



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Character of Leaders without Christ

JUNE 2-4, 2010

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Matthew 23:1-12 *“Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, (2) saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; (3) 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. (4) They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger. (5) But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. (6) They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, (7) and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. (8) But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. (9) Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. (10) Do not be called masters; for One is your Master, that is, Christ. (11) But the greatest among you shall be your servant. (12) Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.’”*

- JUNE 16-18: MATTHEW 23:34-36 *PERSECUTING THE PROPHETS: THE LEGACY OF BLOOD*
- JUNE 23-25: MATTHEW 23:1-12 *THE KING’S LAST WORDS TO HIS NATION*

The Leaders of Christ’s day had so perverted the Scriptures to meet their own personal and political ends that Christ had to deal with the false ideas that they were promoting. They were emphasizing minutia that didn’t matter and were minimizing what was most vital and important. The people had not yet discerned the falsehood but Jesus deals with it after these antagonists have finished their questions intended to trap Him. This is the last public discourse Jesus will ever make and He refuses to allow the false system of the leadership to go unchallenged. There are three groups of people gathered around Him: the disciples, the people, and the Scribes and Pharisees. He addresses the two to keep them from being like their deadly leaders.

“BY SITTING IN THE SEAT OF MOSES WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND AUTHORITY TO TEACH THE LAW; OR AS HE TAUGHT THE NATION BY GIVING THE LAW, SO THEY TAUGHT IT BY EXPLAINING IT.” ALBERT BARNES

“FOR THUS SAYS THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE WHO INHABITS ETERNITY; WHOSE NAME IS HOLY: ‘I DWELL IN THE HIGH AND HOLY PLACE WITH HIM WHO HAS A CONTRITE AND HUMBLE SPIRIT, TO REVIVE THE SPIRIT OF THE HUMBLE, AND TO REVIVE THE HEART OF THE CONTRITE ONES.’” ISAIAH 57:15

Why does Jesus give this somber warning to the people and His disciples? What does the “chair of Moses” mean? Can there be a greater indictment against integrity than “they say, but they don’t do”? What are the “heavy burdens” that they place upon others? Why are these leaders so consumed with the importance of being seen by men? Does Jesus promote titles of honor? How is one considered the greatest by God and men?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- JUNE 9-11: MATTHEW 23:13-33 *SEVEN CURSES OF CHRIST UPON UNREPENTANT LEADERS*

I. AUTHORITY WITHOUT INTEGRITY MT. 23:1-3

Because “*the Scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses,*” they represented the absolute truth of Scripture. This “*chair*” was made of stone and sat on the elevated stage in the synagogue with the books of the Law on the wall behind it. Jesus gives the imperatives to “*do and observe*” “*all that they tell you.*” Obey these leaders because of their position, but do not copy their performance. They had studied and even taught the truth, but their hearts were far from it. They had just been told that the distillation of the entire Law was to love God and others, but their hearts were still full of hatred and murder. Jesus said “*do not do according to their deeds, for they say things and do not do them.*”

BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 7:30AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – DENNYS ON RT. 1
THURSDAY @ 7:30AM –BIBLE STUDY –BK AT RT. 10&KRAUSE, NOON – WYTESTONE PLAZA AT 8TH & MAIN – 2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED

Virginia

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“MANY SUCH ARE WITH US STILL, PREACHING ONE THING AND PRACTICING ANOTHER. MAY THE LORD PRESERVE THE PEOPLE FROM FOLLOWING THEIR EVIL EXAMPLE.” CHARLES H. SPURGEON

II. CONTROL WITHOUT COMPASSION MT. 23:5

These leaders had the authority to make the law and have it enforced. They added so many burdensome extras to the Law, which they had devised ways of personally circumventing, that it became an unfeasible burden to the people. “*They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.*” While advancing their regulations as “good” and a “fence around the Law,” they were suppressing the truth and the people rather than serving both. Their Sabbath regulations had become so oppressive that they wanted to arrest Jesus Christ for graciously healing people on the Sabbath.

“JESUS ‘FELT COMPASSION FOR THEM, BECAUSE THEY WERE DISTRESSED AND DOWNCAST LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD’ (MT. 9:36). IT MUST HAVE BEEN GLORIOUSLY REFRESHING FOR THOSE PEOPLE TO HEAR JESUS SAY, ‘COME TO ME, ALL WHO ARE WEARY AND HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS, FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT’ (MT. 11:28-30).” JOHN MACARTHUR

III. PRETENSE WITHOUT PIETY MT. 23:5-7

Their goal was simply popularity. Jesus continued, “*But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men.*” They were not concerned about accountability to God, though they would go the extra mile to present themselves as very religious. “*For they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.*” Both of them were

to be a reminder of God’s Word, to obey it and thereby please God (Ex. 13:9, Num. 15:39). But instead of seeking to please God, they were expanding them to demonstrate external spiritual superiority and thereby gain the honor of men. Instead of encouraging humility as originally intended, it was fostering pride. But the pride of their heart was most clearly revealed by what they loved. “*They love the place of honor at the banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.*” They lived for honor, prestige, power and titles. While claiming to love God and His Word, they showed that they cared nothing for God, but only the praise of men.

“THEIR CHARACTER WAS THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF THAT REQUIRED OF THE CITIZENS OF CHRIST’S KINGDOM (MT. 18:1-35), WHICH MEANT THAT IN SPITE OF THEIR RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONS AND STRINGENT LEGAL PRACTICES, THEY DID NOT ACTUALLY KNOW GOD AND HAD NOT BEEN CHANGED INWARDLY BY HIM.” JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

IV. GODLY HONOR THROUGH HUMILITY MT. 23:8-12

Jesus commands the opposite of His leaders. He forbids seeking titles or trying to give others such to distinguish them spiritually. “*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 masters; for One is your Master, that is Christ.*” Jesus is making it most obvious that we are all equal before God. Since Jesus said “*I am the way, the truth and the life,*” He both is and He examples true greatness. “*But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.*” Every day our actions cause Him to humble or exalt us!

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Do you have integrity in that you do what you say?
- 2) Who are you seeking to please by what you love, the praise of men or the praise of God?
- 3) Has your life been inwardly transformed by Christ so that you seek to serve others and humble yourself before God?