

Religious or Righteous?

We want to spend some time in Matthew 23. The Pharisees were a branch from the Jewish faith. The Jews saw the Pharisees as not having sound doctrine. So when Jesus talks about the Pharisees, He's talking about things that are not sound doctrine. Verse 1, *Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples.* The multitudes were the Jewish people. Verse 2, *Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:* Moses gave the laws to the children of Israel. So the scribes and the Pharisees sat in the seat of Moses to judge what they were going to do and what they weren't. A Pharisee was more like a lawyer in that they recorded the things that they were supposed to do. In today's time, it would be like a secretary at a meeting that kept the minutes. They wrote up what the leaders wanted them to do and be. That's who He's speaking about mostly in this whole chapter. The Scribes and the Pharisees who sat in the seat of Moses making the laws and rules and regulations of what God wanted the Children of Israel to do. Verse 3, *All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do;* Jesus is saying to the people, what the scribes and Pharisees say to do, you need to do it. Apparently there was enough good in the laws still that they were supposed to do it. *...but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.* That sentence tells you what a religious person does. A religious person tells you what you should do but in secret places he doesn't do it himself. In the secret places of their heart there is no love for God therefore his words are to do what God said to do but what he does on his own is his own works. We either do the works of man or the works of God. But they mixed them and so everything that a religious person does is outwardly to impress you that he is a righteous and holy person but behind closed doors he's conniving and trying to benefit his own flesh. Verse 4, *For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.* So the religious leaders told everybody what they needed to do, but they themselves wouldn't even lift a finger to do what they were telling everybody else to do. If you want to look at that in Charismatic move, the preachers get up and preach prosperity. "If you give me X amount of dollars, then you will prosper because I'm a man of God." God gave them whatever they had, and yet they want you to give them money so they can prosper. They have multiplication. If they speak to 1,000 people and everybody would give \$50, they would have a sizeable amount of money in just one offering. And so a religious person looks out for himself and does what he wants because he's a leader. In his eyes, he can do what he wants and not consider it rebellion because he is a leader. Verse 5, *But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,* They do all of their works to be seen of men. They go out in public along the streets and they pray a prayer. They may pray for an hour. When I went to Israel, the ones who came in the daytime to the western wall, most of them were priests. They would go to the wall and pray for 20 minutes or half an hour and then they take off and you couldn't keep up with them if you wanted to. They walk so fast, even the little ones. They almost run they are walking so fast. As soon as they get done praying they are thinking of all the things they need to be doing. They've said their prayers, they've shown themselves, and now they go back to do what they want to do. I can't say that I know that I know, but it sure looked like that's what was happening. Verse 6, *And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.* Each one of us are brethren. What does it mean to be a brethren? It doesn't mean that brethren don't need leadership, because God always puts someone in leadership no matter what it is. But to be a brethren is that I have to go through the same kinds of things that I'm teaching you to go through to become pure. If I'm yielded to God, the Spirit of the Lord will require me to go through it just like He does you. And so when I get up and teach, I know that whatever I say God is going to hold me accountable to change in the same way that I said it so that I don't become a religious leader. Verse 9, *And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.* Now, we have earthly fathers. But there is one thing that happens when you become a man and that is that your father is a brethren unto you. Can you understand what I'm saying? You are father to your children but when your children become of age there is a transfer of authority that the heavenly Father becomes everyone's Father and everybody else is brethren because all of us must go through the same qualifications no matter

what your title is. It doesn't matter. It's what you are inside and what you have cleansed is who you are in God. And the Bible says He knows our inner thoughts, He knows what's in us. Verse 10, *Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.* A master is one that can teach you all things, and there's no one that can teach us all things except Christ, and He is our Master. The Master is the one that gives us an assignment for the day, the week, the year, the lifetime. Verse 11, *But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.* Because we are brethren. Why is it that those that become the greatest, that is, have the most authority in the realm of the Spirit, why should they become the servants? The reason you are given authority is not for you to be up in a lofty place but that you become a servant to help others come to the knowledge of Christ to your ability in knowing how to get there and what happens. It is your responsibility to then help others come into that same place you are in. And you can't teach somebody how to get somewhere that you haven't been. But where you have been you are qualified to help teach someone else how to get there and that is a servant. And that will keep you from becoming religious. And so therefore no matter what it is or where you are at, you are still the brethren and Jesus Christ is the Master that gives the assignments to each person and in you knowing Christ and your relationship with Him, He'll carry you into that place you're supposed to be. And if He gives someone that is in the brethren a word of prophecy or whatever it is, then it's to help and benefit you, to shed more light so you can see better to get where you need to be. And if all of this doesn't happen, you are extremely vulnerable to become religious and arrogant and useless to the body of Christ. And how do I know that? Well as we go along Jesus is going to start saying, "Woe" to the people who think they are so high and mighty. Verse 12, *And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.* Those that humble themselves and become servants will be exalted by the people that they help. I can't make you honor me. But if I become a servant to you then I receive honor from you because I helped you get to that place in Christ that you could become wealthy. And if that doesn't happen (helping others get where you are), you're religious. If you don't have time to help someone, you're religious. Verse 13, *But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.* You don't approach God and you don't know how to get in the presence of God and actually you hinder by the laws, rules, and regulations and the loftiness of who you are. It keeps them from entering in as well if you're not a servant. And the reason you would be a servant is because you can help someone. Why is it that I have patience with someone? It's because I have become a servant to that person to bring them to a place that I know. And if I do that, I'm a servant of the living God. I'm not the master, I'm not the Father, but I am a brethren that helps them prosper in the things that God wants them to be and do. Does anybody believe that? What you need to do with this message is you need to examine where you are from the beginning to where we need to be and what you need to change. We need to be abased and become a servant. Will others say of us, "He's a man that helps?" I knew a man who owned a butcher shop. He never asked anyone to do something he wasn't willing to do himself. If he wasn't busy with something else he would be out in the shop working with everyone else and you wouldn't even have known he was the owner. If something happened he would lay his knife down and go take care of it. But that stuck with me. I'm not asking you to do something that I'm not willing to go through. That also will keep you from becoming religious. It will bring you to a place of helping others and knowing that nobody is everything for everybody except the Master. And so the first thing Jesus is saying here is they shut up the kingdom of heaven. What a terrible thing. Verse 14, *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.* What does it mean to devour? To take advantage of some person that doesn't know what's going on, who doesn't know what the value of things are. Every once in a while I will hear of a "religious" person stealing property from a widow for almost nothing. On their death bed they take them a paper and try to get them to sign it, selling their property for a ridiculously low amount of money. What do you think God thinks of that? Well, He says woe unto those people. You have long prayers and make it look like you are so righteous and religious but when it comes right down to it you are cunning, trying to get money from people who are weak and don't know how to defend themselves. Verse 15, *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.* Twice the sons of hell as what you are.

That's what I think of when they go around and pray for people, trying to get them to say a little prayer and tell them they are saved. Now they think they are saved but can go do what they want to. That makes them twice the sons of hell that they were before, because before they knew they weren't saved but now you're telling them they are and you're supposed to be a man of God. You can't take them someplace where you haven't been. That's why up to this point most of the salvations have been that the Spirit of God moves upon someone and raises them up. John said you don't need to go out and be taught; the Holy Spirit will teach you. And everybody should be taught by the Holy Spirit. The only reason you have teachers is to help that process be sped up. You should be able to get to the place the teacher is at quicker than the teacher got there himself. Verse 16, *Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!* We don't swear that way today and I think it's because of this verse here. You swear by, if it says, you're filling out a statement and you say that it's true, you're just swearing against yourself. What that swearing does is bring judgment upon you if you're lying. But they swore by the temple so that it was absolute. If they swore by the temple it didn't mean much, but if they swore by the physical things then it was really important. Why is that? Because a religious person looks at everything in the physical realm and doesn't understand the value of the spiritual realm. If they did, they would switch. You can't find someone that is religious that holds the value of things if you're a man of the Spirit and that is the most important thing in your life it's because what God did to you and for you. But a religious person, one that just says a few words and then goes on, they didn't actually help you but you think that they did and therefore you have some thankfulness but there isn't any depth of richness in what that experience was. But if God touches you and begins to change you and you can see in the light that God is changing you from a wicked person to someone that is becoming pure and holy before God that it is of greater value than the physical things. Then verse 17, *Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?* There's he's talking about swearing by the gold that's in the temple. Gold isn't holy unless God sanctifies it. Even gold went through a sanctifying process for it to be holy. Verse 18, *And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.* They were valuing the gift rather than the altar that makes the gift holy. Verse 19, *Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that setteth thereon.* So no matter what it is a religious person cannot enter into the spiritual realm and find wealth. The only place they can find wealth is in the physical and that's why they go out in the streets and make these prayers and then go and try to find a way to become rich by taking from a widow or someone that doesn't know what's going on. That's a religious person. How can you be a servant if you rip off those you are supposed to help? Verse 23, *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* The things that really matter are judging yourself, walking in mercy, and faith. When you deal with somebody do you show mercy? And do you show faith? How do you show faith in a business deal? If you treat someone correctly they will be your friend forever. Verse 24, *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.* You look at the little things and be picky and leave the big things in your life untouched. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.* On the outside you have a smooth mouth. On the inside you're a fox. Years ago I was partner in a business with a man who was that way. Everything seemed good. On the outside he was polished and shiny but on the inside he was full of dead man's bones. He would make a sale and I would come back from installing the part from the sale and he would just laugh at how he ripped the customer off. And I thought, what kind of man is this that he is arrogant in ripping somebody off. He would brag how slick he was. That partnership only lasted four months. Verse 26, *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.* If you clean up what is inside of you then when you go out you don't have to worry about the outside being clean, it will be clean. Verse 27, *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are*

within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. What is in them has to be a spirit from darkness because those are the things that are unclean. That means that their generations and the sins of the community and the sins that you allow in are unclean in you and full of dead men's bones; that is, a dead person, after they were in the grave a while, and if someone else died that was going to be buried in there they would gather up the bones and put them in a little box and set it in the corner. And then the next person was laid in there. So they appear to be beautiful but on the inside they are full of dead men's bones. That's one of the things that helped me to understand our ancestral spirits that live in us. Verse 28, *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.* Hypocrisy means doing the opposite of what you tell other people to do and iniquity is sins within us that make us do what we don't want to do. Verse 29, *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous.* What in the world does that mean? What's wrong with building tombs for the prophets? And building sepulchers for the righteous? A sepulcher is what I just described, where you have a whole family buried in one place. But a prophet had tombs, that is, some kind of a statue there or something. So when you go out to Mount Carmel on the hill there is a statue of Elijah. You look at his eyes and he's ready to crush you. Verse 30, *And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.* The bottom line is, they hated the righteous people and they hated the prophets and so they killed them and persecuted them but they said that if they were back in that time they wouldn't have killed the prophets but they made nice tombs and sepulchers to put them in. What is that old saying anyway? There's only two times when you are loved by everybody. When you're a little bitty baby and when you're dead. Why after when you are dead? Because you can't do anything to them anymore, so you become a nice person again. If you just listen to when someone gets killed they will interview people and they will say, he was the nicest person, quiet and to himself, and just a nice person. But if you would have talked to them just the day before when he was still alive, they would call him a rascal and everything else. They do that because they're afraid of the spooks. He's dead now and he could come back and haunt you so they say nice things about them. Verse 31, *Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.* He said, Just go ahead. I'm sending you prophets and righteous people and you're going to kill them. Just go ahead and fill yourself up like your fathers did. Go ahead and allow all the uncleanness to come in you. Just let it come in and fill yourself up. Be like them if that's the way you want to be. That's what He said. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. With all the uncleanness and all the dirtiness that is in you. He died for those that want to be free of that and if you want to be free He will help you. If you don't, go ahead and fill yourself up and become like your ancestors that you didn't like. Verse 33, *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* Do you know what that tells me? All of these woes are people that won't make it. That shakes me to the core. Those people are not going to make it to heaven. He said, you're a snake and a generation that comes from a whole wad of snakes that are crawling around on each other. That's what you are. How are you going to escape the damnation of hell? Verse 34, *Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:* He's prophesying what they are going to be if they don't change. Verse 35, *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* That's getting rid of the blemishes that are in us from bitterness, anger, and self-centeredness. All the things put together that you don't want to become a servant for those who don't know what you know.

