

Christ Exposing the Scribes and Pharisees

Matthew 23:1-36

by R.A. Torrey

R.A. Torrey's sermon exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees while urging disciples to embody true humility and faithfulness in their practices.

Scripture: Matthew 23:1

Topics: "Hypocrisy", "True Servanthood"

Description

R.A. Torrey's sermon on Matthew 23:1-36 addresses the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, emphasizing the dangers of seeking human praise over divine approval. He warns that while they outwardly appeared righteous, they were inwardly corrupt, failing to practice what they preached and burdening others with their demands. Torrey highlights the importance of humility and true servanthood, urging believers to focus on the weightier matters of the law such as justice, mercy, and faith. He calls for self-examination to avoid the pitfalls of Pharisaism, reminding the congregation that true greatness is found in serving others rather than seeking titles and recognition. Ultimately, the sermon serves as a caution against hypocrisy and a call to genuine faithfulness in following Christ.

Transcript

DISCOVERY OF THE FACTS

1. Warning Against Seeking the Praise of Men, vv. 1-12 To whom were the words of the lesson spoken? Why not spoken to the Pharisees themselves? Why spoken to the multitudes? To His disciples? (1 Tim. 5:20.) Why was it necessary to warn even His disciples against Pharisaic sins? Is warning against them needed even by the disciples of Christ today? What other class of offenders were rebuked so sternly by Christ as the Pharisees? Between what two things in the Pharisees did Jesus distinguish (v. 3)?

What did Jesus bid His disciples do? If good laws are promulgated by bad law makers what is our duty in the matter? If truth is preached by ministers of the Gospel who do not practice it, what is our duty in the matter? Was the bread and meat that was brought to Elijah at Cherith any less from God or to be despised because the ravens brought it? (1 Kings 17:4.) What is the limitation to obedience to the decrees of bad officials? (Acts 5:29.) Were the scribes and Pharisees under any less obligation to keep their own laws than others?

Is one who preaches the truth under any less obligation to keep it than those to whom he preaches? Will good preaching make up for bad practice? Can we escape condemnation for our own sins by condemning the same sins in others? (Ro. 2:1-5.) What did the scribes and Pharisees require of others (v. 4)? What did they themselves do with these requirements? Are there any like them today? What was their object in requiring such great things of others? For what purpose did they do what they did do?

Are there any today who do their works to be seen of men? What is the result of such doings? (c. 6:1.) How did men regard the Pharisees? How did God regard them? (Luke 16:15.) Is it so today with those who do their works to be seen of men? What were some of the things the scribes and Pharisees did to be seen of men? (Compare Deut. 6:8; Num. 15:38, 39.) Do men nowadays ever make a great parade of the Scriptures and their loyalty to them before men? Ought we then to go to the opposite extreme and be ashamed to be seen carrying a Bible or reading one?

What did the scribes and Pharisees seek for themselves (vv. 6, 7)? Are there any today who seek for themselves conspicuous places and titles? Is it Christian to do so? (v. 8; Luke 14:7-11; Ro. 12:10; 3 John 9.) What is the modern equivalent of "rabbi"? What are the two great reasons why we should not take that title to ourselves (v. 8)? Who is the only one to whose authority in the matters of faith and doctrine the Christian should bow? (vv. 8, 10; compare c. 17:4, 5; Job 32:21, 22.)

If one is really great how should he show it (v. 11)? Who has set us the example in this? (Matt. 20:28; John 13:14, 15; Phil. 2:5-8.) What kind of greatness is that which shows itself in lording it over others? (Matt. 20:25.) What will be done to those who refuse to listen to this teaching of Christ and exalt themselves? What will be done to those who humble themselves? (Compare Is. 57:15; Luke 18:14; 1 Peter 5:5.) 2. Outwardly Fair, Inwardly Foul, vv. 13-36 With what word does v. 13 begin?

Why did Christ use this word "woe"? How many "woes" did He pronounce against them in all? To what other eight of this Gospel may we set these eight words in contrast? (Matt. 5:3-10.) What did He call the Scribes and Pharisees in v. 13? What does "hypocrite" mean? What did He accuse them of doing (v. 13)? Was that a serious offense? Are there any who are guilty of it today? How can it be done? (Acts 8:1; John 7:46-52; 1 Thess. 2:15-16; Luke 11:52; 2 Peter 2:2; Ro. 2:24.) How great is the guilt of those who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men?

For what reason did Jesus pronounce the second woe upon the scribes and Pharisees? (v. 14; see R. V. but compare Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47.) Are there any today who make a great pretense of piety while robbing the widow and oppressing the poor and outwitting the unwary in real estate deals and other ways? What shall such receive? Was the fault with these men that they made long prayers? (Luke 6:12.) For what reason did Jesus pronounce the third woe upon them? Is it a good thing to be diligent in making proselytes? (Gal. 4:18.)

Did it do any one any good to be made a proselyte by the scribes and Pharisees? What did Jesus call them and their proselytes? Is not that rather strong language? (Compare John 8:44; Acts 13:10; Eph. 2:3.) For what did Jesus pronounce the fourth woe upon these scribes and Pharisees? Are there any today who are guilty of such blind and foolish hair-splitting? What did Jesus call these casuists (vv. 16, 17, 19)? Why was it they considered the gold of the temple more sacred than the temple, and the gift on the altar more sacred than the altar?

Are there any today who are more concerned about the gold collected in the house of God than the honor of that house itself, and the gifts "laid upon the altar" than the honor of that altar? For what reason did

Jesus pronounce the fifth woe upon the scribes and Pharisees? Are there any today who are very punctilious in the little niceties of piety and omit the weightier matters? Was there anything in the Scriptures which the scribes and Pharisees themselves acknowledged to tell them that these were the weightier matters? (Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:8; Prov. 2:1, 3.)

Who for example? What did Jesus say were "the weightier matters"? What is meant by "judgment"? (Prov. 21:3; Jer. 22:15, 16.) Do all professed Christians seem to regard these as the weightier matters? Did Jesus say they should omit the minor matters? To what did Jesus compare this scrupulous care about little things and indifference to weightier matters? (v. 24, R. V.; Matt. 27:6-8; John 18:28-40.) For what reason did Jesus pronounce the sixth woe upon the scribes and Pharisees?

How was "the inside of the cup and the platter" to be cleansed? Are there any pious platters today that are full of extortion and excess? For what reason did Jesus pronounce the seventh woe upon the scribes and Pharisees? Are all hypocrites conscious hypocrites? (Jer. 17:9, 10; 1 Cor. 4:5; Heb. 4:13.) Is a hypocrite ever a zealous worker (v. 15)? What is a hypocrite's doom? (Matt. 24:50, 51.) To what did Jesus compare the scribes and Pharisees? Why were sepulchres white-washed? (Num. 19:16.)

What is the point of the comparison? Are there any today who appear fair without but are full of corruption and worms within? Are there any worms and rotteness beneath your fair exterior? Where should one seek first for the hypocrite? (Matt. 7:1; John 8:7.) To whom was it the Pharisees appeared (Luke 16:15.) For what reason did Jesus pronounce the eighth woe upon the scribes and Pharisees? Was there anything wrong in building the tombs of the prophets? What is the point then of Christ's condemnation? (Ro. 2:1.)

Which is better, to build the tombs of dead prophets or listen to the words of living prophets? Which is easier? Which are men in all ages more prone to do? What was their judgment of their own goodness as compared with that of their fathers? How did they prove that this profession was false and that if they had lived in their day they would have treated the prophets of those days just as their fathers did? Do men nowadays ever flatter themselves that if they had lived in former days they would have done much better than the men of those days did?

How do they disprove their own claim? Which is better to exult over, not repeating the sins of our ancestors or to search out and put away our own sins? What did Jesus tell them to do (v. 32)? Did He mean that He really desired them to do that? (v. 37; compare Eccle. 11:9.) What did Jesus finally call the scribes and Pharisees? What is meant by these startling titles? (Ps. 58:4; Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9.) Was this Christ's customary manner of speech? Is it always wise to speak to men in this way?

Is it ever wise? What feeling had Christ in His heart toward the Jews when He used these terrific words? (v. 37.) Is there any lesson in that for us? What question did Jesus put to them? What similar question is put to all who neglect salvation? (Heb. 2:3.) What is God's answer to that question? (Heb. 12:25.) Were those men to be given up of God at once (v. 34)? How would they deal with these ambassadors whom God in long-suffering mercy continued to send? Was this prediction fulfilled? (Acts 7:59; 12:2; 14:19-22; 22:19, 20; 2 Cor. 11:24, 25; John 16:2.)

What would be the outcome of this treatment of God's ambassadors? Was it just that the sins of their fathers as well as their own should be visited upon them? When was v. 35 historically fulfilled? Have we any historic instance outside of the Bible in which God has allowed the sins of a nation to ripen and visited them when fully ripe upon a single generation? Are there any judgments ripening now? How can any

generation avoid having the consequences of the sins of their fathers fall on them? (John 1:2 and 3:7-10.)

Was God's primary purpose in sending the prophets one of mercy or wrath? (Compare 2 Chron. 36:15.) Why then did it culminate in wrath? (2 Chron. 36:16.) In what does God's mercy always end, if it is despised? (Ro. 2:4, 5.) CLASSIFICATION OF TEACHINGS

1. Jesus Christ

His divinity, 34; compassion, 34; hatred of shams, 13-36; fearlessness, 1-36; severity, 13-36.

2. Christ's Disciples

(1). Their equality:

"All ye are brethren," 8.

(2). Their peril:

Pharisaism, 1-36.

(3). Their privileges:

A divine Teacher, 8; a divine Master, 10; a divine Father, 9; exaltation, 12.

(4). Their duties:

To avoid errors of the scribes and Pharisees, 3; not to forget the greater matters of the law while observing the minor matters, 23; to accept the authority of no man, 10; to avoid titles of honor, 8; to humble themselves, 12; to be servants of others, 11.

3. The Pharisees

(1). What they were:

Hypocrites, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; fools and blind, 17, 19; blind guides, 16; serpents, 33; offspring of vipers, 33; sons of those who slew the prophets, both naturally and spiritually, 30, 31, 34; sons of hell, 15 R. V.; like whited sepulchres, fair without, rotten within, 27, 28; righteous in outward seeming, 28; full of hypocrisy and iniquity, 28.

(2). What they did:

Sat in Moses' seat--a place of honor, a place of authority, 2; taught with great authority what others should do, but did not themselves, 3; made heavy demands of others, but did not meet the slightest of these demands themselves, 4; did their works to be seen of men, 5; made a great parade of their devotion to the Word of God, 5; sought for themselves places and titles of honor, 6, 7; shut up the Kingdom of God against men, 13; entered not into the Kingdom themselves, 13; would not suffer them that were entering to go in, 13; devoured widows' houses, 14; for a pretense made long prayers, 14; compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, 15; made them proselytes two-fold more the sons of hell than themselves, 15; thought more of the gold of the temple than the temple itself, 16; thought more of the gift upon the altar than the altar itself, 18; made hair-splitting and irrational discriminations, 16-22; tithed mint and anise and cummin and omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, and mercy and faith, 23; strained at gnats

and swallowed camels, 24 R. V.; very scrupulous about the outward cleanness of the cup and the platter from ceremonial defilement, but careless about its moral defilement by extortion and excess, 25: built the tombs of dead prophets and killed the living prophets, 29-34; boasted themselves better than their ancestors while doing the same things, 30-34; persecuted, scourged and crucified the prophets, 35; filled up the measure of their fathers' sins, 32.

(3). What they got:

Greater condemnation than if they made no pretenses, 14; the accumulated wrath of many generations, 35; the damnation of hell, 33.

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