

(Matthew) ch.21:23-23:6

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience, brokenness, and repentance in understanding spiritual things and giving the fruit to God.

Duration: 48:47

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 21:43, Matthew 22:15, Matthew 22:37-41

Topics: "Loving God", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of two commandments given by Jesus: to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. These two commandments summarize the entire law of God and the teachings of the prophets. The speaker uses the parable of the vineyard to illustrate how the Jewish nation failed to produce the fruit of obedience and repentance, instead persecuting God's servants. The speaker warns that the same mistake can be made in the church today, where people may prioritize pleasing words over true repentance and obedience.

Transcript

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 21 and verse 23. And when Jesus had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him, as He was teaching, and said, By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority? But Jesus answered and said to them, I will ask you one thing too, which if you tell Me I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men? And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, If we say from heaven, He will say to us, Then why did you not believe Him? But if we say from men, we fear the multitude, for they all hold John to be a prophet.

And they answered Jesus and said, We do not know. He also said to them, Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things. There's something very interesting that we can learn here from the attitude of Jesus to those who asked Him questions.

Whenever His disciples asked Him a question, even if it was a silly question, He always made it a point to reply and took pains to explain to them the answer. But when the scribes or the Pharisees came to Him and asked Him things which were really just to set a trap for Him, they were not really interested in a godly life. We find very often that Jesus did not give them a direct answer.

Sometimes He did, and very often He didn't. He would sometimes ask another question in return and never answer their question at all. And this is one of those instances.

They were not really interested in a godly life. And so when they asked this question, Jesus, recognizing their heart, did not give them an answer. He finally said, Neither will I tell you, verse 27, by what authority I do these things.

Of course, the authority He had was the authority of God. But He did not want to explain that to carnal people who were only interested in an argument. And so He asked them a question which put them in a trap.

He asked them whether the baptism of John was from heaven or from men. And they were really caught in a trap because if they said it was from heaven, then He would ask them, Why don't you believe in it? And if they said it was from men, then the people would turn against them because they all held John to be a prophet. And there we see an example of that wisdom that the Holy Spirit gives when people question us.

One thing we learn from Jesus' life and example is that we should never get into an argument with people because spiritual things are not spiritually understood and not intellectually understood. And this is the mistake that so many people make, that they think they can understand spiritual things by human argument. It's not the condition of your head that determines whether you understand spiritual things, but rather the condition of your heart.

The disciples were not as learned or clever as these scribes, but they understood. But these clever scribes didn't. What is it that the disciples had which the scribes didn't? They had a sincere heart, even though they didn't have as clever a brain.

And that's something we need to bear in mind in these days where we think that the important thing is our brain. You can't understand scripture and God's word just with a clever brain. God has hidden these things from the clever and the intelligent.

He's revealed them to babes, and babes have got a good heart. So that's something very important for us to understand and remember whenever we come to the scriptures. And then Jesus went on.

He didn't leave them there. He went on to say something to them. In verse 28, he said, What do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in the vineyard.

And he answered and said, I will, sir. And he did not go. Notice here, the attitude of the first son was, I will go.

In other words, his words were right, but his obedience was lacking. He didn't actually do what he said. In other words, his doctrine was right, but his life was wrong.

He was right in his doctrine, but wrong in the matter of obedience. And a second son came, and the father said the same thing to him. And the son said, I will not go.

Yet afterward, he regretted and went. You see, his words were not right, but his actions were right. There is a great emphasis, unfortunately, in Christendom on right words.

Now, right words are important. We don't devalue them. But if it is right words without right actions, then that's worse than someone else whose wording or terminology is not exactly accurate, but whose actions

are actions of obedience.

That's the point of this parable. We're not devaluing the importance of correct doctrine. I'm talking here about terminology.

There's so often conflict among Christians over terminology. Dear brothers and sisters, the important thing is obedience. Which of the two did the will of his father? And Jesus said, of course, they understood it was the latter.

And Jesus said, I say to you, the tax collectors whom you despise and the harlots whom you despise will get into the kingdom of God before you. The reason being, John came to you, verse 32, in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and harlots whom you despise believed him.

And when you saw this, when you saw sinful people repenting, even then, verse 32, you didn't feel any remorse afterwards. You didn't have a repentant heart yourself. To believe in John, and therefore, you will miss the kingdom, whereas those whom you despise will not.

Now, who had the right terminology? It was obviously the scribes and Pharisees. They were the ones who had the right terminology, and if you went to one of those harlots and asked them something about the law of Moses, they wouldn't have been able to give you a right answer. That terminology was all wrong, but they had a repentant heart and they wanted to enter into the kingdom, and Jesus said that they would get into God's kingdom before these Bible scholars.

That is a warning that comes down through the centuries to us today, that repentant hearts that obey God's word will get into God's kingdom before many Bible scholars and preachers who have the right terminology and speak the right words, but who do not have obedience and repentance in their life. This is the thing that Jesus kept on stressing, and this is the thing that needs to be stressed today in the midst of Christians, otherwise Jesus will have the same words for us too. The harlots will get into God's kingdom before you who speak so much about my word.

Therefore, let us learn a lesson from this, that it is repentance and obedience that Jesus looks for, and not just right terminology. When Paul was writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 16, he said, Take heed to your life, and then to your doctrine. If you take heed only to your doctrine and not to your life, you'll go astray.

Take heed to your life first, yourself, your personal life, and to your doctrine. That is the right attitude. And Jesus continued to speak to these people who came to him with questions.

He said, Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and rented it out and went on a journey. And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the wine growers to receive his produce.

And the wine growers took his slaves and beat one and killed another and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves, larger than the first, and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, They'll respect my son.

But when the wine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir. Let's kill him and seize his inheritance. They took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those wine growers? They said to him, He'll bring those wretches to a wretched end and will rent out the vineyard to other wine growers, who will pay him the proceeds of the proper season. And Jesus said, That's right, didn't you read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected became the chief cornerstone. This came about from the Lord, and it's marvelous in our eyes.

Therefore I say to you, The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruit of it. That was again a parable against that Jewish nation. That was the vineyard God had planted.

In verse thirty-three, He put a wall around it, that was the law of Moses, to protect them from evil, dug a winepress in it, given them His commandments and His presence and His temple, and built a tower. They had communication with God, and these wine growers were supposed to give the fruit of the vineyard to God. And so God sent His servants.

They were the prophets. And what did the wine growers do to God's servants? They beat them, they killed them, they persecuted them, they said, We don't want to listen to what you have to say. Afterwards, God sent His son, and here was a prophetic reference to what they were going to do to Jesus.

They would cast him out of the vineyard and kill him. Therefore, when the Lord finally returns to earth, what will He do to these wine growers? And they themselves gave the answer, that they would be rejected, and the vineyard would be given to others. And that's exactly what's happened, you know, that God has turned aside that Jewish nation because they rejected His word, His prophets, and His son, and He's opened the gospel now to everyone else.

The stone which the builders rejected, that was Jesus, rejected by the Jewish people, became the chief cornerstone, and that was the Lord's doing. And it's marvelous in our eyes. The kingdom of God, which God intends to establish on earth, He said in verse 43, is going to be taken away from you and given to others, and that is the church.

Now the thing is, today in the church, unfortunately, we've made the same mistake that the Jews have made too. We haven't given the fruit to God. We've turned against those who have spoken the truth, and we have preachers who tickle our ears now and flatter us, and the Lord will come again a second time, and judgment will come.

So it's good for us to learn a lesson from the example of these Jews, so that we repent and turn back to God and give to Him the fruit that He looks for in our lives. Let's turn today to Matthew's gospel and chapter 21. We were looking at this parable that Jesus spoke in our last study about the landowner, verse 33, who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it, and we saw that that was a picture of the Jewish nation whom God had enclosed and separated from the rest of the world by giving them the law, and how they had failed God in giving to Him the fruit of that vineyard, and it turned against God's servants whom He had sent, and finally rejected even His Son, and therefore the vineyard would be taken and given to others, and that is the church.

But we mentioned in our last study how the church needs to learn a lesson from the failure of the Jews, so that we don't make the same mistake ourselves. And if we were to study the Old Testament and see the failure of the Jews, we would see how there are many, many things that we can learn from their failures if we are to avoid the same failures ourselves. In the Old Testament, too, the Jews had the attitude of rejecting the true prophets because they spoke the truth, which was convicting and searching and

exposing their sin and made them uncomfortable, and in their place they would appoint these false prophets who tickled their ears and told them that everything was all right with them and God was very happy with them, and it was not true.

Now unfortunately the same thing is happening in the church today. The true prophets who speak the truth are not always the most popular. It's the ones who flatter and give people an unrealistic view of themselves, not the truth as God sees them to be, who are accepted.

That's a very dangerous condition for any Christian or any church to be in, because it will finally lead to God rejecting that church and that individual altogether. So we need to learn a lesson from this parable. And the other thing we see here is that God didn't come Himself, the landowner didn't come Himself to collect the produce, He sent His servants.

His servants have His authority, and a true prophet of God has the authority of God behind Him when he comes with God's word. Now there's a lot of difference between a true prophet and just a preacher who is preaching for a salary. A true prophet comes with God's authority, and to reject him would be equivalent to rejecting God Himself.

Rejecting a preacher who gets a salary may not be a serious thing, but to reject a prophet is a very serious thing. And then Jesus said, The stone which the builders rejected became the cornerstone. Jesus was rejected by the Jews, but God made Him the cornerstone for the church.

And we read that in Ephesians chapter 2, the end of the chapter, that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone for the church. And then Jesus went on to say in verse 44, He who falls on the stone will be broken to pieces, but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust. There are two alternatives here.

I can either humble myself and repent and fall upon the stone and be broken. Broken means broken in repentance, broken in mourning for my sin. The Word of God says in Psalm 34, verse 18, that the Lord is near the brokenhearted.

Think of that lovely verse. If you want the Lord to be near you always, just be brokenhearted always. That's the surest way to have the Lord near you.

Brokenhearted because of your sin, because of your unchristlikeness, a sense of mourning because we are not like Jesus in some area. The one who falls on the stone in humility and repentance will be broken. His strength, his human strength will be broken.

That's what God desires to do in our lives. That is why He arranges circumstances and difficult people across our paths so that we can humble ourselves and mourn and be broken before God so that our strength is gone and it can be replaced by His strength. You remember the time when Jacob was broken and his hip was dislocated and as a broken man God said to him, now you shall be Israel, you shall have power with God.

That is the time we get power. That's one alternative, where I am repentant and broken. Now, the other alternative is where I refuse to be broken because I think I'm all right, I'm self-righteous and I look down on others and despise others.

What will happen? One day the stone will fall on such a person and scatter him like dust. That's judgment. And there are only two alternatives.

It's not a question of doctrine here. It's a question of brokenness. A lot of people have the right doctrine but they don't have brokenness.

The sacrifices of God are not a right doctrine but a broken and a contrite heart. That's what He will not despise. So if I stand erect in my pride and my self-sufficiency, one day that stone will fall on me.

But that time hasn't yet come, so there's time for you and me to repent, to be broken, to fall on that stone which God has selected as the chief cornerstone and be broken on it so that I can find my place in fellowship with that cornerstone as a part of the body and the bride of Christ and the temple of God. That is how I give to God the fruit that is His due. You see, in verse 43, Jesus said, The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruit of it.

What type of fruit? Is it the fruit of knowledge or the fruit of preaching and witnessing? No, it's more than that. It's this fruit of brokenness that He spoke of in the next verse, from which the fruit of the Spirit comes. You know, just like a farmer, before he sows the seed, what does he do to his hard, sun-baked ground? He puts a plough on it and digs up that ground so that it's all broken up.

If he sows the seed on that hard ground, nothing will come up. There won't be any fruit. Any sensible farmer knows that.

It's useless sowing the seed on unbroken ground. You got to plough it up with a plough, and that's exactly what God says. Break up your fallow ground and then sow the seed of the word of God.

God's word is the seed, but it'll never produce fruit in ground which is not broken. So that is a lesson for us to learn from this parable. And when the chief priests, verse 45, and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.

And maybe, as you are hearing this, you understand that God is speaking about you. And now the question is, what will your attitude be to the word of God that you have heard? If some of those Pharisees had a repentant heart, they could have turned to the Lord and said, Lord, I see my need here. I'd really like to repent.

Instead of that, what did they do? It says they got so angry with this preacher that they wanted to seize him. You see, that their attitude was just so hard. They knew that He was speaking about them, and they only got angry.

Woe unto those Christians who get angry with a preacher who tells them the truth about themselves. And that was the damnation of those Pharisees and their condemnation, that they wanted those who would tickle their ears. But they couldn't seize Him because they were afraid of the multitudes, because the multitudes recognized Jesus to be a prophet.

And Jesus continued. It says in chapter 22, verse 1, He spoke to them again in parables. He said the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.

This again is a picture of the wedding feast that God has for Jesus. And He sent out His servants, that is, God's servants, the prophets, His true witnesses, to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. Now the first people who were invited to fellowship with God were the Jews.

We find that expression in the New Testament to the Jew first. They were unwilling to come. They rejected the invitation of John the Baptist, the friend of the bridegroom.

They rejected the invitation of Jesus, the bridegroom Himself. Again He sent out other slaves. This is the wonderful thing about God.

He doesn't just turn away a man because he rejects one invitation. He tries again. He tries again.

Tell those who have been invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen, my fat and livestock. All are butchered and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.

God is very long-suffering and patient. He sends another invitation, saying, Come. But they paid no attention.

They went their way. They didn't want to listen to the true prophets, one to his farm and another to his business, each man minding his own earthly affairs. And the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them.

And that was the treatment the Jews handed out to a lot of the true prophets of God. And the king, that was God, was enraged and sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. And that's what happened to the Jewish nation.

That forty years after Jesus' death, the Roman Empire came over them, and the emperor sent his army and destroyed the whole nation of Palestine. Then he said to his slaves, Verse 8, The wedding is ready, but those who are invited, that's the Jews, they were not worthy. Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.

And that is the going out into all the world and inviting people whom the Jews despised. And those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good. And the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

When the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes. Now we need to understand something about the custom in those days. That tradition says, and history tells us, that when people came for a wedding, you see there were people who were very poor and very wealthy.

In order not to embarrass people with their dresses, there was a wedding garment given to them at the door to put on while they were at this feast. And maybe there was a man there who felt that his own dress was good enough. He didn't want this wedding garment that the king offered at the gate.

He decided to come in in his own dress, a picture of a man who feels that his own righteousness is good enough to bring him into God's presence. He doesn't need the righteousness of Christ or any such thing. He's good enough to come into God's presence.

And he came there in his own clothes. All the others were humble enough to receive the wedding garment offered at the gate. The ones who had a bad dress took the wedding garment, and the ones who had a good dress took the wedding garment.

But one man came in his own dress, and he was cast out. The king said, bind him hand and foot. There wasn't a second chance for him.

How did you come here without wedding clothes? And he was speechless. He was cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And that's a warning to us that we can't come into God's presence with our own righteousness. We have to humble ourselves, however good our dress may be, or bad our dress may be, and take that wedding garment that Jesus offers to us freely, if we can humble ourselves and take it. Many are called, but few are chosen.

Who are the ones who are chosen? Those who are humble enough to acknowledge their need and receive the righteousness of Christ to cover them. Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel and chapter 22, verse 15. Then the Pharisees went and counseled together how they might trap him in what he said.

And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, Teacher, we know that you are truthful, and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one, for you are not partial to any. In following the life of Jesus and the way that religious people approached him, we who seek to be disciples of Jesus today can learn many lessons for ourselves, because it's the same experience we have today with a lot of religious people who have no interest in being the disciples of Jesus. It says here that they wanted to trap Jesus, and very often we find religious people like that seeking to trap us in something that we say.

But we find that Jesus was never trapped, because he was so dependent on the Holy Spirit. He never sought to lean on his own reason. And the Holy Spirit always gave him wisdom to escape the traps of religious people.

Here's one of those examples where the Pharisees sent their disciples to him, and they pretended as though they were very spiritual and admired Jesus very much, but Jesus could see through them. He was not taken up by people who flattered him. They came to him and said, Teacher, we know that you are truthful, and teach the way of God in truth, and that you don't seek anybody's favor, and you are not partial to anybody.

But all that flattery didn't move Jesus at all. He saw through them. And then they asked him this question to put him in a trap.

Tell us therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to give a poll tax to Caesar or not? Whatever answer he gave, they could say it was wrong. If he said that yes, we should pay tax to Caesar, then they would say he's not a loyal Jew, he's loyal to the Romans. If he had said no, we shouldn't pay tax to Caesar, then he could be reported to the Roman authorities saying that he's telling people not to pay the taxes.

It was a trap to catch him with whatever answer he gave. And there we see how the Holy Spirit gave wisdom, and Jesus perceived their wickedness, it says in verse 18. Do you realize that, dear friend, that when you are seeking to trap a person in some word that he has spoken, that your attitude is a wicked attitude? It's a wicked attitude when you seek to trap a person in some word that he has spoken.

And Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? They were not only wicked, they were hypocrites. And Jesus could discern that they were only asking that to test him. But he would answer their question, but not in the way that they expected.

He said, Show me the coin used for the poll tax, verse 19, and they brought him a denarius. And he said to them, Whose likeness and inscription is this? And they said to him, Caesar's. And he said to them, Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

What an answer! They marveled when they heard this, and they left him and went their way. Isn't that an amazing answer, to give to God what belongs to God, and give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar? What fault could they find with that answer? Now, the wonderful thing is that the Lord has said to us, in Luke, chapter 21, and verse 15, a tremendous promise. The Lord says to his disciples, I will give you a mouth and wisdom, utterance and wisdom, which none of your enemies will be able to resist or refute.

That's a promise that we can claim, that the Lord can give us wisdom to refute our enemies in such a way that they will have no answer, even when they try to trap us. So it's not only for Jesus. We can follow him and receive that same wisdom from the same Holy Spirit who gave it to Jesus.

Jesus did not have that wisdom as God on earth, but because he depended on the Holy Spirit as a man, which we can also have. Hearing this, they marveled, and leaving him they went away. Verse 23, On that day some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and questioned him, saying, Teacher, Moses said, If a man dies having no children, his brother, as next of kin, shall marry his wife and raise up an offspring to his brother.

Now first of all the Pharisees came, in verse 15, to trap him, as we just saw. And now this is the other group. Both these religious groups couldn't get along with each other, but they were both against Jesus, because he exposed the hypocrisy and the wrong doctrines in both of them.

And so they came to him with their question to put him in another trap. And they invented the story of a man who died and had no children, and his brother marries his wife, and there were seven brothers like this, and the first died, and the second died, and the third died, and like that all the way down to the seventh, and the woman married all seven. And last of all, the woman also died, verse 27.

And then they asked this question, verse 28, In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven shall she be? For they all had her as wife. And Jesus answered and said to them, He says, You are mistaken. Your thinking is so earthly.

You don't understand the scriptures, nor the power of God. There are two things that we need to understand, the word of God and the power of God through the Holy Spirit. If we don't have the power of God, if we don't have the Holy Spirit, we can't understand the word of God.

These two go together. It's dangerous to have the power of the Holy Spirit without knowing the word of God. It's dangerous, in fact, we can't even understand the word of God without the power of the Holy Spirit, without revelation from the Holy Spirit.

There are two things Jesus mentioned here in verse 29 that are fundamental for a balanced Christian life. We could say there are two legs we stand on, the scriptures and the power of God. Understanding God's word and knowing the power of His Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, we find in Christendom those who have gone to two extremes. Some emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit, some emphasize the knowledge of the word, but Jesus emphasized both. And if we don't have both, then Jesus will have to say to us, you're mistaken, verse 29, because you don't understand the scriptures or the power of God.

One or the other or both are missing. And then Jesus went on to explain to them, verse 30, in the resurrection, He said they need to marry. There's going to be no marriage in eternity, you know.

After we're resurrected, we're not going to go around with our wives and husbands. They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. Our relationship to the Lord is going to be so much more purer.

And our relationship with one another will be at that perfect purity of brothers and sisters. There will be no marriage in the resurrection. They're not given in marriage, but they're like the angels in heaven in the resurrection.

And then Jesus knew that these Sadducees didn't really believe in the resurrection, and so He went on to clarify something. Regarding the resurrection of the dead, He said, haven't you read that which is spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He didn't say that I am the God of Abraham who died, but I am the God of Abraham. Not I was the God of Abraham, but I am.

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. How does He call Himself, I am the God of Abraham, if Abraham has ceased to exist? His body died, but Abraham did not cease to exist. And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching, because He showed them from the scriptures which they believed and taught that God is a God of resurrection.

He's not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the Pharisees heard, verse 34, that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves together. He had put them to silence, He had put the Sadducees to silence, and one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question.

This is really a wonderful chapter, where we see again and again people coming to Jesus. There are times when He wouldn't answer their question directly. There are times when He would answer it indirectly.

There are other times when He proved to them from scripture where they were wrong. In each occasion, He had the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The lawyer comes to Him and says, What's the great commandment in the law? Now, to the Jews, one of the great commandments was to keep the Sabbath.

And Jesus said, The great commandment is, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Now that's not one of the Ten Commandments. And He said, That's the great and foremost commandment, but I can't leave it by itself.

He said, He said, There's a second one which is just like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depends the whole law.

All the Ten Commandments hang on these two and the prophets. In other words, the first four commandments are basically summed up in this commandment, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And the remaining six commandments out of the ten are summed up in the second, where Jesus said, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

On these two hang all the law and the prophets. And so Jesus summed up the entire Ten Commandments, and He said, All that the prophets have spoken are summed up in these two commandments, and we cannot separate them. The entire law of God is found in these two commandments.

God is love, and He seeks that our heart is filled with love for Him and love for one another. Then we have kept the law and the prophets. Let's turn now to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 22, and verse 41.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question. In the last two studies we've been considering how Jesus answered various questions that people put to Him, and it's a very profitable passage of Scripture, chapter 21 and 22 of Matthew, to see how Jesus answered questions differently. There was no standard procedure.

He was dependent on the Holy Spirit all the time as to how to do it in each occasion. And that is the great secret we learn on how to answer questions that people put to us, to be dependent on the Holy Spirit, to have wisdom from the Spirit as to what to say and what not to say. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He? He was asking about the Messiah.

They said to Him, The Son of David. And He said to them, Then how does David in the Spirit call Him Lord, saying, and then Jesus quoted from Psalm 110, verse 1, The Lord said to My Lord, that is, Jehovah said to My Lord, Sit at My right hand until I put Thine enemies beneath Thy feet. If David then calls Him Lord, how is He His son? And that was a mystery to them.

How could the One who was the Son of David be David's Lord as well? They couldn't understand that the Messiah was to be God manifest. That Jesus was both God and that He had become a man like us in our flesh. He was not only the Son of David, but He was David's Lord as well.

He was Jehovah from all eternity. But at the same time, He came of the seed of David according to the flesh and became a man. This is a mystery.

In the New Testament we are told that there are two confessions that the Holy Spirit prompts us to make, and by which we identify the Holy Spirit from other evil spirits. The first is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 3, where it says, No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit prompts us to proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord.

That is, He is Jehovah, He is God. The second confession that the Holy Spirit prompts us to make is in 1 John, chapter 4, verse 2. By this you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

The second confession is that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, and if we are truly inspired by the Holy Spirit, we shall without any hesitation proclaim, Jesus Christ is Lord, and Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. It is not just that He became a man, but that He came in the flesh, and the flesh is a word used in the New Testament for what we have, the flesh with its lusts and desires. Jesus came in this flesh that we have, but He never sinned.

That is the great secret of godliness. It was a mystery to the Jews. Paul calls it in 1 Timothy 3.16, the great mystery of godliness.

It is a mystery even to many today. It's a secret, but like Psalm 25, verse 14 says, The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and to them He makes known His covenant. And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses. 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. Here we see Jesus drawing the distinction between doctrine and life.

He said the doctrine of the Pharisees is correct as far as the written word is concerned. The doctrine of the Sadducees was not correct, but the doctrine of the Pharisees was. The problem of the Pharisees was not their doctrine, it was their life.

The problem of the Sadducees was both their doctrine and their life. And in a sense we could say that when your life is wrong, theoretically your doctrine may be right, but actually even your doctrine is wrong, because a doctrine that does not lead to life is a false doctrine. But according to the letter of the law, what the Pharisees said was right.

They had seated themselves in the chair of Moses. What they say to you, do. It's amazing that Jesus said to his disciples, what they say is right, do it.

He wouldn't have said that if they were teaching wrong doctrine. And that's a warning to us, that we can be evangelical in our doctrine, absolutely right so that even Jesus can't find a fault with our doctrine. But he may still have to tell his disciples, those people who preach that right doctrine, do what they say, but don't wash their life and do what they do, because they say many things and don't do them.

That's terrible, if Jesus has to say that about us, because in that case we are followers of the Pharisees and not disciples of Jesus. And then he went on in this chapter to explain to the disciples what Phariseeism was all about. First of all, he said, in verse four, they tie up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

They bind heavy loads on people and lay them on men's shoulders, but they're not willing to move them with a finger themselves. In other words, they themselves don't seek to live according to the high standards they preach, but they are very particular and zealous to proclaim a high standard to others, because you can get honor by preaching a high standard. And you don't live up to that high standard yourself.

How many people there are in the world like that today, who preach such a high standard from the pulpit, but they're not living up to it themselves in their private life? Such are the hypocrites and the Pharisees even among evangelical Christians today. The Pharisees are not found among those who've got wrong doctrine, like the liberal Christians. No, because the Pharisees, their doctrines were right.

The liberal Christians are symbolized by the Sadducees, whose life and doctrine were wrong. But here is a warning for those of us whose doctrines are right. Are we preaching high standards that we don't practice ourselves? Then we are followers of the Pharisees.

Further, verse 5, Jesus said there's another characteristic of the Pharisees, they do all their deeds to be noticed by men. They're only concerned that their life should be upright before men. If they sin, so long as men don't see that sin, they're quite happy.

The only commandment by which they live is, thou shalt not get caught in thy sin. And so, they're only careful to ensure that other people never catch them doing anything wrong. In their private life, in their thought life, they can be filthy.

It doesn't disturb them. That's one mark of a Pharisee. They do their deeds to be noticed by men.

And when they do something good, they want all men to notice them, because they are seeking for honor from men. They broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. These were things

that were commanded by God.

These phylacteries, which were small little boxes containing scripture texts, which some of these religious people wore upon their foreheads, and they made their boxes bigger than others to show that they were more spiritual. And the tassels of their garments, there was a little fringe of blue that God commanded the Israelites to put on their garments, and they made it bigger to show that they were special. They were more spiritual than the others.

The desire to appear a little more spiritual, a little superior to one's fellow believers. Do we find that today? In so many ways. It may not be in our dress or in scripture boxes, which we don't have in any case, but it can be in some way in which we try to show that we are a little more spiritual than the others, a little more holy.

This desire to be noticed by men, it can be in our praying, it can be in anything that we do, just to show that we are spiritually superior. And further, Jesus went on to say another characteristic of the Pharisees in verse six was that they loved the place of honor at banquets. They loved to be up in front where people would notice them, special seats on the platforms and that type of thing, the chief seats in the synagogues.

Those who were right up in front, the platform seats, they loved it. They'd be offended if you didn't give them such a seat at a function. They had to be special seats.

Are you one like that, who wants a special seat in a function, a special seat up there in front on the platform to be exalted above all the other ordinary believers? Well, that's how the Pharisees were. And they loved, verse seven, respectful greetings in the marketplaces. They wouldn't like to be called just brother.

They'd like to be called rabbi or some other title other than brother. And there are many titles in Christendom today which are similar to rabbi. And if there is a love for a title, you don't want to be just called a brother.

You want to be called a reverend or a reverend doctor or a pastor or a chief pastor. You're not satisfied with just a title of a brother. You're following the Pharisees because Jesus said, you don't be like that.

They love all these titles. You should not be called rabbi for only one is your teacher, Jesus. What should you be called? And verse eight is very clear what Jesus said, you're all brothers.

My dear friends, if you desire any title other than a brother, you're in danger of being a Pharisee. And further, he went on to say, don't call anyone on earth your father. Think of that.

Don't call anyone on earth your father. Jesus was against religious titles. He wanted us to be brothers.

May we never forget that.

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