

Matthew 23 & the "Modern Day" Pharisee



Why does the term "Pharisee" have such a bad connotation? What does it mean to be "Pharisaical" today? The speech of Jesus in **Matthew 23** is directed at this religious sect. Scripture gives us insight as to what made many Pharisees contrary to God. Jesus calls them hypocrites seven times! There are 2 particular elements constituting their hypocrisy, which are as follows:

How many pounds of myrrh and aloes were wrapped round the body of Jesus Christ after He died upon the cross for our sins?

1) **Narcissism**. They loved themselves. They loved to be noticed by others. They were all about appearances (**Matthew 23:5-7**), all while harboring secret sin in their hearts (**Matthew 23:25-28**). They reveled in gaining followers (**Matthew 23:13,15**), and they were willing to pander, lie and bribe to obtain and maintain them (**Matthew 23:29-36**).

2) **Shallowess**. Their religious practices focused largely on ritual elements, to the exclusion of the spiritual value and purpose (**Matthew 23:16-24**). They also bound additional laws (above God's Law) on people in order to increase the stranglehold they had on the people's necks (**Matthew 23:4**).

As if 613 laws weren't enough, the Pharisees developed a culture in which it was more fearsome to break the traditions of the elders than the actual commandments of God (**Matthew 15:3**). It was all for show. It is no surprise that Jesus used the Greek word for "play actor" as a description. That's just what they were...hypocrites.

Now, please allow me a point about "legalism." That is *not* what the Pharisees were – at least, not in the way anyone progressive defines "legalism" today. There are those today who would warn about the "legalism" of the modern-day Pharisees, telling us that when we teach or preach on **obedience** we are committing the same error as the Pharisees of old. That accusation is rubbish.

Jesus was fine with the Pharisees teaching **obedience** to the law, but they should have taught men to respect the spirit of the law, *as well as* the letter (see **Matthew 23:23**). Jesus told his disciples to respect AND obey every word the Pharisees spoke from Moses' seat (as they read from the law of God), but not to follow them in their behavior, because they were hypocrites!

Never once did Jesus encourage His followers to abandon the spirit or letter of the law, or even to downplay the importance of **true obedience** because of the threat of "legalism." And that's not to say he expected sinless conformity, either. Jesus knows human beings are not sinless. That's WHY He came: to sacrifice Himself on the cross in our place! Have you obeyed the gospel?

God has always expected man's **obedience**. The fact that we can't obey perfectly does not nullify its necessity, it only elevates the beauty of His grace when we don't (didn't Paul say something like this... "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" **Romans 6:1-2**). Continue reading for the necessity of baptism for salvation.

The modern Pharisee is not someone who preaches or teaches on the significance of developing an obedient heart toward God. An obedient heart is necessary for salvation! The modern Pharisee is a hypocrite, a narcissist who pretends to be something he is not, and who expects others to do something he will not do. The modern Pharisee is not someone who preaches or teaches the importance of **obedience** (cf. **Hebrews 5:8-9**, What did Jesus learn?). Please. Let's get it right!

By Rick Kelley

To our valued visitors: *Please feel free to participate!*

You should expect to hear singing with voices only, a few "family" announcements, prayers spoken, and see the Lord's Supper offered, then free-willed giving, and gospel preaching from the Bible. Any response is up to you and will be kindly received. We are glad you decided to worship God with us on this first day of the week!

Birthday/Anniversary Lunch: Second Sunday of the month... next one... (11/11)

NMCCH: Spray & Wash and Bar Bath Soap (pick up in **April 6, 2019**)

Gospel Meeting: at Bells (**10/28-31**), see flyer on bulletin board.

CraFt Activity Time: Saturday (**11/3**), for ALL ages, beginning at 3PM until we all finish being "crafty"...

Gospel Meeting: at Central (**11/4-7**), "Reaching for a Better Me."

Gospel Meeting: at Howe (**11/11-14**), "Do Not Cast Away Your Confidence."

Friday Bible Study: 7PM to 8PM, yes, here every Friday ... Lord willing!