

Matthew 23.1-12

Fingers Pointing All Around

Matt 23 is POST Game Show > Review of DECISIVE VICTORY of Lord Jesus
 Previous Chapters Team Religion tested Him with Tough Questions and Tricks
 Captain of our Faith BESTED them, Superior WISDOM, Selfless Compassion

Matthew 23 Probably Collection of Teachings of Jesus, Different Times / Places
 CLIMACTIC End to Encounter w/ Religious Leaders, Final Womp to Bad Boys
 “The King’s Final Break with Judaism”

LAST PUBLIC Message of Jesus before CROSS > SCATHING REBUKE
 Recurrent THEME is HYPOCRISY > Not Apply to ME > does to Many of YOU

1. Look at Me!

a. Self-Appointed Prominence

Pharisee word meant SEPARATION, Fully Dedicated to Following Law of God
 Good Beginning – perhaps early as Ezra / Nehemiah – at least 200 BC
 As Nation was OVERRUN by Greeks, Syrians, Romans > GENTILES
 KEEPERS of True Faith – Established Necessary Boundaries > REAL Believers

Time of PLURALISM and COMPROMISE > Some MUST Stand for TRUTH

Jesus: “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and
 Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5.20

JAWS DROPPED! How could ANYONE be MORE Righteous than MARINES!

Made WRONG TURN > Protect God and His Law by ADDING More LAWS

Law of Moses contains 600 Laws > Necessary ORDER for ENTIRE Nation

Ceremonial, Civil, & Moral Laws > BLESSING and DIRECTION God’s People
 Pharisees ADDED Several THOUSAND Laws to Protect & Explain God’s Laws

Jesus: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.”
Matthew 23.23

4th Commandment – Keep the Sabbath Day > WORSHIP and REST

Questions – Can you Cook Food? Travel? Do ANY Work?

Places Modern Israel Elevators Programmed to Stop on Every Floor on Shabbat

PUSHING BUTTON for your FLOOR is Considered WORK

MORE Human Laws and Traditions – Some Seem SILLY – Further from GOD

SABBATH > Give to Bless, Refresh, Rejoice, Celebrate Loving, Saving, GOD
NOW day of DRUDGERY, NO FUN, RESTRICTIONS, Meaningless Rituals

1st C 6000 Pharisees (pop ½ Million) – LAY PEOPLE – Middle Class Business
Strict, Devoted Working People – Opus Dei, Knights of Columbus, Tea Party
NOBLE Members – NICODEMUS, JOSEPH of Arimathea, SAUL of TARSUS

vs. 1,2 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat

FACT Not a FIAT > Jesus DESCRIBING the Situation, Not making a DECREE
PHARISAIC FANCIED selves SUCCESSORS of Moses To THEIR Generation
Self-Appointed Prominence >> TIME-SERVERS and APPLAUSE SEEKERS

Pushed themselves Forward to Occupy Stone Seat at Front of Most Synagogues

Rabbis Sat Down to Teach > like Professors “Chair” at a University

This Chapter > Jesus FINAL REJECTION of their Whole Religious System
So ENCRUSTED with Corruption & Tradition > Not Possible to SAVE Seekers
Become RELIGIOUS System that led Followers TO HELL

Jesus had spoken against the religion of the Pharisees earlier

For the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ““This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”” Matthew 15.6-9

He Warned his Disciples about their Harmful Teachings

Jesus: “...beware of the...teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” Matthew 16.12

OUR TEXT - His Exposure and Warnings become PUBLIC > SHAMING

In FEW DAYS they will have HIM KILLED

Jesus warns those LEFT BEHIND about their DEADLY INFLUENCE

“When in the pulpit, they preach ... so well that it is a pity they should ever come out; but, when out of the pulpit, they live ... so ill that it is a pity they should ever come in.” Matthew Henry

b. Self-Attested Preaching

v. 3 ...so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.

Only GOOD Thing about these Guys is GOOD BOOK, Text is WORD OF GOD

Moses: “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children...” Deuteronomy 4.7-9

These men taught the Scriptures; in that they were right.

Believed the Scriptures, Zealously STROVE to Obey > Even to Smallest Details

Their teachings, when accurate, should be obeyed.

Not Flagrant Sexual Offenders nor outright Thieves nor Murderers

“The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’” Luke 18.11,12

Probably being VERY Honest > The Way Pharisees Actually Lived

What was wrong with them? > Why Jesus HARSHEST Words against Them?

Jesus speaks in SOFT TONES people caught in Sexual Sin, Drunkards, Gentiles
But STRONGEST, HARSHEST Words Jesus spoke Against Religious Leaders

Character Exact Opposite Required of Citizens of Christ’s Kingdom

Spotlight NOT on the WORTHY SAVIOR but their WONDERFUL SELVES
FAITH not CENTERED in Hearts > Corrupted OUTWARD Ritual & Tradition

WRITTEN by 2 Theology Professors at Heidelberg Uni – One 28, other 26

21. Q. What is true faith? --- A. True faith is a sure knowledge whereby I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word. At the same time it is a firm confidence that not only to others, but also to me, God has granted forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation, out of mere grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits. This faith the Holy Spirit works in my heart by the gospel.

CONFESSION and a CONVICTION – Changes BELIEF AND BEHAVIOR

True Faith TRANSFORMS – HEAD, HEART, and WILL

60. Q. How are you righteous before God? -- A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all God's commandments, have never kept any of them, and am still inclined to all evil, yet God, without any merit of my own, out of mere grace, imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ. He grants these to me as if I had never had nor committed any sin, and as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me, if only I accept this gift with a believing heart. Heidelberg Catechism, 1563

THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEEDS SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

Because it is NOT from our SINFUL SELVES but our SUFFICIENT SAVIOR

v. 5 For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long

Containing Scripture passages – Worn during Morning & Evening Prayers

Phylacteries – Small Boxes fixed by Leather Strap on Hand or Head

Prayer Shawl that had LONG FRINGE to Remind them to Pray



Nothing Inherently Wrong in Dress, WORN by Jesus

a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched *the fringe of his garment* Matthew 9.20

...brought to him all who were sick and implored him that they might only touch *the fringe of his garment*.

And as many as touched it were made well. Matthew 14.35,36

Clothing first SUGGESTED by God, perhaps just SYMBOLIC, NOT Literal...

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

Deuteronomy 6.4-8

SYMBOLS meant to REMIND Followers of God’s LAW & LOVE

FIRST Priority is to KNOW and LOVE God, then OBEY His Laws

Pharisees REPLACED TRUTH with HUMAN TRADITION

WEARING Symbol without WORSHIPPING God makes Symbol Meaningless

Foul Mouthed Rappers and Half Naked Women wearing CROSS of Jesus

The Pharisees had been using their position as teachers to get praise for themselves while making it nearly impossible for those they taught actually to learn the Bible's truths and come to God. James Boice

2. Look at You!

a. Ministry of Pain

v. 4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

USSR – harsh GODLESS Regime did much to ATTACK Church of Jesus Christ
 Thru years of SOVIET ATHEISM – Church did NOT Die – Continued to Meet
 Purges in Different Areas / Times – Churches Closed, Christians Arrested
 70 yrs 11 Time Zones of USSR > Church of Jesus Never EXTINGUISHED
 What DID to Survive was ADD Rules / Rituals to SHOW True Believer
 SPIES tried to INFILTRATE Church > Raised bar Discipleship / Obedience
 Believers Persecuted – Lousy Jobs, Low Wages, Poor Housing, Bad Schools
 1991 PERESTROIKA – Walls of USSR Collapsed – New Republics EMERGED
 MANY Cases WALLS in CHURCHES in FORMER USSR NOT Collapse
 Discipleship Rituals – Once Necessary – NOW Seen as DIVINE LAWS
 7 Most Important Words of Church - “We have Always Done it THIS WAY!”

Pharisees RELIGION was about OUTWARD CONFORMITY

FIRST Place God looks is HEART --- He DOES look on OUTSIDE Too!

But IF your HEART is not FOCUSED on GOD, NOTHING Else Really Is...

KING DAVID's prayer of REPENTANCE...

Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Psalm 51.6

1990's pastored church in Hawaii Founded in 1824 – First Church in East Hawaii

Prominent, Beautiful Building in Center of Town of HILO, Hawaii

Hired Painting Crew to REPAINT Building > decades Yellow, Red Roof

In Office, Painter Brought Samples show Me > Green more Complimentary Roof

You're the Expert, I am just a Preacher, do what you think is BEST

Members of Church: Most Important Words I Spoke in 6 years of Serving Them

Members of Community – No Interest in God or our Services – ANGRY!

7 Most Important Words of Church - "We have Always Done it THIS WAY!"

Dayna & I had a lot more JOY in Ministry getting SHOT at in Uganda in 1980's

Than we did taking all the Friendly Fire in that church in the 1990's

Pharisees TURNED Faith in God to UNBEARABLE BURDEN

SHEPHERDS had become WOLVES in SHEEP'S Clothing

Only CRITICIZED, No COMPASSION / ONLY GUILT, NO GRACE

Pharisees were HARDER on OTHERS than they were on THEMSELVES

FOLLOWING the RELIGION they OFFERED would lead People to HELL

400 years Earlier MALACHI Prophesied about this PROBLEM...

For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant Malachi 2.7,8

b. Ministers being Praised

vs. 5-7 They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

COMMON Complaint in ANCIENT World – POOR Seats big EVENT
High IMPORTANCE placed on PUBLIC SHOWING of your STATUS

SOCIAL Greetings were IMPORTANT and Followed Recognized Rules
Many Others – Impt to recognize WHO is Older > I usually WIN NOW!

Not enough TODAY be Pastor – SENIOR, PROPHET, APOSTLE, Excellency
The test of effective Christian leadership and teaching is that people learn to live
in vital relationship with God. Joe Kapolyo

Great to have LARGE CHURCH, LOTS of People > Impact in Marketplace!
Problem > It is ABOUT THEM and FOR Them > Hearing the Compliments!

Paul SHOWS BIBLICAL WAY TO SHOW ENCOURAGEMENT

“I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers”
Ephesians 1.16

HOW TO FUEL A PERSONS PRIDE - praise them for something they do

HOW TO MAKE A PERSON DISCOURAGED - ignore the good they do

It takes no special skill to see what is wrong with people, and to criticize them.
But to see people robed in a righteousness not their own and to encourage them
on this basis to be more of what they should be powerfully communicates the
heart of Christ. Bryan Chapell

3. Look at Him!! - Like in All Things, Solution is FOUND in Christ

a. Stands Above

vs. 8-10 But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are
all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who
is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.

By Talmudic times (*couple hundred years later*) a rabbi's status was immense, his disciples had to obey him without question, never walk beside or in front of him, never greet him first...The situation had not developed so far in Jesus' day, but the process had begun and Jesus is exposing it. Don Carson

Some RABBI affectionately called DADDY by their DISCIPLES

Many think ALL Religions RELATIVE - Any Sincere Faith & Practice Will Do

“All religions were considered by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the magistrates as equally useful.”

Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

Jesus NEVER Suggested or HINTED that Any Faith would DO!

Only God RECEIVES Highest RESPECT – All His SERVANTS are PEERS

Jesus is THE CHRIST – TRUE Teacher – WORD Incarnate

Jesus ALONE has RIGHT to Sit in the SEAT of Moses > Law and GOSPEL

There is a spiritual equality among the children of God, under the lordship of Jesus Christ...God has placed spiritual leaders in the church, but they must not replace God in our lives. A true spiritual leader directs the people into freedom and a closer fellowship with Christ, not into bondage to his ideas and beliefs.

Warren Wiersbe

b. Served Below v. 11 The greatest among you shall be your servant.

Jesus NOT ELIMINATE Categories of GREATNESS, or even COMPARISON

Rather he SETS the BAR Way UP to a DIZZYING, UNATTAINABLE Height

REASON Jesus is HIGHER than any Other, He Went to DEPTH of the CROSS

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

John 13.1

BITTER End of Golgatha > Not just WASH Feet > Wash from Sins with Blood

FULL EXTENT of His Love > REDEEM and RESTORE us to Family of God

Jesus TEACHES Disciples > True LEADERS are HUMBLE and Self-Effacing
 Makes Self STANDARD Live for PRAISE of God, Not the Praise of MEN

REASON we LOVE Jesus > TOTAL Opposite of PHARISEES

Jesus: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11.28-30

Pharisees DUMPED Burdens of People > Jesus DELIVERS from our Burdens
 TOOK our GREATEST BURDEN of SIN > Suffered Our Place > Paid Penalty
 As Jesus has DONE the Greatest SERVICE, He is Most Highly EXALTED

v. 12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

There are LEVELS in the Kingdom > Some Higher and Lower, Greater, Less

STATUS is earned thru SERVICE and DETERMINED by God

We must say that the risen Christ is as displeased with those in his church who demand unquestioning submission to themselves and their opinions and confuse a reputation for a show of piety with godly surrender to his teaching as he ever was with any Pharisee.

Don Carson

TRUE Greatness found in GIVING AWAY for Glory of God / Good of Church

“He ascended”...he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry

Ephesians 4.9-12

Great Servants of church WILL DECREASE as Jesus INCREASES in OTHERS

NEXT 2 Sundays – asking YOU to Join Sm Gps & SERVE in Ministry of ZGC

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12.3-8

SOLUTION to EGOTISM in Church are People who SERVE HUMBLY
FREELY Give their ENERGY & INTELLECT Advance GLORY of GOD
STAND UNITED at LEVEL Ground of CROSS of JESUS

I GET why People GIVE UP on church > DISCOURAGING, Tradition Bound
Many who Leave ZGC – HARD Time finding church – Start NEW Ones
CHURCH is still BRIDE of Jesus, Place HE is when People Gather in His Name
GOSPEL is POWERFUL to SAVE those OUTSIDE and INSIDE the Church

Few Days from Message – RELIGIOUS Leaders EXECUTED Jesus
But RISEN JESUS was NOT FINISHED with ISRAEL or HIS Church

WITHIN Months of CRUCIFIXION we READ...

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 6.7

PROMISES of God are YES & AMEN in Christ – INSIDE & OUTSIDE Church

The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low
Isaiah 2.11,12

Man is humbled, and each one is brought low, and the eyes of the haughty are brought low. But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness. Isaiah 5.15,16

And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it.” Ezekiel 17.24

Matthew 23.¹ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, ³ so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ⁴ They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ⁵ They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ⁶ and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ⁷ and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. ⁸ But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.