

This Pharisee was always cleaning the outside of the cup and platter. To him, religion was always to be reckoned in terms of a profit and loss account. Matthew, a God fearing Pharisee, really and truly loved God, and found delight in obedience to the Law of God, no matter how difficult that Law might be. Always in dread of divine punishment, seen in terms of judgment, he reports Jesus' blistering attack on Sham Religion when important spiritual things are forgotten.

The Law, Moses received from God. He handed it to Joshua who transmitted it to elders, who passed it to prophets; who gave it to the Scribes and the Pharisees. It must not be thought for a moment Jesus is commending the Scribes and Pharisees. Then spoke Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not you after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers (Matthew 23: 1-4 AKJV).

Jesus' sermon identifies eight woes that show all the pretense required to promote a multi-million dollar business, with pomp, status, favor, and a parade of the show of approval of being seen by other men for works. Read it aloud.

13 But woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in. 14 Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. 15 Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. 16 Woe to you, you blind guides, which say, Whoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever shall swear by the gold of the

temple, he is a debtor! 23 Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 25 Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. 27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like to white washed sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. 29 Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, 30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets (Matthew 23:13-16, 23, 25, 27, 29 & 30 AKJV). By Matthew's inspired gospel, Jesus points out religion can become a burden instead of blessing.

The Master makes eight charges. He predicates the eight on this error; all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments (Matthew 23: 5 AKJV). They were careful to display fringes and tassels. They worked hard at parade and pomp. They demanded submission to human authority and interpretation. Self reigned supreme! No man can doctor your soul. The Word must be the authority! The Holy Spirit must be the guide! No man can father you into heaven; And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven (Matthew 23:9 AKJV). No church leader, or officer has power to impart spiritual life by ceremony or sacrament. God is the source! No man is an infallible guide to truth, morals, and the daily decisions of life. Anyone who does so deprives you of the right to seek and hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The important things were approved symbols, position, recognition, honors, and titles. Jesus dealt with it summarily. 10 Neither be you

called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. ¹¹ But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted (Matthew 23: 10-12 AKJV).

The Greek word translated woe is *ouai*. It is difficult to translate into English, righteous anger at the stubborn blindness of men. For it includes wrath, sorrow, and tragedy of denunciation.

The Greek word translated hypocrite is *hupokrites*. Originally it meant one who had answers. Yet it came to mean an actor in the worse sense of the term, a pretender. Scribes and Pharisees were men acting a part. To Jesus these Scribes and Pharisees were men who, under a mask of elaborate godliness, concealed godless feelings and emotions held sway.

Pharisees believed that to do God's will was to observe their thousands of petty rules and regulations. Nothing could be farther from the Kingdom whose basic idea is love. The Pharisees had forgotten the basic truth that if a man is to teach others he must himself first listen to God.

The gravest danger any preacher or teacher encounters is that he should erect his own prejudices into universal principles, and that he should substitute his own ideas for the truth of God.