



## The King's Denunciation

By Ken Terry on December 23, 2022

**READING:** Matthew 23

This is our Lord's last public message. He addressed the Pharisees and revealed their hidden agendas. However, all the Pharisees Jesus condemned were not hypocrites. There were some that only sought the truth, such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. But for the most part, the Pharisees used their religion and self-righteous traditions to promote themselves for material gain and Jesus was not having any of it! In this passage Jesus explains the basic flaws of the pharisaical religion:

They had false concept of righteousness – they assumed an authority not their own. *"Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do"* (Matthew 23:3, NKJV).

They had a false concept of ministry – they handed down laws and further burdened people. The same laws they did not follow. *"For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers"* (Matthew 23:4, NKJV).

They also had a false concept of greatness – they measured success by the recognition of men, rather than the approval of God. *"They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren"* (Matthew 23:6-8 NKJV).

Jesus rebuked all these facets of self-aggrandizing behaviors from these hypocrites. However, the worst "woe" in the list of woes that would result from their behaviors is blood guilt on their hands; *"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in"* (Matthew 23:13, NKJV).

By honoring man before God, their teaching would lead many astray. By teaching man-made traditions, instead of God's truth, they took away the key of knowledge and closed the door to salvation. Today's reading makes one think about their own walk in Christ. It helps us examine ourselves in light of the gospel message. You see, we never want to elevate ourselves or ministry as the primary objective, but more so the One who drives us in the ministry. Therefore, let us humble ourselves in the manner Jesus speaks. *"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"* (Matthew 23:11-12, NKJV).

**PRAYER:** Our Father in the heavens, thank You for our time in Your Word today. Thank You for helping us understand the difference in Your righteousness and self-righteousness. Father, please do not allow us to fall in the prideful trap of self-righteousness. Father, help us always seek the truth and from whence it is revealed through our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ!

*Acknowledgement- Warren Wiersbe Commentary*

**TOMORROW'S READING:** Weekend is for catch-up and review.

**MONDAY'S READING:** Matthew 24

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