

## **Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ Beware of the Scribes and the Pharisees**

Last time...Jesus asked the scribes and the Pharisees a question:

What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?  
“David’s”

Then He stumped and silenced them with a follow-up question:

How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

How to you explain your answer in light of Ps 110:1?

No one could answer Jesus’ question...and He did not answer it for them, for they have the Scriptures

This time...Jesus has a warning for everyone in the Temple listening to Him

We will be in Mark 12, Luke 20, and Matt 23

### **Mark 12:38-40**

v38-40 Beware of the scribes...receive greater damnation:

According to this account, Jesus is speaking to whom?  
The common people...v37b

The Lord’s instruction is a warning: Beware of the scribes

The scribes were the teachers of the Law

They knew the Hebrew language, the common people did not

Therefore they taught and interpreted the Law of God for the people

What is it about the scribes that produced this Divine warning to the people?

1. Love/prefer/chose/delight in

- walking around in their long robes, looking all pious decked out in their religious regalia
- the salutations/greetings/recognition/admiration of the people in the marketplaces/public places
- the preeminent positions in the assemblies
  - front row seats in the synagogues, facing the congregation
  - places of honor at the feasts

2. Devour widows houses...imagining evil in their hearts, took advantage of (rob the wealth of) the weak and vulnerable using false “spiritual” pretenses
3. Making long, showy prayers...so all eyes and ears were on them  
Disingenuous, intended to impress the people

These sanctimonious displays of “super spirituality”

- misrepresent the Lord to the people
- are self-serving
- will receive greater/more abundant damnation  
(which means there are levels/degrees of punishment in hell)

Now let’s go to Luke 20

### **Luke 20:45-47**

v45-47 all the people...His disciples:

In Mark’s account, the audience was the common people.

In Luke’s account we learn that Jesus’ warning is primarily for His disciples/learners/followers, but it’s in the hearing of the people

Jesus’ warning to His disciples (and the people) regarding the scribes:

Don’t be deceived by these hypocrites!

They are hazardous to your spiritual health

The “holiness” of the scribes is

- a deceptive counterfeit...of the flesh, not of the spirit
- all outward for men to see, not inward where God alone sees
- intended to attract attention to themselves

Things may not be as they seem (the definition of “deception”)

Regarding the spiritual leadership of the Jews...and their kingdom...Jesus said

John 8:23      **Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world**

John 8:44a      **Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do**

e.g. v46-47

Jesus taught His followers and the people...regarding His kingdom

Matt 5:20

Matt 7:15-20

In the SoM, etc, and now in the Temple in His Final Week of ministry, as recorded in the Gospels written to the Gentiles, Jesus is warning us about the false show of “spirituality” that is self-serving and others-oppressing

1. long robes

the garb of all the false priesthoods in religions of men  
and the uniforms of “men of the cloth”  
that draw distinction between the wearers and all others

2. reverent salutations in public places

Good morning, Reverend/Bishop/Father/Pastor/

3. positions of preeminence and honor

Luke 14:7-11 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, **When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted**

4. taking advantage of the weak and vulnerable to steal from them

televangelists endlessly begging for or demanding money

e.g. Oral Roberts and his gold university and hospital

“The Lord is going to kill me unless...”

ministries seeking money that make merchandise of the people  
scams like handkerchiefs from Paul (Acts 19:12)

2 Tim 3:4-6

lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;  
Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins

Zech 7:9-10    Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart

James 1:27    Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world

5. prayer-for-show

Matt 6:5-8

We get more of Jesus' instruction/warning in Matt 23, in the Gospel written to the Jews

**Matt 23:1-12**

v1-3    The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

Speaking to the multitude of people in the Temple **and** His disciples/followers...  
**and** within earshot of the scribes and Pharisees since they have not left the scene and Jesus will speak to them next...

Jesus is warning both His disciples and the people about both the scribes and the Pharisees

The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat –  
the teachers and interpreters of the Law

The Law is good and right, so do as they say – obey the Law  
But do not what they do, because they say but do not do...  
they do not walk the talk

As Jesus taught

- a multitude after rebuking the Pharisees (Luke 12:1-2):  
*Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.  
For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid,  
that shall not be known.*
- in The Parable of the Two Sons (Matt 21:28-32) in response to the challenge of His authority in the Temple from the chief priests and scribes

James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves

Rom 2:13 For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified

Regarding those that preach and teach but do not practice what they preach and teach...

v4 bind heavy burdens...one of their fingers:

The “religious instruction” given by the scribes and Pharisees was “heavy-handed” (just like the religious instructed I received as a youth)

They strapped heavy spiritual burdens on the backs of the people

- “letter of the Law”...impossible to keep their microscopic interpretations of broad Laws (not work on Sabbath, work = ?)
- traditions...that make the Word of God of none effect
- guilt...a crushing, debilitating weight
- condemnation...a burden that leads to hopelessness and rebellion

And, knowing the oppressive weight of these things, did not so much as lift a finger to relieve their burden

They imposed guilt and condemnation they did not bear themselves in their holier-than-thou self-righteousness

The shepherds were not only no help to the sheep, they oppressed the sheep!

But Jesus taught

Matt 15:1-9

Mark 7:8-9

For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition

Matt 11:28-30

Matt 20:25-28

with Rom 8:1

Jesus came not to lay a burden but to take our burden

Matt 5:17-18 with Rom 10:4

But I say unto you...Spirit of the Law vs Letter of the Law (Matt 5:21-48)

1. Murder (Matt 5:21-22)
2. Adultery (Matt 5:27-28)
3. Divorce (Matt 5:31-32)
4. Vows (Matt 5:33-37)
5. Vengeance (Matt 5:38-42)
6. Love (Matt 5:43-48)

2 Cor 3:6      the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

v5-7    all their works they do for to be seen of men:

Here in Matthew's account we hear Jesus expose the motive/hearts of the  
"super spiritual" scribes and Pharisees: To be seen of men

All these were for show to garner the attention and the praises of men:

1. make broad/wide their phylacteries
  - Deut 6:8 (these words)...thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes
  - literally made leather boxes that attach to the wrist and forehead, containing 4 Scriptures
  - wider = more spiritual/holy
2. enlarge the borders/tassels of their garments
  - Num 15:37-40...And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God
  - larger = more spiritual/holy
3. love
  - the important places and positions of honor, for which they continuously jockeyed
  - the seats in front, facing the congregation (congregation facing them...all eyes on them)
  - greetings of recognition and admiration in public places... a power over the people
  - to be called by men, Rabbi, Rabbi (my master, my teacher)... a title of honor

To seek the attention and praises of men is to...steal it from the Lord!

But Jesus taught

Matt 6:1-6, 16-18

John 4:34     **My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work**

John 8:29b     **I do always those things that please him**

v8-10   one is your Master...one is your Father...one is your Master:  
Jesus confronts the spiritual pride of religious hierarchies

v8: One is your Master...Don't be called Rabbi/Master because there is only One Master – Jesus Christ our Lord

Jesus alone is Master, Teacher, Head of the Body, Good Shepherd  
Mark 1:21-22     And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes

Matt 7:28-29

All who follow Jesus are spiritual equals in the eyes of God  
There is no hierarchy in Biblical Christianity;  
But there are hierarchies in unbiblical religious christianity

Per the voice of God to the followers of Jesus: One Master, one following  
From a Biblical perspective, there is something intrinsically wrong with social media (FB, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube)  
Strip away the thin veneer of “Friend”-ship, what is the objective of those technologies?  
To build a...following, a self-centered endeavor than fans the ever-burning flame of pride in the heart of man

James LeBron has over 40 million followers on Twitter  
(a public dumping ground of personal opinions)  
That kind of a following is...power

Followings can be monetized  
A couple has a You Tube channel of their 7 year old child opening presents  
The cuteness developed into a following recognized by advertisers who paid the couple over \$20 million last year  
That kind of a following is...power

What does power do to man's heart?!

The only following that matters is the Good Shepherd's

The only One Who can be trusted with power is the  
Good Shepherd  
A sheep seeking a following is...absurd and self-destructive

However, a wolf wants a following

Acts 20:29-30 For I know this, that after my departing  
shall grievous wolves enter in among you,  
not sparing the flock. Also of your own  
selves shall men arise, speaking perverse  
things, to draw away disciples after them

Given the condition of man's heart (Jer 17:9), Social Media is a

- snare for the followers of Jesus Christ
- clever trap laid down by the world for the carnal  
Christian (not Spirit-led) to seek the praises of men

I'm sure if you asked every Christian striving to build a following  
in Social Media, they would say, "I'm doing it for the  
Kingdom of God, for the glory of Jesus Christ!"

That may be true...and it may not be true!

What gets stirred/excited in a person when the "Like"s and the  
"Share"s and "Retweets" hit 100 or 1000 or beyond?  
Is it the spirit...or the flesh?  
Does humility swell...or does pride?

An objection to this warning that may be heard by Christians  
striving to build their Social Media following:

1 Cor 4:16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of  
me

1 Cor 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of  
Christ

But...

- a. The Holy Spirit inspired those words recorded by Paul  
Can the same be said of an objecting Christian or  
are the words of God being used to justify  
one's words/actions?

- b. Paul's motive was kept pure

2 Cor 11:19-28 his "resume" of suffering

2 Cor 12:7-11 his "thorn in the flesh"

1 John 3:1-3 how we purify ourselves

- c. Paul was not self-promoting, he did not care how many  
"Like"s or "Retweets" he got



Gal 1:10      For do I now persuade men, or God?  
or do I seek to please men? for if I  
yet pleased men, I should not be the  
servant of Christ

Can self-less purity of motive be said of every Christian laboring  
to build a following on Social Media?  
Is Social Media the problem or is the proud and sinful heart of man  
the problem?

Jesus warns us about doing spiritual things with  
selfish motives and for selfish gain...  
so we using Social Media must examine our hearts

Hab 2:14      the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the  
glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea  
will happen without any help from Social Media followings!!

v9: One is your Father...There is only One Giver of Life, the Father which is in  
heaven Who gives physical and spiritual life (begat vs born)

Do not ascribe (give credit or honor) spiritual life to any other

Also, the Father in heaven, the Father of spirits (Heb 12:9) is the ultimate  
authority and has sovereign dominion

- His will be done, not ours
- We are to be about His business of seeking and saving the lost

Do not supplant the Father's authority and dominion with any man's

In the context of the warning us about spiritual pride and spiritual  
counterfeits, Jesus prohibits giving the title of "father"...  
and the honor and authority and dominion it carries...  
to any one but His Father

I am a father  
I had a father  
But I do not have the title of "Father", nor do I give it to my dad

My father was a computer programmer  
He wanted me to be about his business (take it over)  
I wasn't interested...he did not have dominion...  
my will was done, not his

My Father wants me to be an ambassador/witness of His Son  
He wants me to be about His business  
He has dominion over all...His will be done, not mine

Yet the Roman Catholic Church, Russian Orthodox Church, Greek Orthodox Church, Coptic Church, and some Protestant denominations that did not fall far from the Roman tree boldly defy this prohibition by Jesus to give honor to the members of a hierarchy (false priesthood) created within their religions

The title of "Father" comes with honor and authority and dominion  
We are called to diligently obey the voice of the LORD God  
Obeying the voice of a false "father" (religious title) results in scandal (abuse of power)...as is plaguing the RCC

v10: One is your Master...Titles separate people, elevating some above others.  
Titles puff up those who seek the title

My Driver's License says "Doug"...not "Pastor"  
I am not your teacher, the Holy Spirit is our Teacher  
John 14:26  
1 John 2:27-28

My calling does not make me different than you, it does not put me on a higher level or closer to God than you  
What my calling does is give me a greater responsibility and accountability before God

And this [ Browse Hottest Trending Sermon Ideas ] is not being faithful to my calling!

James 3:1	be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation
2 Tim 2:15	a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth
Acts 20:27	I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God (not my favorite/trending topics)
2 Cor 1:27	Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy, for by faith ye stand
1 Peter 5:2-4	not lords over God's heritage, but are examples to His flock (of which we are a part)

All honor and glory belongs to Jesus

Rev 4:11	Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created
Acts 20:28	who purchased the Church of God with His blood

v11-12 greatest...servant...exalt...humble:

The polar opposite of the scribes and Pharisees:

1. Greatness lies in serving others, NOT being served by others

John 13:13-17 *Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*

2. The proud self-righteous will be humbled and the humble Christ-righteous will be exalted  
Matt 5:20 with 1 Cor 1:30-31

What does Jesus bring to the table?

The righteousness of God

What do we bring to the table?

Sin

What does Jesus bring to the table?

White linen garments of His righteousness

What do we bring to the table?

Filthy rags...used menstrual cloths

Jesus GLADLY takes what we bring in exchange for what He brings!

### **Application**

1. Biblical Christianity is not an organization or a business enterprise with their titles, spans of control, and levels of authority

Biblical Christianity is a living organism, a Body with One Head and countless dependent parts doing the will of the Head

The glory belongs only to the Head!

2. Beware of spiritual frauds  
Beware of being a spiritual fraud...spiritual pride is the worst form of pride

Matt 24:4....spiritual deception in the last days