

## Matthew 23

Jesus exposes the Pharisees, one of four sects that were around at the time of the early church. The others were Sadducees, Essenes and the Zealots.

This chapter is in three parts

1. Warnings
2. Eight Woes
3. A Lament

### Warnings

## Matthew 23 v 1-12

*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 things and do not do them. 4 They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. 5 But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. 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 anyone 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, that is, 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.*

The Pharisees were good at teaching the truth of the Mosaic Law, but did not live in the good of the truth; Jesus said that they were to obey the Law but not be like the Pharisees who were hypocrites. Their motto was *Don't do as I do but do what I say*. They made an outward show, went to the Synagogue, wore their colourful garments and carried large boxes (Phylacteries) in which they carried their scripture texts. They took the seats of honour at the banquets and in the Synagogues and looked for people to speak endearing words to show how important they were.

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\*SCF- Stevenage Christian Fellowship where Dennis Marshall was Pastor

Jesus said that this was not His way, we are not to be called Rabbi (teacher) or Father because there is only one who is over us all, He is to receive the honour and the glory. We are not to give ourselves titles (Reverend or Father) setting ourselves above everyone else, we are all brothers in Christ, only Jesus is to be revered. We are not to boast about things as though we did them, if we do then we shall be humbled. When we give Him the credit or the glory, then He may exalt us in due time.

## **Eight Woes**

### **Matthew 23 v 13-36**

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.] 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 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 cummin, 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? 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 the guilt of 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.

Jesus demanded that the disciples obeyed the word of God, but He showed sympathy and compassion on those who were weak and stood beside them to help them into the right place. This is the kind of minister that God seeks to shepherd His sheep. The way that Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of the day was to say to them *woe betide you if you continue in this way*. There is total condemnation of such attitudes in leaders. We once again see that Jesus is saying that that we are to serve one another, not laud it over each other, His way, not the worldly way. There is a strong warning to each one of us that we should take our calling seriously, we have a name of being a Christian and we are to live up to that name.

This is a repeat of the previous teach in, No. 20 and woe betide us if we do not pay attention to it. You may ask *How do I know if my life is acceptable to Jesus?* Well, that is very simple, we look at the fruit of our lives openly and honestly; open to correction and to help and willing to obey the word of God. The comparisons are in the following scriptures.

**1 Corinthians 6 v 12-20**

*12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. 14 Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! 16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "The two shall become one flesh." 17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*

**Galatians 5 v 16-24**

*16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

I am committed to allowing the fermentation to continue, I want you also to give off a sweet-smelling aroma to the Lord and am sure that you do too. We have to acknowledge both the good things that He has done and those things that need changing. I hope you agree!

### **A Lament**

### **Matthew 23 v 37-39**

*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!'"*

The chapter finishes with a lament. A lament is passionate expression of grief, in this case felt and expressed by Jesus Himself. We can help to remove that grief that He feels today about us, He is concerned if we do not show a true commitment to become holy in every aspect of our lives because we have a name that is above every other name and we should honour that name.