



Are you False leader?

Matthew 23:5-12

Mark 12:38-40 & Luke 20:45-47

Matthew 23:5-12, *But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. ⁶ They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷ greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'* ⁸ *But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. ⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. ¹⁰ And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹ But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

One of the duties of pastors is to warn their people.

The apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had spent night and day for years warning them.

Paul was warning them about those who would try to destroy their faith, those who would come as false spiritual leaders to take them away from the truth. But he was not the first to warn his people for true spiritual leaders throughout all the history of God's redemptive plan have always been called to a ministry of warning.

There must be warning as a part of the ministry because the world is filled with false prophets, false teachers, false shepherds, and false spiritual leaders. They are everywhere.

They occupy the places of authority in leadership in the false religions of the world, the cults, and the occult. They have found their way into the forums of Christianity. They masquerade as those who represent God and do not. The sad fact is that they damn the souls of men and women to hell while promising them heaven.

Matthew 23:15, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.*

False spiritual leadership must be dealt with great seriousness for it damns the souls of men in the illusion that they have found God and are pleasing Him.

That is why false spiritual leaders are the most cursed of all sinners in the Scripture.

This chapter falls into several parts.

It begins with a call to the people to avoid these damning teachers.

There is condemnation of the teachers themselves.

It closes with a compassionate word of pity about the people who have been under their influence being judged.

A hard chapter.

V 1, Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,

Passion week, it is Monday, and the Lord will be crucified on Wednesday and rise on Sunday.

During this week, He has conflicted with the Jewish religious leaders. He is now in the temple. It is filled with people who are there as pilgrims and residents of Jerusalem, celebrating the Passover. All day long, He has been in encounter with these religious leaders.

This is the last public message of the Lord, and it is a warning to stay away from those who steal men's souls from God, from truth, with the lies of false religion.

Matthew 23:1-12, He talks to the multitude and the disciples, the leaders are there, and they can hear everything He says, but His message is directed at the people.

This is a warning to stay away from these false religious leaders. Jesus says they are disqualified because they lack five things.

There are five elements that false spiritual leaders lack according to our Lord gives them here.

They lack

1. **Authority,**
2. **Integrity,**
3. **Sympathy,**
4. **Spirituality, and**
5. **Humility.**

Those are things where true spiritual leaders possess authority, integrity, sympathy, spirituality, and humility.

A study in contrast.

We looked at the first three characteristics in detail last Sunday.

4. They lacked spirituality.

Everything was for the outside, not the heart.

All their religion was for show.

All of it was for fleshly gratification.

They got ego satisfaction out of their religious parading pious, arrogance, and showiness. They wanted to show on the outside how pious they were so they could get the homage and reverence of the people.

They sought physical gratification.

The Jews were into making a fair show in the flesh.

V 5, *But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.*

But all their works they do for what reason?

To be seen by men.

That was the whole thing.

In **Matthew chapter 6**, the Lord directs that part of the Sermon on the Mount to false religion.

Matthew 6:1, *“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

Can you imagine?

When the Pharisees would come into the courtyard of the women which had receptacles all on the walls where you put your offering for various things. As they came to give, they would have a person blow a fanfare on a trumpet to announce that they had arrived so everyone could watch them give and see how , holy, and how devout they were.

That was the whole thing, it was all on the outside.

It was all for show.

Matthew 6:5, *“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.*

Here they would pray their daily prayers right in the middle of everybody. Where everyone could see them and remark how holy, virtuous, and pious they are.

They would find the most public place that they could do that.

Matthew 6:16-18, *“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they*

have their reward. ¹⁷ But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

They are hypocrites with sad faces.

They disfigured their faces.

They would put ashes on their face and make it pale and white and they would go around, "I am fasting, I am fasting, I am so devout." It was all externalisms.

Jude deals so much with false spiritual leaders.

Jude 1:19, *These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.*

These are they who separate themselves.

They want to be considered as spiritual elite.

They want to dress differently.

They want to appear very pious.

Sometimes they may wear a backwards collar or a fancy robe or a funny hat or all kinds of stuff all over them. They want to appear different than other people. They want to make a display of their pious.

They want to separate themselves.

They want to be creating some kind of separated identification as if they are greater than just normal folks.

The word Pharisee may come from a word that means separated.

Generally, they thought of themselves as better than everybody else.

Someone to be revered, looked up to and honored. They were in it for the whole objective of being seen by men.

Matthew 6, *"They have their reward."*

What is it?

They are seen by men.

God will not reward them at all, but He will punish them.

Jude 1:19, *they are sensual.*

They are to do with the soul. It has to do with the physical part of life.

It has to do with our human life as opposed to the spiritual dimension in the sense of being sensitive to God.

They are not spiritual in the sense of being tuned to God. They are not spiritual in the sense of considering things that are the deepest part of a man's being.

They are soulish.

The word is used of the life that's in a tree or the life that's in an animal. It's just that everything is for the human dimension. Everything is for the physical world.

Nothing belongs to the pneuma, the spirit which knows God.

They are soulish.

Jude 1:19, *they have not the Spirit.*

They don't possess the Spirit.

Devoid of the Spirit.

They have breath, but not the Spirit of God.

These elite, fleshly frauds without the Holy Spirit who parade and masquerade as if they were representatives of God are followed by millions of people.

They head religious organizations.

They have seminaries and colleges.

They even pastor churches and teach, all in the flesh, all for the gratification of their earthly appetites.

So, they are characterized as those who are desirous of being seen by men. That's the whole business.

The gratification that comes when you think people think you are something very pious and very devout. It's an ego trip.

V 5, *But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.*

Everything is on the outside.

The whole religious game with them is what is visible to people, contrary to the heart.

1 Corinthians 4:4-5, *For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. ⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.*

Every one of us who serves Christ will ultimately be judged as to the motives of the heart, and thoughts and desires of the heart. The true standard.

Not so with these people.

They are called in Scripture

- Whitewashed tombs,
- White walls,
- Graves concealed by grass,
- Broken pots covered with silver dross.
- Wolves in sheep's clothing.
- Wells without water,
- Cloaks covering sin.
- Hired weepers who cry for a price.

Everything they did is motivated by the desire for honour from men, and Jesus exposes that right here.

They were all standing there and they have all got large phylacteries and they have got enlarged garments.

They were standing there while He was rebuking them here. It was a dramatic scene in the temple court.

What does it mean they make large phylacteries?

Background:

**Exodus 13:9, Exodus 13:16,
Deuteronomy 6:8, Deuteronomy 11:18.**

Four places in total, two in Exodus and two Deuteronomy.

The Old Testament says that the commandments of God are to be upon the hand and between the eyes of God's people. All four of those verses say that.

The commandments of God are to be upon the hand and between the eyes of God's people.

What is the significance?

The ancient Jews had absolutely no problem with that all.

They understood the significance of it.

It was symbolic of saying that the commandments of God are to be the controlling factor in what we think and what we do. Very simple.

In what we think and what we do.

Between the eyes speaks of the thought processes.
On the hand, of the action, the activity of life.

- When you think you think through the commandments of God.
- When you act, act through the commandments of God.

In other words, that is the grid for all of thinking and all of living.

Nobody had a problem with that.

The Jews accepted that as symbolic statement, a spiritual command, that they were to give attention to God's Word in their thoughts and in their actions.

But as the centuries passed and the Jews began to develop an external, legalistic, outward approach to religion, that which was originally understood for the heart somehow crawled outside, left the heart, and became a way that you sort of parade your supposed pious.

They became concerned to literally put the law of God on their hand and to put the law of God on their head between their eyes on the outside.

They were following the letter of religion when their hearts were far from God, but they thought God would be pleased by their mechanical, external legalism.

There was no record of phylacteries until 400 B.C., which puts it in the intertestamental period.

This didn't come until later when a system of external religion was developed.

What are phylacteries?

The word basically means, "a means of protection."

Another way to simply understand it is a charm or, an amulet.

The idea was that the Egyptians and the pagans around Israel wore charms to ward off evil spirits. The Egyptians were really into this.

As the Jews drifted away from God and more toward pagan expressions of religion, they wanted charms also. They wanted things that would ward off evil spirits and ward off demons and be a means of protection.

They developed these phylacteries as charms, as little magical boxes to ward off demons, which shows how far their religion had deteriorated.

They made them square and covered them with black leather from a ceremonially clean animal. Then they connected to them with twelve stitches each, one stitch for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, leather straps by which they could tie one on their forehead and another on their hand.

They did their left hand because they said it was closer to the heart.

Now, in the box they put four sections of the Mosaic law, **Exodus 13:1 to 10, Exodus 13:11-16, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and Deuteronomy 11:13-21.**

In one of the boxes, they put all of those on one piece of parchment. In another box, they put each one separately on a different piece of parchment. They rolled up all these little pieces of paper and stuck them in these little boxes and strapped them on their head and strapped them in their arms.

This shows you the extent to which this whole magical approach had gone. The phylacteries were more sacred than the gold plate on the forehead of the high priest which had the name of God on it, because inside the little box was God's name **23 times**. So, they were 23 times as sacred.

They taught that God Himself wore them all the time.

If you follow Phariseeism, you will find that they thought God was nothing more than a glorified rabbi who studied the law three hours a day to keep up on it.

On the little box there is a shin. Shin is the **S-H** sound letter in the Hebrew language, and they put that on the little box. When they tied the straps of the box on the head in the back, they made a knot in the form of a daleth, which is the **D** sound letter in Hebrew.

Then when they strapped the one on their hand, they had seven times around the arm and three times around the hand. The whole objective is that when you are done, you create there a **yod**, which is another Hebrew letter.

They have got shin, daleth, yod, which are the letters that form the term Shaddai, which is the name Almighty.

They were creating a magical charm with God's name to thwart off any demons. Very pagan.

Magic is what they believe in.

A boy of 13 today who is raised in an orthodox family gets his set of phylacteries when he is 13 years old.

Every time he goes to prayer in the times of prayer designated in the day, particularly in the morning, he puts that on when he prays. In those days men only and still wear them.

They wore them at the time of prayer but the Pharisees wore them all the time.



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Their minds see them marching through the history of the New Testament, all the time they have little boxes on their heads and little boxes on their left arms.

One story is told in rabbinic literature of a rabbi who went to see a king. Of course, in the Jewish tradition, rabbis were superior to kings. The rabbi went to see the king and after seeing the king, he turned to walk away, he turned his back to the king and walked out. You don't do that with a king.

In ancient history, when you go out, you go out backwards like this bowing and bowing and bowing until you are out of his sight. You don't turn your back on him. The king was so irate, he called his soldiers to attack the man and kill him for his effrontery. As they moved toward the rabbi, the straps of his phylacteries began to blaze with fire. They dared not touch him.

Strange fairytale that gives you some idea of how they thought this provided protection.

Now, it wasn't that they just wore them, which would have been bad enough.

V 5, they made them large.

The bigger the box, the more pious you were.

Remarkable bigger boxes and wider straps demonstrate greater devotion to God.

This is all about outside, just to be seen of men.

Even today we see them do that in very public places. It's a parade of supposed devotion, utterly devoid of heart.

V 5, enlarge the borders of their garments.

The garments are probably implied. It just says they enlarged the borders, but it means their garments.

Numbers 15:37-41, *Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁸ "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. ³⁹ And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, ⁴⁰ and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God. ⁴¹ I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God."*

When you make your clothing, put on your clothing, little tassel, **tallith**, the phylacteries are called **tefillin**, the fringe is tallit, so they were to the tallith and the tefillin.

Now, the tallith was just a little hem or a little fringe on a Jew's garment to mark him out as set apart unto God.

It was an actual outward mark. Jesus wore them on His garment, according to **Matthew 9:20**.

It was a common thing.

But the Pharisees made theirs bigger and bigger to parade some kind of devotion to God.

They were on the outer garment in the time of Christ. A little later in Jewish history, they went to the inner garment, and today, since the orthodox Jews were black suits, they are on that prayer shawl.

Have you ever seen a prayer shawl that an orthodox Jew pulls down over his head and has a blue line in it and some blue fringe on it?

That is the remnant of the tallith, to mark them out as Jews.

So here they came, parading with the little boxes on their heads and the big fringes hanging off their garments as if they were utterly devoted to God. All that for show.

All that to parade supposed spirituality.

Truth is, they lacked it. They lacked spirituality altogether.

5. They lacked humility.

Not only authority, integrity, sympathy, and spirituality, but they lacked humility.

V 6, *They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,*

What does that mean?

They want to sit at the speaker's table.

They want to sit up by the host.

The seat on the right and the left hand of the host was the seat you wanted. That was the seat of honour.

That was the seat of dignity.

They wanted to be in the chief place where they could be thought of as the great people. They loved it.

James and John fell into that by sending their mother.

Can we sit on the right and the left hand of the Messiah in His Kingdom?

They were used to that in their culture. Those were the seats of prominence. They loved that.

They loved to be welcomed as if they were some great people. When there was a feast, they wanted to be recognized as the supreme guests of honour.

V 6, *the best seats in the synagogues,*

They wanted to sit on the platform.

There was a raised platform in the front like there is in this place, and they wanted to sit up here where everyone was facing them and looking and seeing them.

They wanted to come in with their little boxes on and their enlarged garments and they wanted it wasn't a bad idea to come in late when everyone could see, and you would come up and take your place with the dignitaries who prayed and the dignitaries who read the Scripture.

Parade flashily, proudly, and boastfully your supposed piety before everybody.

This is the reason why I have such an aversion to sitting on the platform. I always love to sit down there.

But they were into religion for show.

Prestige, fleshly gratification, and honour from men.

That's a sad thing.

The church has really kind of muffed this up.

Some churches make me very nervous to sit in those things.

V 7, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

When they were walking through the marketplace, they wanted to be recognized for who they were and properly saluted with the dignity that their office deserved.

One heathen governor of Caesarea is portrayed in the rabbis' writings as saying that he considered their faces as if they were the faces of angels. They really had a very lofty opinion of themselves.

They give in their writings very elaborate directions about how you are supposed to treat them and their office and their rank. If you don't treat them that way, you are in a lot of trouble.

There are even lists of things that you do to people who don't treat rabbis the way they ought to be treated.

They liked formal titles.

They wanted to be called by titles.

They wanted to be acknowledged as great ones.

In fact, one rabbi wrote that he was supposed to be buried in white because he wanted the whole world to know how worthy he was to appear in the presence of God.

Jewish writings said there was a debate in heaven and an argument ensued between the group of rabbis and God. They had to go get another rabbi to solve the dispute.

Mishnah says, "It is more punishable to act against the words of the scribes than against the words of the Scripture."

When they went through the market, and Jesus is saying this, and they are there listening to this, they loved to be called by men, "Rabbi, Rabbi."

Now, that doesn't mean a lot in our culture because rabbi is not a word that we are accustomed to.

What it means is teacher.

But more than that, because teacher isn't even the right word in our culture because a teacher is so broad, there are so many things in a culture like ours that's not religious, but to say teacher in a Jewish culture is to say supreme one, your excellency, most knowledgeable one, great one.

The Latin equivalent is doctor, docere.

Doctor So-and-so.

They loved those titles that pushed them up that elevated them above everybody else.

Some people like the elevation that comes. It feeds the ego, you know. Doctor So-and-so, as if that means you are some great one. They wanted to be called that.

They demanded to be called that.

V 10, *And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.*

Master.

They loved to be called leaders.

- They wanted to be called doctor – knowledge.
- They wanted to be called leader - authority.
- Another word they loved to be called is father.

V 9, *Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*

They wanted to be called rabbi or teacher or doctor because that spoke of the fact that they were the source of knowledge. They wanted to be called master because that indicated that they were the source of direction and guiding.

They loved to be called father because that spoke of the fact that they were the source of spiritual life. They were the father of spiritual life. They gave spiritual life.

- They wanted to be called teachers, source of knowledge.
- They wanted to be called master or leader, source of all direction.
- They wanted to be called fathers, source of spiritual life.

All of that was what they sought.

I don't want to be called any of that.

I just don't want to corrupt my own soul unnecessarily with those kinds of things and have my ego react and respond to those.

Primarily in the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Episcopal Church. If you were in the Church of England today and you are a bishop, your proper title is Right Reverend Father in God.

Can you imagine introducing me to someone and saying this is our pastor, Right Reverend Father in God Abraham David John?

Mercy.

The word abbot in the Roman Catholic church comes from Abba Father. The word pope even comes from a form of the word father, and the word father obviously comes from father.

But that's characteristic of a false spiritual leadership viewpoint.

In the middle of this our Lord turns to His disciples.

V 8, But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

Who?

Christ.

I am not your teacher.

I have no special in with God that I get the truth from Him independent of the Word of God. Christ is the teacher. I just tell you what He said.

So don't pat me on the back and call me Doctor.

I am not the teacher. So don't stick on person up above another person as if that person is the source of truth.

"You are all brothers."

Nobody's a great one.

Nobody's superior.

Jesus just puts us all on the same level, we are all brothers.

You have one teacher and that's Christ. He taught us the truth which we pass on.

We really lose sight of this in the church.

There is a place for honouring those that God has given us to pass on the truth. There is a place for respect. There is a place for admiring, for giving respect, rendering the due honour to those who are over us.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Hebrews 13:17, Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

But there is no place to seek that, to desire that, to clamour for that. It is better to have no titles. No degrees to play an ego-centered game which endeavors to push you up and keep other people in their place.

The reverend, doctor, bishop, professor, abbot, pope, father, so forth, so on is artificial. We are all brothers.

If we ever teach truth, it's because the master teacher taught us.

V 9, Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

There is not a soul on this earth that gave you spiritual life. Nobody.

Nobody here gave you spiritual life. The Sanhedrin members like to be called fathers as if they were the source of spiritual life. Men in the ministry of some churches today want to be called father, as if they are the source of spiritual life. They are not.

The source of spiritual life is the heavenly Father, not some human person.

To call a man father or a higher-ranked priest holy father is unacceptable, a violation of Scripture. It just isn't right because neither of us is the teacher and none of us is the leader and none of us is the Father.

V 10, And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

- ✓ Christ is the teacher.
- ✓ Christ is the guide.
- ✓ Christ is the source of life.

So don't be called master. We have so many problems.

We want to get a bachelor's degree and a master's degree and a doctor's degree and then we want to keep going up just putting these barriers between ourselves and the common people.

It shouldn't happen among those who are all brothers in Christ. None of us is any great one.

None of us is the depository of all truth.

None of us are leaders who have all insights.

None of us is the spiritual life source of anybody.

You stay away from these false leaders.

You disciples, you be true leaders and you avoid the things that they got into and don't be like them.

How should we be?

V 11, But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Your servant.

Servant leadership.

You are not going to have a title if you are a servant. You are not a holy reverend doctor bishop slave.

You are not right reverend father master guide professor foot washer.

Greatness consists in self-giving.

Greatness consists in a humble outpouring of life for others.

It is the servant leader.

If you want to be great, then serve, that's all.

Jesus was just Jesus in terms of His earthly name.

He served and He washed feet, and He gave His life.

He said, "The Son of man has not come to be ministered unto but to serve, give His life."

Greatest isn't the one with the most degrees and the most titles and the highest rank but whoever is the lowest servant.

Whoever is the best server?

Whoever is the most selfless?

Whoever gives and gives and gives.

V 12, *And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

Just a reverse of the world.

You want to be up, push yourself up.

The Lord says, push yourself down, He will lift you up.

Push yourself up, He will put you down.

No, you can make your choice. You want to be useful to the Lord, put yourself down.

Down in the role of a servant, down in the role of a sinner who has no right except a God-given right, who has no knowledge except God-given knowledge, who has no wisdom except God-given wisdom, who is not one who gives spiritual life except God gives spiritual life.

When you see yourself as simply a servant, that's what helps you to understand where God wants you.

Then in God's own time and God's own purpose, He will lift you up.

1 Peter 5:1-3, *The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ² Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;*

Self-exaltation has no place in those who represent Christ.

We could always tell when a Christian was growing, and the way he could tell when a Christian was growing is the Christian would always talk more and more of Christ and less and less of himself. Christian seeing himself get smaller and smaller until like the morning star, he gave way to the rising sun. False spiritual leaders, no authority, no integrity, no sympathy, no spirituality, no humility.

What is a true spiritual leader?

Divine authority that come from Word of God.

Integrity, his life matches his message.

Sympathy, he is filled with grace, mercy, pity, and care.

Spirituality, it's the heart he is concerned about, not the outside, not the show.

Humility, instead of lacking humility he manifests the heart of a servant who seeks to be humble and let God lift him up.