

**Matthew 23:1-12:** Then Jesus said to the crowds & to his disciples, <sup>2</sup> "The scribes & the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, <sup>3</sup> so practice & observe whatever they tell you – but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice. <sup>4</sup> They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, & lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. <sup>5</sup> They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad & their fringes long, <sup>6</sup> & they love the place of honor at feasts & the best seats in the synagogues <sup>7</sup> & greetings in the marketplaces & being called rabbi by others. <sup>8</sup> But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, & you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup> And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. <sup>11</sup> The greatest among you shall be your servant. <sup>12</sup> Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, & whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

**Intro:** Last Sunday, after so many verbal attacks & tests from the Jewish religious leaders, we saw Jesus go on the offensive! He asked the Pharisees a question concerning the deep reality of who He really is (Jesus is God & God's Son!), & no one could answer Him, & after this, no one dared to ask Him anymore questions! Jesus won this confrontation battle with the Jewish religious leaders once & for all! All He does is win! By the mercy of God, trust, obey, & delight in Jesus Christ, the Son of David, as your LORD & your God!

Today, & throughout Matthew chapter 23, we see Jesus continue to go on the offensive & show the sin, hypocrisy, pride, & wickedness of the scribes & Pharisees. All the "woes" are in contrast to the "blessed's" in chapter 5.

In view of God's mercy, humble yourselves, flee hypocrisy, follow Jesus, and you will have great reward!

### **1. Jesus Commands His Followers To Obey The Lawful Commands The Scribes & Pharisees Teach Them**

**Matthew 23:1-3:** Then Jesus said to the crowds & to his disciples, "The scribes & the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so practice & observe whatever they tell you . . . ."

**a. Moses' seat:** The authority of Moses, the Mosaic law, a chair found in early synagogues, where the law is taught

**b. The scribes (experts in the law) & Pharisees (separatists/specifiers) set themselves on Moses' seat: NAS:** "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses"; **Jeremiah 14:14:** And the LORD said to me: "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds."

**c. Jesus did warn His disciples about the teaching of the scribes & Pharisees: Matthew 16:6:** Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees & Sadducees." (Some think Jesus is using irony in 23:3.)

**d. Jesus is commanding His followers to respect the position of the scribes & Pharisees:** Jesus teaches His followers to honor authority. Children, honor & obey parents; Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's; Submit to governing authorities; And the scribes & Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so they should be honored, in a sense.

**e. Jesus is commanding His followers to obey whatever the scribes & Pharisees command, as long as it is in harmony with God's law (Moses' seat):** As long as they are teaching what is in accord with the law of God, obey

### **2. Jesus Commands His Followers Not To Do What The Scribes & Pharisees Do**

**Matt. 23:3-7:** but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, & lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad & their fringes long, & they love the place of honor at feasts & the best seats in the synagogues & greetings in the marketplaces & being called rabbi by others.

**a. These religious leaders were thought of by the people as the righteous standard in Jesus' day:** Because of Jesus' teaching about them, we often view them as the bad guys, & they are! But this is not how they would have been viewed by the people in Jesus' day. They were like your favorite radio/TV/internet preachers & authors!

**b. Scribes & Pharisees are hypocrites: V. 3:** For they preach, but do not practice: **Rom 2:17-29:** But if you call yourself a Jew & rely on the law and boast in God & know his will & approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; & if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge & truth - you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code & circumcision but break the law. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward & physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, & circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

**c. They weigh people down but don't lift anything themselves: V. 4:** They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, & lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

**1 Kings 12:6-11:** Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" <sup>7</sup> And they said to him, "If you will be a servant to this people today and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever." <sup>8</sup> But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. <sup>9</sup> And he said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us?'" <sup>10</sup> And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us,' thus shall you say to them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. <sup>11</sup> And now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'"

**Jesus is so different!:** **Matthew 11:28-30:** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. **GOSPEL!**

**d. They do everything they do to be seen by others: Vs. 5-7:** They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad & their fringes long, <sup>6</sup> & they love the place of honor at feasts & the best seats in the synagogues <sup>7</sup> & greetings in the marketplaces & being called rabbi by others.

1) They do all their deeds to be seen: **Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18:** Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. <sup>2</sup> "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues & in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. <sup>5</sup> "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand & pray in the synagogues & at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room & shut the door & pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. <sup>7</sup> "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him . . . <sup>16</sup> And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, anoint your head & wash your face, <sup>18</sup> that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

**a) We should seek to avoid two extremes:** 1) Avoid being a monk & totally leaving the world;  
2) Avoid blowing trumpets for the praise of men

**b) What Jesus' Words here do not mean:** You don't have to be a monk and leave the world and be overly paralyzed by the thought of others seeing your good deeds. Jesus expects the world to see your good deeds!

**Matthew 5:14-16:** You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

**c) What Jesus' Words here do mean:** Jesus is challenging His disciples to do what they do with a right heart attitude & motive: do good deeds, not to be seen by others, but for the glory of God & for the good of others!

We will miss out on the best, greatest, longest lasting, most satisfying rewards if we do our good works to be seen by men! We will miss out on our Father's rewards!

**Sinclair Ferguson:** In the context of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus directs us to an altogether different reason for the spiritual hypocrisy he sees in the Pharisees. Notice that in Matthew 6:1-18, God is called "Father" on ten different occasions. Throughout this section of the sermon, our Lord hints that the real trouble with the heart of the hypocrite is that he does not know God as his heavenly Father! He is insecure before God and, therefore, seeks security in what his fellow men think about him. He is unreal in his activities before men because he has no real relationship with God. The more you read the Gospel narratives, the more you will become convinced that this was a chief reason for Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees. He was not against disciplines in the Christian life. The reason he reserved his strongest condemnations for Pharisees was because they distorted the character of his Father, and turned him into a tyrant, a slave driver who did nothing but place restrictive burdens on his people. By distorting the image of God, they "shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces". They did not know God as Father at all, and they hated the thought that he should show mercy to sinners who had broken his law.

2) They have broad phylacteries & long fringes: **Michael Wilkins: (phylacteries):** Small cube-shaped cases made of leather, containing Scripture passages written on parchment. They were worn on the left arm & forehead as a literal way to obey the admonition of **Deut. 11:18:** You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

**Michael Wilkins: (fringes):** Tassels with a blue cord that were attached to the four corners of a man's garment, reminding the people to obey God's commandments & to be holy: **Num. 15:37-40:** The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel, & tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, & to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. & it shall be a tassel for you to look at & remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart & your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember & do all my commandments, & be holy to your God

3) They love the place of honor at feasts & the best seats in the synagogues: Jesus warned against this: **Luke 14:7-11:** Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, <sup>8</sup> "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, <sup>9</sup> and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. <sup>10</sup> But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. <sup>11</sup> For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

4) They love being greeted in the marketplaces & being called rabbi by others: You don't want people who want to

be called “Pastor” to be pastors! **Joke:** “Call me Rev, Doctor, Bishop, Pastor, Elder, Apostle, Evangelist Randall!”

In all of these things, we can know the right truth about these matters, & still desire the wrong things in our hearts! We can still subtly find our identity, our worth, our value in being a pastor or a position or a job or a husband/wife

In view of God’s mercy, humble yourselves, flee hypocrisy, follow Jesus, and you will have great reward!

### **3. Jesus Commands His Followers How To Live The Humble Life That Is Exalted By God**

**Matthew 23:8-12:** But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, & you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup> And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. <sup>10</sup> Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. <sup>11</sup> The greatest among you shall be your servant. <sup>12</sup> Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, & whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

**a. You are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, & you are all brothers: Michael Wilkins:** Jesus does not literally forbid use of the titles “teacher,” “doctor,” or “father” for all time in all circumstances, but he prohibits his disciples from using these terms in the way the Pharisees used them, in a spirit that wrongly exalted leaders & reinforced human pride.

**b. We are all brothers (the priesthood of all believers): J. V. Fesko:** The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers states that all believers in Christ share in his priestly status; therefore, there is no special class of people who mediate the knowledge, presence, and forgiveness of Christ to the rest of believers, and all believers have the right and authority to read, interpret, and apply the teachings of Scripture.

- **Colossians 3:11:** Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

**c. You are to call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven:** As we have seen, in the context of Matt. 23, Jesus is talking about false teachers: **Matt. 23:13, 23:** But woe to you, scribes & Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in . . . <sup>23</sup> You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

**John MacArthur:** Here Jesus condemns pride & pretense, not titles per se. Paul repeatedly speaks of "leaders" in the church, & even refers to himself as the Corinthians' "father" (1 Cor. 4:15). Obviously, this does not forbid the showing of respect, either. Christ is merely forbidding the use of such names as spiritual titles, or in an ostentatious sense that accords undue spiritual authority to a human being, as if he were the source of truth rather than God.

- **Malachi 2:7-10:** 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. <sup>8</sup> But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, <sup>9</sup> & so I make you despised & abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction. <sup>10</sup> Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

**D. A. Carson:** Like the priests of Malachi's day whose teaching caused many to stumble, so the revered Jewish fathers have so misinterpreted Scripture that they must not be called “fathers.” There is but one Father, God. (Pope) **(God is your Father!)**

**d. You should not be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ: Craig Blomberg:** People are properly called teachers in Acts 13:1; 1 Tim 2:7; & Heb 5:12. Paul will even refer to a spiritual gift that enables some people to be so identified (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28-29; Jas 3:1) . . . such titles are not to be used to confer privilege or status. [The point: Jesus is the chief Instructor! All the glory & honor belongs to Him! All our teaching should be from Him & to Him & through Him & for Him!]

**e. The greatest among you shall be your servant: Matt 20:25-28:** You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it

over them, & their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, & whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, & to give his life as a ransom for many.

**f. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled: 1 Peter 5:5:** Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (Mention "The Heart God Revive" sheet)

**g. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted: Philippians 2:5-11:** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him & bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven & on earth & under the earth, <sup>11</sup> & every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [You will be exalted! You will be glorified! Heaven will be amazing]

- **Martyn Lloyd-Jones:** The supreme matter in this life and world for all of us is to realize our relationship to God . . . I suggest that the greatest cause of all our failures is that we constantly forget our relationship to God. Our Lord puts it like this. We should realize that our supreme object in life should be to please God, to please Him only, and to please Him always and in everything. If that is our aim we cannot go wrong. Here, of course, we see the outstanding characteristic of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is there anything that stands out more clearly in His life? He lived entirely for God. He even said that the words that He spoke were not of Himself and that the works He did were the works which the Father had given Him to do. His whole life was given to glorifying God. He never thought of Himself; He did nothing for Himself; He did not obtrude Himself. What we are told of Him is this, 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench.' He did not raise His voice aloft. In a sense He seems to be there unseen and trying to hide Himself. We are told about Him that 'he could not be hid', but He seemed to be trying always to do this. There was a complete absence of ostentation. He lived entirely and always and only for the glory of God. He said constantly in various ways: 'I seek not My own honor but the honor of Him who has sent Me.' And He put it negatively in this way: 'How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?' 'That is your trouble', He says in effect. 'You are so concerned about man. If only you had a single eye to the glory and honor of God, then all would be well.'

- **Let's look unto Jesus:** Jesus not only sat on Moses' seat like no one ever before, but He created Moses' & his seat & gave the Mosaic law & is the only One Who obeyed that law perfectly without sin! Jesus is the only teacher Who has ever lived for Whom we are to practice & observe everything He told us AND we are to do what He did because He lived it out perfectly without sin! The scribes & Pharisees tied up the people with heavy burdens, but Jesus bore our greatest burden, our sin & the wrath of God when He died for us on that cross! And by His Spirit, He empowers us to obey Him! The scribes & Pharisees wore their phylacteries & fringes long, but Jesus is the Word, inspired the Word, & obeyed the Word, & His fringes were stripped off of Him, & He died for sinners naked on that cross! Jesus was not greeted but condemned, ridiculed, & mocked when He suffered on that cross. Jesus is the Rabbi of rabbi's & the instructor of all instructors! In Isaiah 9:6, He's called the everlasting Father because like a father, he provides, protects, pursues, loves, & cares for us His children like no one else! Jesus is the greatest among us, & He is the Servant of all servants Who humbled Himself like no other when He died on that cross! But God raised Him from the dead & highly exalted Him! And gave Him that name that is above every name! . . .

Christ Jesus Is Perfect, The Humble Rabbi  
The Instructor And Teacher Who Came To Defy  
False Teachers And Hypocrites, All Who Are Sly  
He Created Moses, Spoke God's Word Lifted High  
He's The Truth And The Way And Our Every Supply  
He Came To Fulfill God's Word And Apply  
He Suffered God's Wrath On That Cross He Would Die  
"My God! My God! You've Forsaken Me Why?!"

That Was His Darkest, Deserted, Death Cry  
But Then He Arose, Death's Dead It Will Die  
By Faith Alone We Are Just And Comply  
With The Spirit Of Christ He Shall Vivify  
So We Do Our Good Deeds For His Beautiful Eye  
We Humble Ourselves To Him Alone Glorify  
For We Know Christ Alone Can Truly Satisfy!

In view of God's mercy, humble yourselves, flee hypocrisy, follow Jesus, and you will have great reward!