Would you like to compare this to other similar phrases in Jewish literature or Jesus' other teachings?

Jesus' Command on Sin & Excommunication

15 “If **your brother** or **sister** sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. 16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and **if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector.**

Matthew 18:15-17 NRSV

Treat them as if “you never knew them.”



Craig S Keener

"The Gospel of Matthew" A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary

exceptional circumstances demand expulsion of wolves in sheep's clothing who may not wish to leave (18:15-20; cf. 7:15-23). In this context of forgiveness to the fullest possible extent (18:21-27), however, even in the case of expulsion the ultimate goal remains restoration (cf. 18:19-20; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 2:5-11; 1 Tim 1:20; cf. also, e.g., Pfitzner 1982). The unpardonable sin of this context is being a continuing stumbling block to others (18:6-7, 15),²⁰ unwilling to accept them (18:28-33; cf. 18:1-14) — a sin that results in damnation (18:34-35). Presumably it is an unrepentant and continuing sin against the community or members of the community.

First, a disciple must admonish his or her fellow privately before taking any other steps (18:15). Although Jewish teachers preferred that the offender seek forgiveness first (as many as three times before witnesses if necessary — Edersheim: 378; as long as necessary — cf. b. Ber. 28a; p. B. Qam. 8:7, §1), Jewish law also emphasized proper giving and receiving of reproof (Sifra Qed. pq. 4.200.3.3; Sifre Deut. 1.3.2; b. 'Arak. 16b, bar.; Shab. 119b; Tamid 28a, bar.; Gen. Rab. 54:3; Manson 1979: 210), that admonition must always precede punishment (Sifre Deut. 173.1.2; p. Sanh. 7:6, §2), and it must continue until the offender repents or decisively repulses the reprover (Moore 1971: 2:153).²¹ One who reproves must do so with the proper attitude (1QS 5.25; CD 7.2-3).

Like some other ancient moralists (Plut. *Flatterer* 32 in Boring 1995: 115), rabbis emphasized that reproof was to be private (e.g., b. Sanh. 101a) and taken before witnesses only if necessary (Edersheim: 378, cites b. Shab. 119b; Tamid 28a; 'Arak. 16b; see Beer 1988). A sage could hyperbolically rule that publicly shaming one's fellow warrants exclusion from the coming age (m. 'Abot 3:11; also b. Sanh. 107a; other references in Urbach 1979: 1:253). The Scrolls, which include record keeping of rebukes (for offenses like anger and pride; 4Q477; Eshel 1994), also emphasize this sequence: private reproof, then before witnesses, and finally before the gathered assembly (cf. Schiffman 1983: 97-98; Davies 1966b: 79; Brown 1972: 4); the Qumranites detested disrespect for fellow members of the community (e.g., 1QS 6.26-7.9; 7.15-16). That Josephus adds to Exodus 18:14 this principle of private correction in *Antiquities* 3.67 reinforces the probability that Jewish people expected private reproof. Public admonition thus represented the form of rebuke reserved for the severest of circumstances (cf. Gal 2:14; t. Kip. 4:12).

exemplary hospitality toward a stranger (Test. Abr. 2B) and one rabbi's title for another (Sifre Deut. 34.5.3; b. 'Abod. Zar. 18a, bar.), and Israelites addressed fellow Israelites in such terms (e.g., Tob 5:10; 6:10; 7:3; 2 Macc 1:1). In Matthew the term applies to fellow disciples (23:8-9; 25:40; 28:10; cf. 6:9; 12:48-49). The words "against you" in 18:15, but the early geo-

Second, although disciples seek reconciliation, they must gather evidence in the proper order in case they later need proof of what transpired (18:16). As community centers, synagogues doubled as local courts, a function they maintained when evaluating internal disputes in Diaspora Jewish communities (cf. Grant 1977: 38; comment on 10:17). Judaism was strict about the need for witnesses (Syr. Men. Sent. 142; t. Sanh. 8:3), and later Jewish teachers regularly echoed the judicial requirement of two witnesses in Deuteronomy 17:6-7 and 19:15 (Jos. *Life* 256; *Ant.* 4.219; CD 9.17-23; 11QTemple 61.6-7; 64.8; Sifre Deut. 148.1.1; 188.2.1-2; 188.3.1-2; b. Sanh. 37b, bar.; p. Git. 4:1, §2; Sanh. 6:3, §3; Smith 1951: 169; cf. Heb 10:28); they required a pair of witnesses even to attest the new moon (m. Rosh Hash. 1:7; 2:6). Under their rules, to speak evil of another without supporting witnesses warranted a public beating (Belkin 1940: 267). The requirement of two witnesses remained standard judicial procedure in early Christianity (2 Cor 13:1-2; 1 Tim 5:19-20). (Because m. Sanh. 1:1 indicates that normal as opposed to capital cases required only three judges, Matthew might suggest that Christian witnesses are competent as judges; but the Mishnah's number of judges may be later than Matthew's period.) Other Jewish groups also required confronting an erring person before witnesses before the matter could be brought before the public assembly (1QS 5.25-6.1; CD 9.3-4).

Third, if all else fails, the messianic community must publicly dissociate itself from a habitually sinning professed disciple (18:17). Neither outsiders nor the sinner should continue under the delusion that this person is truly a follower of Jesus. One should treat such a person as a tax gatherer (cf. 9:9; 21:32) or a Gentile (cf. 5:47; 6:7; 20:25; cf. Pol. *Phil.* 11) — unclean and to be avoided. Although lesser forms of public discipline existed (e.g., 1QS 6.25 vs. 5.16-17; p. Mo'ed Qat. 3:1, §§4, 10; 2 Thess 3:6; Edersheim: 407), the discipline urged here was full excommunication, implying spiritual death (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20; Titus 3:10-11).

Fourth, God authorizes the messianic judicial assembly that follows these procedures to act on the authority of heaven (18:18). The verb tenses literally represent the cumbersome "whatever you bind . . . shall have been bound," which grammatically need not but could mean what the context probably suggests: that their earthly action followed the heavenly action.²² Presumably the "binding and loosing" here (cf. comment on 16:19) mean that "the halakic decisions of the community have the authority of heaven itself" (Davies and Allison 1991: 787).²³ In this context, halakic authority applies to judicial decrees and not merely legal theory. By removing an unrepentant sinner from Jesus' community, believers merely ratify the heavenly court's decree;²⁴ to borrow Johannine language, they

22. For specific grammatical arguments for either reading of the construction, see Mantey 1973; Marshall 1974; Carson 1984b: 370-72; France 1985: 256; Blomberg 1992a: 255 following Porter 1988.

23. The image would not be unfamiliar to an ancient audience; even in classical Athens, law-breakers acted lawlessly against the gods, hence a jury might execute justice or vengeance "in place of the gods" (prosecutor in Ps-Demosth. *Or.* 59, *Against Neaera* 126, LCL 6:448-51).

24. For a detailed discussion of the background of the heavenly court here, see Keener 1991a:

THAYER'S GREEK LEXICON

WE SEE THAT INIQUITY MEANS VIOLATING LAW OR TO DO WICKEDNESS. THESE DISCIPLES DISREGARDED THEIR RABBI'S COMMANDS.

JESUS OUR MASTER, WILL SAY "DEPART FROM ME," TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN HIM BUT DID NOT OBEY OR DISREGARDED HIS COMMANDS.

ἀνομία, -ας, ἡ, (ἄνομος);

1. properly, the condition of one without law — either because ignorant of it, or because violating it.

2. contempt and violation of law, iniquity, wickedness: [Matthew 23:28](#); [Matthew 24:12](#); [2 Thessalonians 2:8](#) (T Tr text WH text; cf. ἁμαρτία, 1, p. 30f), [2 Thessalonians 2:7](#); [Titus 2:14](#); [1 John 3:4](#). opposed to ἡ δικαιοσύνη, [2 Corinthians 6:14](#); [Hebrews 1:9](#) [not Tdf.] (Xenophon, mem. 1, 2, 24 ἀνομία μᾶλλον ἢ δικαιοσύνη χρώμενοι); and to ἡ δικαιοσύνη and ὁ ἁγιασμός, [Romans 6:19](#) (τῇ ἀνομίᾳ εἰς τὴν ἀνομίαν to iniquity — personified — in order to work iniquity); ποιεῖν τὴν ἀνομίαν to do iniquity, act wickedly, [Matthew 13:41](#); [1 John 3:4](#); in the same sense, ἐργάζεσθαι τὴν ἀν., [Matthew 7:23](#); plural αἱ ἀνομίαι manifestations of disregard for law, iniquities, evil deeds: [Romans 4:7](#) ([Psalm 31:1](#) (Ps. 32:1)); [Hebrews 8:12](#) [R G L]; [Hebrews 10:17](#). (In Greek writings from [Herodotus 1, 96] Thucydides down; often in the Sept.)

[Synonym: cf. Trench, § lxvi.; Tittmann 1:48; Ellicott on [Titus 2:14](#).]

LORD, LORD

Hear & Obey

24 “**Everyone**, then, **who hears these words of mine** and **acts on them** will be like **a wise man** who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. 26 And **everyone who hears these words of mine** and **does not act on them** will be like a **foolish man** who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

Matthew 7:24-27 NRSV



< **Lord, Lord**



Done

46 “Why do you call me ‘**Lord, Lord,**’ and **do not do what I tell you?**”

Luke 6:46 NRSV

Do you obey All of the commands of Jesus?

Some Commands of Jesus

Murder and Hatred: Matthew 5:21-22

Reconcile: Matthew 5:23-26

Adultery: Matthew 5:27-28

Divorce & Remarriage: Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18 Matthew 5:30-32

Cut off what causes you to sin: Matthew 5:29-30

Oaths: Matthew 5:33-37

Retaliation: Matthew 5:38-39

Love For Enemies: Matthew 5:43-48

Give to the Needy in secret: Matthew 6:1-4

Pray in secret not just in public: Matthew 6:5-7

This is how you pray: Matthew 6:9-13

Forgive others: Matthew 6:14-15

Fasting in secret: Matthew 6:16-18

Store Treasure in heaven: Matthew 6:19-21

Guard your heart: Matthew 6:22-23

Do not serve money: Matthew 6:24

Do not worry: Matthew 6:25-34

Do not judge hypocritically: Matthew 7:1-5

Do not give what is Holy to Dogs: Matthew 7:6

Ask, Seek, Knock: Matthew 7:7-12

Enter Narrow Gate: Matthew 7:13-14

There are more commands given in the Gospels.

Jesus addressing backsliding Christians

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 **But and if** that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to ***be drunken***;

46 **The lord of that servant** will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him **his portion with the unbelievers**.

Luke 12:41-46 KJV

Paul's warning to Christians

19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: **those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Galatians 5:19-21 NRSV

9 **Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?**

Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, men who engage in illicit sex, 10 thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, swindlers—**none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.** 11 And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NRSV