

Pharisaism Exposed

1Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; 3therefore 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, 7and 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 leaders; for One is your Leader, 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.

We've been following Matthew's presentation of the King with a common thread of **authority**. The authority to reign of God is the theme of Matthews book.

The religious authorities and national leaders of Israel asked Jesus in chapter 21 verse 23 *By what authority do you do these things, and who gave you this authority.*

And that is the question Matthew has been answering for us in his gospel since chapter 1. Every chapter and every verse in this treatise has something to do with the authority of Jesus to reign. Over every created thing. Every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord . . . of everything.

Satan has usurped control over the kingdoms of this world. Jesus will return to this world and depose him and He will crush all of his enemies and reign on David's throne forever.

That's the present situation and the future promised to those who love

Him, but what about the nasty now and now.

In terms of authority, Matthew finishes his book with Jesus pronouncement that 28:18b *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."* But, it's a tenuous situation in the interim while we wait for Him to come in glory.

For twenty centuries the church has prayed the Lord's prayer. It is a prayer that pleads for the future kingdom to come. But it also recognizes the current needs of the saints while they wait.

Give us this day, our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil . . .

For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

The church is in limbo. We are in a holding pattern in enemy territory, enemy combatants, waiting for the chopper to come and pick us up.

And it has pleased God for this tension to remain while He accomplishes His sovereign plan and gathers His church out of every tribe in every nation in the world.

So, that begs the question; During this time where we are enemy combatants left in hostile territory with the task of spreading the gospel to every person, in every nation, dangerous work for certain, who is in charge?

I mean, the King is at the right hand of God, who's in charge here, where we're at, in hostile territory. Satan still rules this place, mostly. Who rules over us? The enemy combatants that belong to the other more powerful more glorious King?

Some years ago, I think it was Larry King interviewing John MacArthur and he said something like "Who polices your movement?" In other

words, who's in charge, because people lumped together with the common denominator of Jesus Christ, seem to be all over the place. Who keeps the movement in check.

It's a really good question. The world looks at this movement labeled Jesus Christ and they see bizarre behavior? Everything from soup to nuts. Who's in charge?

Jesus is going to speak to that issue in this passage this morning. And He's going to use the example of some really bad leadership as His example of what NOT to do.

1Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

Often on sit coms we're watching two people talk openly about a third person and the object of the discussion breaks in and says something like, Hey, I'm standing right here. While the first two keep right on discussing him.

It always gets a laugh. But on a more serious note, that's what Jesus is doing here. The scribes and the Pharisee's haven't left the room, but they're finished talking to Him.

Every time they opened their mouths, He crushed them. They're done looking stupid. What remains for them is to eliminate the challenger. And **that** they will plot and accomplish. But for now, He turns to the crowd and also to His disciples who will be left bereft of Him to carry the truth forward, and He addresses leadership.

These guys are your example. Don't do it like they do. Your current example is a fail. But we need to watch carefully how He approaches the topic because therein is also the answer to our question. Who's our leader?

How does that work?

1Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, 2saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

It's fun to compare translations here because with two exceptions most of the others simply re-state how the King James rendered the original language. *The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:*

But the Holman and the New American Standard take the verb tense which is middle voice, 3rd person continuous active, and say more succinctly, *they have seated themselves* in this chair.

He recognizes the seat, but He seems to be rolling His eyes, so to speak at how it is getting filled. It brings to mind Matthew 11:12; *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force."*

But what's important here is that Jesus recognizes that there is a seat of Moses. And what that is, is the Word of God, revealed to men.

Jesus resorts over and over and over throughout His ministry to men, to what the book says. He solves every problem, sees every condition, in light of what the book says.

And thus, there is honor bestowed on the person who is in this seat, proclaiming and interpreting properly, the Word of God. We'll see that in the next verses. Jesus recognizes that office. He just doesn't recognize the current usurpers who have placed themselves wrongly, in that office.

Therefore all that they tell you, do and observe,

There is an authority base, in this world, that men must observe. And it isn't other men who wield some kind of spiritual authority, it is the Word of God.

That's where authority begins and ends. We - Must - Understand - and - Obey - This - Book.

And there is a kind of honor involved in that. Paul recognizes that. Honor those who teach and shepherd you. Double honor for those who

do it well.

You folks have honored me with the highest position attainable on this earth at this moment in time.

We've got silly politicians slugging it out slinging mud and embarrassing everyone with any sense of decorum, and for what? The authority to be a king in Satan's realm.

Why would you want to be a king in Satan's world when you could be a shepherd of God's possession. You have graced me with the world's highest office. Shepherd. Over-seer. Elder. Presbyter.

But before Jesus finishes His discussion we'll also see that the highest office, is the lowest servant. The King is in heaven at the right hand of His Father. The Glory belongs to Him. We are just shepherds of His possession. The church.

The scribes and pharisees had that all screwed up backwards. They were after the power and the glory of lording it over men. They wielded tremendous authority and power over God's flock and they were robbing God of the glory that was His, while they mis-treated His possession.

Therefore all that they tell you, do and observe,

Even if the source is imperfect, the word maintains it's authority. Even if the most hypocritical pharisee is the source, if he stays true to God's revealed truth as revealed through the servant Moses, you do what it says.

But that's as far as that goes.

but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.

If they're preaching the good stuff, the word of God, do as they say, but in the case of the pharisees, that's as far as that goes. Do not copy their hypocritical deeds.

Paul told the church just the opposite. Follow my example as I follow Christ. That's how it's supposed to work. Jesus says, don't do that when the source is the pharisees. *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.*

This is the law of a double standard. The pharisees loaded down the people with minutia. Layers and layers and layers of traditions that had no basis in Moses.

They piled it on deep. But they made no effort to live according to the bogus rules they required of others.

They were good at piling on the burden. But they offered no help with the burdens they piled on the people. They had no concern for the people under them. None. Dump impossible loads on people, then walk away.

Paul taught it different in Galatians 6:2. *Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.*

The law of love, the law of Christ, is to help your neighbor with his burdens. We don't crush men, we come along side and help.

So, the question arises, what motivates religious people who are bereft of God. Religious phonies. And we have bushel baskets full of these folks. Why? Empty religion. Godless religion. Where does that come from? Why would anyone do that? Listen to Jesus;

5“*But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men;*

That's the beginning and the end of their motivation. It's like a club. You put a sign out front. The sign has your brand stated importantly. First church of blah blah blah blah blah. The church of Jesus Christ of latter day saints. Whatever.

And when you join that club, you modify what you do in order to match the expectations and guidelines of the members inside that clubhouse. God isn't there. It has nothing to do with God. Your motivation is to be the grand pubar in *that* club. Your honor and prestige as you climb up the ropes, is the recognition of other men in that club.

Jesus gets very particular about the pharisee club. You could change the various nouns to represent all the other organized religions we see around us and the paragraph would read the same for all of them.

for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.

Phylacteries and tassels. Phylacteries were the boxes they place on their chest and forehead and wrists. Simple. Bigger box, more spiritual person. Same with the tassles.

I remember when the boom box craze got wacky. You'd see these gang bangers walking around with boom boxes on their shoulder as big as a Volkswagen. Baggy bottoms shorts with belts with the end dangling almost to their knees. Same deal, different club.

Gotta be seen by your homies. It's exactly what Jesus is talking about, and religious people do this.

6“They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

More of the same. One thing to join the club. But what you really want is to be significant in that club. You don't just want to be a member. You want the other members to reference you as Grand Master. All stand as grand master Galli enters the room. You can be seated after he takes his place first. OK, at ease.

FWIW, I am just wired polar opposite of this. Sure I've got other issues, but this one isn't mine. I'm not even really comfortable with you calling me pastor, but in deference to you I cringe a little bit and forbear that

title. I guess it's better than rotten tomatoes. Some guy at the back of the room throwing his shoe at you.

Now then, this next section is most interesting and requires some diligence on our part.

Let's read through it again and then dig in just for a minute or two.

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 leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

The immediate problem to tackle is the father thing and the catholic church. And protestants go here and batter the catholics with this, but I'm not going to do that.

If you look in your old testament, you see that Job was a father to the poor. Righteous Job. And when Elijah was carried away to heaven, Elisha shouts out to him, My father, my father. Later still the king calls Elisha father. And there are lots of other examples.

In the new testament, they use all kinds of familial terms constantly. To the Galatians, Paul says My little children with whom I am again in labor. He calls Timothy his son in the faith.

In 1 John 2 there is this whole section all based in family roles; 12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven through His name. 13I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. 14I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one....

And protestants through the centuries have referred to the great christian leaders who shaped the faith through the centuries as "the fathers". If

you go to the Master's Seminary, sooner or later you're going to study something we call Patristics.

So, we don't get to have it both ways. We can't beat up the catholic church and then join right in with everyone else we agree with and use the term father.

And if we go too literal wonky, what do you do with teacher here, when Jesus himself, upon leaving this earth told us to do what in the great commission? Mt. 28:19 *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching** them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

James recognizes the office of teacher when he warns; *Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.*

So, what was Jesus saying here. He wasn't just having a bad morning spouting off a bunch of stuff He shouldn't have said. This means something, and we need to get at the root of what He's saying here.

The context of the passage is spiritual leadership. Who's in charge. And something new has come. These disciples and some of the listeners are part of something new. The church.

We are not jews. We don't identify with judaism. Jesus is referencing a new reality. A spiritual reality, the ecclesia, the called out ones, who are something new. The church is taking shape before our eyes in this passage, and Jesus is going to give us 3 bedrock truths about the church.

And if you look closely, He's going to introduce us to the trinity right here.

So put your thinking caps on just for a minute or two and stay with me. This is us. This is who we are. These are our marching orders and they define who is in charge. Let's have another look at these all important words of Jesus.

8*“But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.*

This term rabbi was used to indicate someone who was above everyone else in their knowledge of God. The jews would commonly refer to different schools of thought headed by different Rabbi's. The school of Hillel. Or the school of Shami. Paul references being taught in the school of Gamaliel in Acts 23.

These were the Master's. The teacher's of Israel. Jesus asks Nicodemus, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and you don't know this...?"

Here Jesus says, in this new movement, these dichotomy's have to go. In the church, we are all brothers.

Just here, I think I will take a poke at the Catholics. If you go to Wikipedia and look at the page, hierarchy of the Catholic church, I could fill about 3 pages just with titles. Here are a condensation for reasons of time;

1 Bishop

1.1 Pope (Bishop of Rome)

1.2 Patriarchs

1.3 Major archbishops

1.4 Cardinals

1.5 Primates

1.6 Metropolitans

1.7 Archbishops

1.8 Diocesan bishops

1.8.1 Equivalents of diocesan bishops in law

1.9 Other bishops

2 Ordinaries and local ordinaries

3 Presbyterate

3.1 In general

3.2 Priests in service outside their diocese

- 3.3 Positions within a diocese at diocesan level
- 3.4 Vicars Forane or Deans
- 3.5 Parish priest/pastor
- 3.6 Assistant priests/parochial vicars
- 3.7 Honorary titles

4 Diaconate

5 Laity

8“But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers.

Jesus says, forget about honorific titles. You are all brothers. And in this case the title was for Master. The honorific teacher.

Jesus says One is your teacher.

Let me introduce you to the Holy Spirit. In the evening before His death, Jesus tells His disciples in John 16:12, *13 I still have much to tell you, but you cannot yet bear to hear it. 13 However, when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak what He hears, and He will declare to you what is to come....*

We saw earlier that the Book, the Word of God, revealed truth, is our authority in all manners. Here we see that the Holy Spirit is our teacher. Our Master who gives us all things in this book.

In the church, the called out ones who are not of this world, we have One authority, the Word of God, and One teacher, the Spirit of God. We are all equals.

The apostle John, in his letter to his children, the church, says: 1 Jn. 2:26 *I have written these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 27And as for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But just as His true and genuine anointing teaches you about all things, so remain in Him as you have been taught.*

The Holy Spirit who dwells in you, if you are a believer, will lead you into the truth.

9“*Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*

How is it that we are called out of Satan's kingdom and into God's family? We that make up the church, how did we get here?

Jesus is clear. You have one progenitor. Only one person has the authority to pluck you out of Satan's kingdom and place you into His own family. *One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*

I'll pick on the Catholics again. They give this power to the church. The catholic church claims the authority to declare you excommunicado. The church has the authority to either declare you in, or declare you out.

Jesus says; 9“*Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.* We are all placed into the body of Christ, the church, the same way, with the same source. Sovereign God does this, and no man on earth has the authority to undo what God has done.

The jews had the authority to excommunicate people from the commonwealth of Israel. They could declare you out. They could damn your soul to hell. The catholics and the mormons declare this same authority. Jesus says, there's only one progenitor. Only one Father. And He isn't on earth. God places you in His family and no man has the authority to un-place you.

Now, the church for it's own benefit and health is told to put sinning members out. Cancer cells need to get excised. Rotten apples need to get seperated, or the whole barrel can get infected.

We recognize a biblical plurality of elders or presbyters who have the authority to do this, in the protestant church. For the safety and health of the rest. But even in the case of a sinning member who is in reality a

person born of the Holy Spirit and part of God's family, if this harsh reality should be necessary, we separate ourselves from them, for a time, and God deals with them, but they haven't lost their salvation.

God might kill a sinning member and take him home. Or He might drag them through the gutter like the prodigal son until repentance comes and we restore such an one with exceeding joy. But to declare someone outside of God's family is authority we do not have.

And finally a third truth about authority in the church of God;
10“Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

This new reality, this new spiritual reality of called out ones, placed into the church by God the Father, and taught all truth by the indwelling Holy Spirit, belongs to and is lead by one person. The Lord, Jesus, the messiah.

The church belongs to Jesus. If you ever come to any of our board of director meetings, you would hear the same opening words of prayer every time. This church does not belong to us, it belongs to you, and we are simply seeking your will for your church.

We ask the One leader to guide us into His will for His church. It's as simple as that. Actually, nobody comes to those meetings because they're pretty boring. There's no drama. Nobody's fighting with anyone else about what to do, because we recognize the words of Jesus right here.

10“Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.

We see our job as humbly asking for His guidance for His church.

So, Jesus unveils a new spiritual reality, separate from Israel, with a hierarchy not of this world. The trinity each has a role. The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth in His revealed Word. Those are our marching orders. God the Father places us in this body. He is progenitor of every member in this body. And Jesus leads us in where we will go and what we will do for His Glory.

Is there a hierarchy in the church, the ecclesia, the called out ones, those placed into the body of Christ? Yes. Yes, there is, and Jesus finally addresses that question. Who is greatest in the body of 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.

I was visiting with my mom the other day and in our conversation she said, I wish I had the treasure in heaven that two little ladies you've never heard of in your life before, will have in heaven.

Kathy Gouker and Alice Wise. They both are about the same age as me now. Young. OK, middle aged. In their latest picture, they both have hair the same color as mine, and frankly, they're looking, well, matronly.

But these two ladies, in their youth, gave up all that young women normally aspire to, in order to be missionaries in Haiti. Ultimately, it pleased God for them to be mothers to many many black children who have no one else in this world, and they have faithfully housed and fed and taught orphans, literally, for a lifetime.

Mom is spot on. These two humble servants that only a handful of people know exist, are going to be "greatest" in heaven. Here, in this world, they are so far down the servant ladder, nobody's ever heard of them.

Nobody asks them to speak at conferences. They don't have a church with 8,000 members. They don't hold huge rallies in stadiums. What they did was to say to a few members in their home church in Pennsylvania, you hold the rope and we'll climb down into the well and rescue who we can.

They are my hero's. True greatness, according to Jesus.

A day of reckoning is coming. *12 "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.*

We don't see it very clearly right now. But that day will come. Kathy and Alice will receive the exaltation that is truly theirs. And a whole bunch of christian rock stars will get moved so far to the rear they won't even be able to see Kathy and Alice without a telephoto lens. They'll need binocular's

Not my words. Jesus said it.

Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth. Numbers 12:3

Mt. 5: 5“*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

Who is in charge in the Church of God. Jesus uses the scribes and pharisees, the rulers of Israel, as His launching pad to answer that question.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in conjunction with the revealed Word of God are in charge of this living organism we call the church.