

# Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

## THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1958

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### PART 58: RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

#### FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

Jesus knew that Monday was His last day to give a final instruction, not only to His disciples, but also to the Jewish people.

The First Covenant would cease to exist when the God-man was resurrected. **Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 8:7-13**

#### RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

Jesus openly taught about the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. While these men taught from the Torah (five books of Moses), and the God-man implored the people to obey what they said, Jesus also explicitly stated to ignore their actions because they were hypocrites. In other words, do what they say, but ignore what they do. **Matthew 23:1-4**

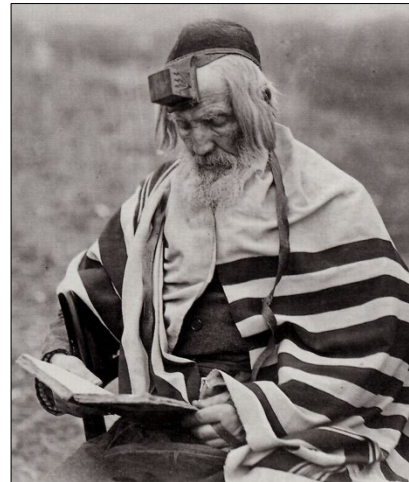
The Pharisees and scribes liked to adorn themselves with phylacteries and over-the-top fringes on the borders of their clothes to show they had special respect for the Mosaic law and impress the common people of their holiness.<sup>1</sup> They loved places of honor at feasts and always wanted to sit on the best seats at the synagogue. **verses 5-6**



Phylactery (Tefillin)



Tallit (fringed garment)



Tefillin and Tallit

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<sup>1</sup> Phylacteries (Hebrew: tefillin) are a set of small black leather boxes fastened to the head and left arm with leather straps. They contain small scrolls of parchment, inscribed with verses from the Torah. The one worn on the front of the head is smaller, than the one worn on the left arm. This custom is based upon Deuteronomy 11:18. The Pharisees believed that when they walked or moved their arms, the scrolls moving inside the boxes automatically sent prayers to God.

A tallit is a fringed garment worn as a prayer shawl. It has special twined and knotted fringes.



The Hebrew word for “teacher” is “rabbi” and these men loved to walk around the common people and listen to the honorific title denoting their authority and competence to teach. Having people salute them in such a manner implied their superiority and they craved the praise lavished upon them. **verse 7**

The Pharisees sought honor from a title and then got their followers to address them by it. Jesus pointed to the Messiah as the ultimate master/teacher and stated that all men are equal. There is no superiority among Christians because we are all children of God and disciples of Jesus. We are all saved by grace through faith; there shouldn't be any pre-eminence over each other. **verse 8**

Jesus was not advocating that a child should not apply the term to his biological father. What He meant was that no man should be called “father” by a group of people. That designation is reserved for God alone because it denotes authority and Christians are equal.<sup>2</sup> **verse 9**

The rabbis liked to be in charge; they inherently enjoyed the preeminence of directing and controlling the masses. Jesus again asserted His dominance as the Messiah. **verse 10**

God will exalt the humble. Therefore, any person who wants to be great, should also be a servant to others. Any proud person that entertains too high an opinion of themselves will be chastened by God. **verses 11-12; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6**

## **FALSE DOCTRINES**

Matthew records how Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees. The God-man laid bare their false doctrines concerning the Messiah because they tried to convince the common people that the Son of God was an imposter, and thus preventing many from becoming followers of Jesus. **Matthew 23:13**

Luke stated that they had taken away the key of knowledge, inferring they had misinterpreted the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah and done all they could to prevent the common people from receiving the Redeemer. **Luke 11:52**

## **DEVOURING WIDOWS**

The Pharisees claimed to be Mosaic law scholars, and for all intents and purposes, they were devout men, but Jesus rebuked their taking advantage of widows. There were few opportunities for women and they were relegated to the role of housewives. When the husband died, it was difficult for the widow to keep the property since taxes had to be paid and not all homes were owned outright. Widows saw the Pharisees as guardians, men whom they could trust, only to lose their property as these “holy men” systematically defrauded them. **Matthew 23:14a**

On top of that, the Pharisees made lengthy prayers, multiple hours long, ostensibly for the benefit of the widows in return for their substance. There is nothing wrong with long prayers, but Jesus condemned the manipulative intent behind them. **verse 14b**

Jesus promised a harsh punishment for these evil men. **verse 14c**

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<sup>2</sup> This means it is blasphemy when a Roman Catholic refers to a priest as “father.”

## RECRUITMENT METHODS

Pharisees traveled all over the Roman Empire seeking Gentiles who could be converted to Judaism. A proselyte was a convert from a foreign nation, religion, or sect. Given that most of the Israelites subscribed to their doctrine, they left no stone unturned in the effort to increase their numbers. **verse 15a**

To be a “child of hell” meant the Pharisees were excessively wicked and deserved the Lake of Fire. Jesus claimed their converts were twice as evil and they too rejected the Messiah. **verse 15b**

## FALSE OATHS

Jesus equated the Pharisees with blind men for their corrupt teaching. They pretended to be spiritual guides, but the irony is that they were just as blind themselves. How can a blind man lead another blind man? **verse 16a**

The Pharisees had devised their own legal system in order to swindle people out of their properties and money. If they made a business deal and closed it by swearing an oath by the temple, that oath had no value and could be broken. **verse 16b**

But any business deal closing with an oath concerning the gold of the temple was legally binding. Such an oath revealed the disposition of these evil men. Gold was the object of their lust. What does it say about these men who considered a metal more valuable than the temple itself? **verse 16c**

Jesus ripped into the Pharisees and asked them if the gold was greater than the temple that sanctified the gold.

The temple was dedicated to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It existed as a place of worship and sacrifice. The holy of holies was reserved for God and the high priest only entered it once a year. To say that the temple was a holy place would not be an understatement. **verse 17a**

Sanctify means to make holy. Gold in and of itself has no holiness. The gold of the temple was considered special because of where it resided; it took on the attributes of the building in which it was housed. If it was kept anywhere else, it would be no different than any other gold. Jesus was implying it was foolish to suggest that the gold was holier than the temple itself. **verse 17b**

## MORE OATHS

The Pharisees had yet another corrupt setup. Any business deal sealed by an oath on the altar of the temple had no legal standing if one party broke the promise. But if an oath was sworn on the gift that lay on the altar, then that particular oath was legally binding. Such a course of action was ridiculous because the altar belonged to God even if it resided with men; the sacrifice was also pledged to God and not reversible. In short, it was a play on words. **verse 18**

Jesus asked a rhetorical question. Which is greater, the sacrifice, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? Logic would dictate that the altar, which is dedicated to God, is what sanctifies the sacrifice. The altar is synonymous with holiness and hence it is the altar which furnishes value to the offering. **verse 19**

The Pharisees loved loopholes from which they could escape accountability. Swearing an oath meant nothing to liars. As we have already examined, they swore by the temple or its gold (verse 16), by the altar or the gift laid on it (verse 18), and Jesus circled back around close the argument. Any man that swears by the altar should realize that his oath is not only binding to the altar, but to the offering laid upon it. God is holy, the altar is holy, and the sacrifice becomes sanctified as well. God will therefore hold a man responsible for any contempt against His divinity. **verse 20**

The temple was God's chosen dwelling place on earth. The holy of holies was where the famous Ark of the Covenant was located and once a year the high priest would enter to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for the sins of the Israelites. How careless and arrogant of the Pharisees to swear an oath by God and not fear reprisal when they broke it. **verse 21**

To swear by heaven is a direct appeal to God. Heaven is where God's throne exists. Anyone that swears by heaven, takes an oath that invokes the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and such a vow is irreversible. **verse 22**

## **SUMMARY**

With this public speech directed to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus made it clear that He was aware of their wickedness; they had been weighed and found wanting. The common people standing around must have been shocked as the God-man boldly told the truth about the corruption within the Jewish leadership.

As the Son of God, Jesus was obviously aware that He had sealed His fate with these immoral men because they would soon demand His crucifixion.

This should serve as an example that we are to call out sin and corruption in our leaders, even if it is not expedient or politically correct to do so.

***Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!***

***Do you have an ear to hear with?***