

# The Bulletin

## Meeks St. Church of Christ

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### “What The Scribes & Pharisees Taught Us Pt. 1”

By Brian Meade

You and I have probably never stepped into a Jewish synagogue, nor have we at any time heard any of the great teachers of the law of Moses. And even though we did not live in the times that Jesus walked among the Jewish leaders—yet we have learned many lessons from their bad examples.

The Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus day have taught us by their failure to keep God’s ways as intended. Although it may be unflattering to them to teach us in this way, we need to heed from their shortcomings!

Our lord & master Jesus said in Matthew 5:20, *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* Basically, Jesus is telling His disciples, and us too, that we need to do a better job in seeking to honor and to please God than the Scribes and Pharisees were presently doing.

They may have started out trying to fully please God in the beginning, but had gotten sidetracked by the time Jesus visited the earth. It is evidenced that things had developed from good to bad and by the nature of the conflicts that Jewish leaders had with Jesus. If they had been truly righteous and devout in keeping the Law, Jesus would have been loved and appreciated by them! But such was not the case (John 1:9-10).

Instead of embracing their Messiah— they looked at His rebukes with arrogance (John 9:40-41), resented the people’s willingness to follow Him (Matt. 21:14-16) and rejected His teachings at every opportunity (John 9:27-28).

**I. The Scribes & Pharisees Taught Us the Need to be Consistent in Our Righteousness.** Jesus pointed out some glaring inconsistencies in the way the Jewish leaders conducted themselves. In Matthew 23:16-24, Jesus points out the problems of looking for loop-holes in the matter of the oaths that they would be bound to perform. Some would even swear that they would do something and have no intention in carrying it out. Notice what Jesus says, *“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’”* And in verse 18, *“And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.’”*



Jesus wanted the Jews to know that this behavior did not make their vows meaningless and not important to keep, but rather made them dishonest liars (verses 19-22). This is the equivalent of someone today making a promise with their fingers crossed behind their back. Such deception is childish, crude, and is considered to be done by only dishonest people to take advantage of others— NOT by people of faith and morality who should be practicing holiness. (Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9)

The Scribes and Pharisees also showed a lack of consistency in *picking & choosing* which commands they thought were extremely important to the neglect of other commands. Jesus



would say of this practice, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. “You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!”*

The graphic mental picture of *“straining out a gnat and swallow a camel”* shows us just how inconsistent they were in regard to keeping God’s laws. As the Bible teaches us, we are a debtor to keep the whole Law (Galatians 5:3; James 2:10). The *“weightier provisions”* that Jesus spoke of make us people who are defined by *“justice, mercy, and faithfulness.”*

I am reminded of what God said through Micah, *“He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”* (Micah 6:8) These words were need then—but also now in God’s people of the New Testament age today.

**II. The Scribes & Pharisees Taught Us to NOT Seek Out the Praises of Men.** Jesus had some strong words to say to those who would seek praise and accolades of men: *“But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. “They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.”* (Matthew 23:5-7)

Jesus could look at the heart and see the motives (John 2:25; Matthew 9:4) behind the actions of men and their desire to be honored by their fellow men.

He also lets us know how God feels about those who desire the chief seats (ahead of others) and the wearing of religious titles to exalt themselves. The Jewish leaders wanted and demanded preeminence in order to feel more than others. The Jewish leaders wanted and demanded preeminence in order to feel more than others.

This was nothing more than religious pride taking over their motives for service to God. It was not done out of a sense of genuine desire to please God, but for the praise of men. Jesus would say, *“But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. “Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. “But the greatest among you shall be your servant. “Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”*

Can this same thing happen to us today? Almost certainly when we forget our humility. Religious pride may be the sole motivation for some in the church today. There may very well be preachers, Bible class teachers, song leaders, or elders who love and desire the praises of men. They may well crave recognition as a motivation for their service to God, instead of a proper duty (Luke 17:10)



But in reality, they need to heed the warnings of these lessons from the Scribes and Pharisees on what NOT to do in the matter of religious pride (Matthew 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14).

**III. The Scribes & Pharisees Taught Us That Religious Leaders can be Morally Corrupt.** The leaders of Jesus’ day had degenerated their moral integrity to the point of corruption. Jesus stated, *“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.”* (Matthew 23:13-14)

Jesus pointed out again their failures from being the noble, honest, and upright people that God desires of us. It is especially sad that they tried to prevent men from listening to Jesus and fighting Him every step of the way.

But even sadder still is that the religious leaders would take advantage of widows and then still feign prayers to God. This points a corruption that is rooted in the love of money and material gain (Matthew 6:24; I Timothy 6:9-10).

Many today are turned off by religions that have corrupt priests and leaders selfishly fulfilling desires for money and material gain. The PTL scandal of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker has been called, *“A Scandal of Self.”* The Bakkers started with a Christian puppet show to rise to fame, popularity and excesses of wealth at their disposal. Their television ministry, the PTL Club, became a household name in the 1980’s among denominational viewers in America.

In 1987, the extravagance of wealth and corruption finally caught up to them in the wake of sex scandals and misuse of funds given to their television empire. Jim Bakker was sent to prison, and was later paroled in 1994.

Many people in the world saw this scandal, and others, as what typical American mainstream religion was all like. As later in 1991, Jimmy Swaggart, who denounced Jim Bakker’s immorality, would have another scandal of his own in the matter of sexual immorality with a prostitute.

Not to mention the great abuse and cover ups of the Catholic Church in many areas of immorality and decadence throughout the centuries. But it only confirms what the Bible says about false religion, *“And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you”* (2 Peter 2:3 ASV)

**News and Notes:** Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Betty Hurst, Steve Switcher, Gail Armstrong, Nicky Curtis, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), Charlene Newborn, Delain & Robbie Doles, Greg Fields, June Lawson (Lisa Busby’s Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Madeline Flippo, Karey Trimble, Jerry Trimble, Janis Johnson is out of the hospital, and Ava Lynn.

**Those Who Serve:**

**Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:**

**Opening Prayer:** Brian Meade  
**Preaching:** Brian Meade  
**Sermon:** *“Is Water Baptism an Unnecessary Command?”*

**Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am**

**Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:** Jerry Kennemur  
The Book of John (Mike Willis)  
*Start Lesson 3, Question #1*

**Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:**

**Announcements:** Russell Briggs  
**Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:** Fred Johnson  
*Ephesians 2:1-3*  
**Song Leader:** Lee Busby  
**Lord’s Table:** Russell Briggs  
**Assisting:** Nathan Meade & Chris Callahan  
**Preaching:** Brian Meade  
**Sermon:** *“How Satan Influences This World Today”*  
**Closing Prayer:** Daniel Holloway

**Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.**

**August 1st:**

**Auditorium Bible Class:** Paul Johnson  
1 & 2 Kings (Mike Willis)  
*Page 13, Question #5*  
**Invitation:** Chris Callahan  
**Song Leader:** Brian Meade  
**Closing Prayer:** Nathan Meade