

## 0 **Setting the Record Straight**

Matthew 23:1-12

### 1 **General Considerations**

- The people received Jesus two ways
  - As Son of David (implication of kingship)
  - As “the prophet Jesus” (as one who speaks for God and with His authority)
- Jesus teaches 1 object lesson and 3 parables
  - Fig tree – fruitfulness
  - Two sons, a landowner and a wedding
    - Failure of the Jewish leaders to bear fruit and accept the ministry of the Messiah
    - Future finality of Judgment against the leaders

### 2 **General Considerations**

- The Chief Priests, Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes had attacked the Lord several ways...
  - Confrontation 1, on the issue of authority (21:23)
  - Confrontation 2, on the issue of ultimate commitments (22:15-22)
  - Confrontation 3, on the issue of resurrection (22:23-33)
  - Confrontation 4, on the issue of the greatest commandment (22:34-40)
  - Confrontation 5, on the issue of the nature of Messiah [being David’s son and Lord (22:41-46)]

### 3 **Current Context (1-2)**

- As Jesus’ question still lingered on their minds (45)
- Jesus once again spoke
  - “to the crowds and to His disciples”
  - Were there any of the ‘religious leaders’ gathered?
    - Though it does not explicitly say, nevertheless it was incumbent upon them to at the very least continue to have spies near him
    - He directly addressed them from verse 13ff

### 4 **Current Context (1-2)**

- Jesus then makes a statement concerning the “scribes and the Pharisees”
- Matthew 23:2 “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;
- What is Jesus getting at?
  - First, historically, there was a place in the synagogue that was indeed called the seat of Moses
  - Second, it was an authoritative position in which the ‘law and prophets’ were read and expounded upon

### 5 **Inference (3a)**

- Because of what Jesus just said concerning the scribes and Pharisees
  - “therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds”
    - There are two views in terms of how it is we are to understand what our Lord is getting at here
    - One, our Lord is being ironic in speaking about the scribes and Pharisees
    - Two, our Lord is being forthright in speaking about the scribes and Pharisees

#### 6 **Inference (3a)**

- Let’s take up the first one that our Lord is being ironic in speaking about the scribes and Pharisees, that is,
  - (1) They have simply assumed something for themselves in terms of Moses’ teaching authority
    - They presumably sit in the seat of Moses but not rightly so
  - (2) They never teach anything in accord with Moses or the prophets so in reality, never listen to them
    - Their presumed authority only leads to presumed accuracy
    - Matthew 16:11-12

#### 7 **Inference (3a)**

- Let’s take up the second view that our Lord is being forthright in speaking about the scribes and Pharisees (we should take it at face value)
  - Not everything they teach would be wrong
    - The reading of Moses and the prophets should be taken at face value
    - They held to and taught the divine decree and providence, human responsibility, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection and the existence of angels and the extent of God’s Word-the law, the writings and the prophets

#### 8 **Inference (3a)**

- Here it is all together:
  - On the one hand, there is an inherent authority in the teaching of God’s Word and should be taken to heart and kept in obedience
  - On the other hand, there is the misrepresentation of God’s Word in terms of how one reacts to it
    - So our Lord adds, “but do not do according to their deeds”
    - So in the application of God’s Word, they corrupted its intent

#### 9 **Reason (3b)**

- So why take to heart the Word in what is taught but do not do according to their deeds?
  - “for they say things and do not do them” literally, “for they say and do not”
  - Corrupted its intent:
    - 1. They missed the teaching concerning the Messiah, i.e., they failed in its

application.

- 2. They missed the intent of the ceremonial aspects of the Law.
- 3. They missed the correct application of the Sabbath. That is, man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath for man.
- 4. They missed that the heart impact was more important than the external look, "to be seen by men."

#### 10 **Explanation (4-10)**

- Jesus then offers an expanded explanation for what he means when He says, "for they say things and do not do them"
- Covers three areas:
  - The burdens they place on God's people (unnecessarily so) and their refusal to help others who are struggling (4, but see 11:28-30)
  - They do things to bring notice to themselves (5)
  - They seek (situational) honor among others (6)
- What do these have in common?
  - The exaltation of self / one's own name over God's name
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#### 11 **Explanation (4-10)**

- Inversely, our Lord calls on His disciples for the opposite approach to the scribes and Pharisees
  - Do not be called Rabbi (8a)
  - Do not call anyone on earth your father (9a)
  - Do not be called leaders (10a)
- What do all these have in common?
  - The 'titles' were corrupted to displace the Lord's rightful place in the life of Israel (8b, 9b, 10b)

#### 12 **Getting to the Heart of It All**

- Instead, the response ought to guard one's attitude
  - Embracing a servant's heart like our Lord (11)
    - Matthew 20:26-28 "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."
  - Embracing a humble heart like our Lord (12)
    - Matthew 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS."

#### 13 **Final Considerations**

- As He set the record straight, the Lord pointed up two key emphases that need to be held dear to us

- We need to give proper place to God's Word
  - This includes proper understanding
  - This includes understanding the proper intent and application
- We need to embrace the right attitude
  - The heart of a servant
  - The humility of one who understands the tremendous grace of God