



## 45: **Beware Hypocrisy** (Mt 23:1-12)

*Don't you hate it when leaders get to live by different standards than the average person? Jesus hated that too. Today we get to see what Jesus says on the subject as He warns us to BEWARE HYPOCRISY, not only in the lives of others, but in our own lives as well.*

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## teachingnotes

**Hypocrisy.** Nobody likes when someone *does* something different than what they *say*; and nothing is more frustrating than the person who hold you to standards they DON'T hold themselves to.

### Do What They Say, Not What They DO

**Matthew 23:1-3** (NIV) Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to **do everything they tell you**. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach."

The **teachers of the law** were the scribes, scholarly men responsible to copy & preserve the Scriptures, as well as teaching & interpreting the Scriptures. The **Pharisees** were more involved in the everyday affairs of the people as they worked alongside them in typical trades (e.g. Paul - Acts 18:1-3).

Jesus recognized these leaders **sit in Moses' seat**, with the privilege, authority, & responsibility to teach the truths of God as Moses had done. The audience of Jesus was to respect that POSITION although they might not respect the *PERSON* sitting in the seat. Many of them **did not practice what they preached** - *hypocrisy* - holding others to a standard that they aren't willing to hold to themselves. Yet Jesus tells his audience to **do everything they tell you** - that *they should obey the truth the preacher preaches, even if the preacher doesn't*. After all, it's not the person's truth - *it's God's truth!*

- 🕒 You and I are expected to obey God's clear truth, even if we hear it from a hypocrite's confusing voice. We can't discount & dismiss God's truth because of religious hypocrites.

### Shepherds Who Don't Love Sheep?

**Matthew 23:4** (NIV) They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

These religious leaders added hundreds & hundreds of traditions beyond what the Scriptures taught (e.g. Mt 15:1-7). Adding hundreds of man-made traditions to the Scriptural commands was more than *anyone* could carry. They loaded down the people, but did nothing as the people struggled & stumbled to carry the heavy load. Jesus, on the other hand, calls Himself "**The Good Shepherd**" *who lays down His life for the sheep* (Jn 10:11).

### Matthew 11:28-30

 (NIV)

**Come to me**, all you who are weary and burdened, and **I will give you rest**. 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.  
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

A **yoke** was a wooden frame put on the shoulders of animals (oxen or donkeys) to pull heavy loads or plow fields. This image became symbolic for laws or teachings that others submitted to. Jesus offered **rest** to anyone who is **weary and burdened** - those who are exhausted and tired of carrying a heavy load - that includes your daily difficulties, sin struggles, unrealistic expectations.

*This rest is not retirement, NOT a ceasing of work, but a changing of WHO you're working for!* We find **rest** for our souls when we submit to a Master who is **lowly and humble**, a Master who has modeled what obedience looks like; a Master who won't put too heavy a load and leave you to fend for yourself; a Master who lays down His life for His servants & then works alongside them the whole time (Mt 28:19-20). Jesus cares for His sheep, but most of the scribes and pharisees cared more about themselves - **selfish shepherds**.

## Selfish Shepherds Seek to be Seen

**Matthew 23:5** (NIV) Everything they do is done for people to see:  
They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long;

This is a prime example of what Jesus means when he says “**do not do what they do.**” (Mt 23:3)

“**Beware of the teachers of the law.** They like to walk around in flowing robes... (Luke 20:46 NIV)

**Beware** is not a term of trust, but a term of mistrust.

The **phylactery** was a little box containing verses from Scripture (Exod. 13:1-10, 11-16; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21) that adult men wore around the arm & on the forehead during time of prayer. **Wide** straps or boxes would have communicated that they were more serious about obeying God than others.

Following the command from **Numbers 15:37-38**, Jews tied blue **tassels** attached at 4 corners to the outer garment as a reminder of God's commandments that they were to obey. These leaders again made their tassels much more obvious than other people...so people would be sure to notice how seriously they took God's commands.



Rather than use these tools as reminders to remember & keep God's Law and therefore bring glory to Him, these **teachers of the law** used this as a tool to bring glory to themselves.

## Selfish Shepherds Seek Places & Positions of Honor

**Matthew 23:6-7** (NIV)...they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others.

They look forward to getting public recognition; they love to be **greeted with respect, to have the most important seats, & places of honor**. Further, they loved to be **called 'Rabbi' by others** - a title for scholarly teachers recognized for expertise in interpreting the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> They lived to have 1st place, to be seen, recognized, & respected by others.

In contrast, Jesus commanded His disciples to humble themselves and take the lowest place when invited to a banquet (Lk 14:10-11), not going into public to receive applause, but to communicate value to others as they HONOR the One true God.

**Luke 14:10-11** (NIV) But when you are invited, **take the lowest place**, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. **For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.**"

## Christians are to be known for Humility (not Hypocrisy).

### One Rabbi, Teacher, Father, & Instructor

**Matthew 23:8-10** (NIV) But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have **one Teacher**, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have **one Father**, and He is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have **one Instructor, the Messiah**.

Jesus is not saying that there are no legitimate rabbis or teachers, but that His disciples are to recognize Jesus as their true **Rabbi** and **Teacher**. They are not to jockey for position nor pump themselves up with prestigious titles (like **Rabbi**) that make them spiritually superior from one another & others. They are to recognize they are **all brothers**, with the same Heavenly **Father**. Outside of our parents, we only have 1 PROVIDER - our Heavenly Father, and NO ONE is to claim to usurp that position.

• Jesus is not saying you can't call your Dad "father" (we are commanded to honor our **FATHERS** & mothers - Mt 15:4).

Further, we have only 1 ultimate **Instructor** - this is the only time this term is used in the NT & never used in the Septuagint (Greek translation of Old Testament).<sup>2</sup> This term seems to mean more than just a teacher, but **a mentor & master over the student**. Jesus claims that this position belongs to **the Messiah** alone - that's Him!<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 415.

<sup>2</sup> Donald A. Hagner, Matthew 14-28, vol. 33B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1995), 661.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce W. Winter, "The Messiah As the Tutor: The Meaning of καθηγητής in Matthew 23:10," TynBul 42 (1991): 152-57.

## The Greatest is a Servant

**Matthew 23:11-12** (NIV) The **greatest among you** will be your **servant**. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

- ✗ While many of the religious leaders strutted around showing off their expensive robes, thick phylacteries, & long tassels - expecting to be placed in the seat of honor and be greeted with prestigious titles,
- ✓ Jesus wears modest clothing, touches the people they would never touch, cares for the folks they would walk away from, and looks for a place to SERVE rather than be served. Within just a few days, Jesus would take off his outer garment and perform the task of a **SERVANT**, by washing the feet of His disciples.
- 🕒 Jesus expects his 1st century disciples and His 21st century disciples to do the same, to be humble servants.

**Christians are to be known for Humility (not Hypocrisy).**

## FEET TO FAITH

- ▶ **Make sure you're walking' what you're talkin'.** If not, then just quit claiming Jesus while you dishonor Him in your hypocrisy.
- ▶ **Make much of Jesus.** Make the time to tell others about the greatness of God in your life. Tell someone how He has answered prayer, spoken to you from the Scripture, how He's changed another person's life.

## heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

\* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

\* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156), **Rob & Rebecca Leatherberry** (229-232-1087), or **Mark & Dot Mancil** (850-253-5405).

## discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. Why is it so frustrating when people don't practice what they preach? Regardless of the evidence that supports Scriptural claims, how does hypocrisy on the part of Christians impact our lost culture?
2. **Read Matthew 23:1-3.** Why does Jesus say to obey what the preacher preaches even when the preacher doesn't?
3. **Read Mt 23:4 & Mt 11:28-30** and discuss the differences between the religious leaders & Jesus regarding their care for people.
4. **Read Mt 23:5-7, Lk 14:10-11, & Mt 23:11-12.** Discuss the differences between the religious leaders & those who claim to follow Jesus.
5. **Read Mt 23:8-10.** Does Jesus mean we can never call anyone else a **teacher**? Read these passages before answering: **Acts 13:1, 1 Cor 12:28-29, Eph 4:11, 2 Tim 1:11, & James 3:1.** How does Mt 23:8-10 become more clear when we talk about Jesus not being our only teacher, but being our ultimate teacher by which the teachings of others are judged?
6. Jesus wanted to make sure that His disciples didn't pump themselves up with prestigious titles (like Rabbi) that make them spiritually superior from one another & others. What relationship did Jesus want them to appreciate (Mt 23:8) & what does it mean to view other Christians that way?
7. Share why each of the **FEET2FAITH** steps are important for the Christian to apply.
8. What does God want YOU to do with what we studied today?
9. How can we pray for/care for one another this week? (Pray for one another.)