

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1961

JOHN S. TORELL

MAY 5, 2024

PART 60: PRETENDED HOLINESS

MAJORING IN THE MINORS

Jesus chastised the Pharisees for scrupulously paying tithes on the spices they sold. Mint, Anise (Dill), and Cummin (Fennel) were herbs of little value, and yet the Pharisees were extraordinarily precise in such small matters and denoted their adherence to the smallest points of the Mosaic law. **Matthew 23a**

Their conduct overlooked the more substantial things of the law:

- ❖ Judgment – The Pharisees were only interested in justice in relation to themselves. They didn't care about the common people.
- ❖ Mercy – There was no compassion and kindness to the poor, sick, and down-and-out.
- ❖ Faith – The Pharisees paid lip service to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They had no respect for Him. The sum total of their effort was to be seen of men. They were frauds who only sought man's praise. **verse 23b**

The Pharisees were correct to honor the smaller points of the Mosaic law, but Jesus pointed out they should not have abandoned the weightier matters of the law. Their evil conduct was merely an outward expression of the iniquity found in their souls for their utter disregard for justice, people and God's character. Paying tithes to the priests was fair, but what about the mockery of God at defrauding everyone else? **verse 23c**

The God-man equated the Pharisees as blind men for their corrupt lifestyle. They pretended to have sight, but who were just as blind as the ones they professed to lead. **verse 24a**

Gnats lay their eggs in still waters such as ponds, marshes, and wells. The Israelites used a cloth to filter out the larvae and remove other impurities from the drinking water. The gnat mentioned by Jesus illustrated how the Pharisees were scrupulous to avoid small sins. **verse 24b**

And yet they made no attempt whatsoever to shun the large sins as evidenced by their swallowing of the camel. The takeaway is that Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of straining at the small things and ignoring the greater ones. **verse 24c**

Examine the following points:

1. These evil men devoured the properties of widows.
2. They rebuked the disciples for eating with unwashed hands.
3. They invalidated the fifth commandment (honoring your parents) with Corban.
4. They went out of their way to tithe and appear holy.



5. They paid Judas to betray Jesus and then refused to accept the blood money when Judas brought it back afterwards.

This is why Jesus said they strained at gnats and swallowed camels.

After the resurrection, the apostle Peter declared that Jesus was the cornerstone rejected by the religious leadership. There is no salvation apart from the God-man because the name of Jesus is what grants redemption. **Acts 4:11-12**

The apostle Paul stated there were capital offence punishments under the Mosaic law. **Hebrews 10:28**

What should be the punishment for the Jewish religious leadership. They scornfully rejected the Son of God who became the Son of Man. They treated Him with contempt, despised His righteousness, and would go on to devalue and belittle His death on the cross. **verse 29a**

The Mosaic law is clear that there was no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood. The Son of God was incarnated as a man. John the Baptist testified that He was “the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” **John 1:29**

Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice and the Second Covenant was ratified by the blood which flowed from His body when they beat him, whipped him, jammed a crown of thorns on His head, and when they drove nails into His hands and feet to fasten Him on the Roman cross.

The religious leadership counted the blood shed by Jesus to be no different than that of a common criminal. What an affront to God the Father! **Hebrews 29b**

Jesus came to earth and most of the Jews failed to recognize Him as the long-awaited Messiah even though the Son of God had revealed Himself to humanity. The religious leadership denied the deity of the God-man. The extraordinary miracles were explained away or treated with contempt. The supernatural was credited to Satan and the carefully chosen words were regarded with scorn. **verse 29c; John 1:11-12, 15-16**

The apostle Paul stated that God is watching events unfold on earth. He will righteously judge all the wrongs perpetrated by the Israelites and the rest of humanity. The wicked men of the past will cry out in terror as their words and actions concerning the Son of God are judged. The irony is that Jesus will be the judge! **Hebrews 10:30-31**

FAKE CLEANLINESS

Jesus continued to denounce the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees regarding their outward portrayal. They were precise concerning the purifications prescribed by the Law of Moses and their own traditions (Talmud). **Matthew 23:25a**

As religious men, they looked pure and clean, but the God-man scathingly stated they were full of extortion and malice. They were outwardly clean, even though they made a living by devouring widow’s houses, oppression of the poor, and abuse of the needy. **verse 25b**

They were more concerned with the cleanliness of the plate and cup than the food and drink gotten through ill gains. Jesus implored them to put clean food on a clean plate, not dirty food on a clean plate. **verse 26; Matthew 7:15-20**

ORNATE TOMBS

The city of Jerusalem was built on hills and the roads leading to the city proceeded through a mountainous area. Caves had been carved out of the slopes to serve as graves. Only the wealthy could afford this luxury. Before the Passover Feast, the custom was that the stones covering the entrances were whitewashed with lime.

Matthew 23:27a

While the doorways gleamed white, it did not change the contents inside the caves, which were full of dead bones. The illustration is self-explanatory. The dead corpse decomposes and is eaten of worms. The stench from the rotting body is disgusting and repulsive. No one wants to be caught in such a situation, and yet that is exactly how Jesus described the scribes and Pharisees. They were oblivious to their hypocrisy, pride, envy, and malevolence. **verse 27b**

These religious men looked good outwardly by wearing phylacteries, enlarging the borders of their garments, making long prayers, compassing sea and land to make a proselyte, paying tithes on herbs, cleaning the outside of the plate and cup, performing “acts of charity,” and fasting. All this was done to be seen of men. They were outwardly righteous, but like the whitewashed graves, they were spiritually dead inside. **verse 28**

PRETENDED HOLINESS

The scribes and the Pharisees had erected ornate tombs for the prophets and righteous men of the Old Testament. **verse 29**

Many of them had been murdered, and the religious leadership claimed that unlike their forefathers, they would have behaved differently. They imagined themselves better and piously claimed they would have received them as godly men and listened to their message. Hence the reason for building and decorating their tombs.

But Jesus stated that the Jewish leadership were descendants of the same bloodthirsty mob who had killed the prophets and the righteous men who took a stand against their iniquity. He exposed their fake piety as posturing and deception. **verse 30**

The God-man appealed to the free will that governed the consciences of these reprobate men. They knew what they were doing was morally reprehensible and the Son of God was offering them a way out. **verse 31a**

These men knew they were descendants of evildoers, but were blissfully ignorant of the fact that they were possessed by the same demons. **verse 31b**

Their forefathers had persecuted and abused godly men, even to the point of death. The Jewish leadership had the same satanic spirit empowering them and now they were about to slay the Son of God and outdo their forefathers in terms of wickedness. **verse 32**

EXPOSING THE KABBALISTS

John the Baptist had previously called out the religious leadership for being a “generation of vipers.” **Matthew 3:7**

Jesus had also labeled the Pharisees a “generation of vipers.” **Matthew 12:34**

As the Son of God, Jesus was knowledgeable concerning the teachings of the Kabbalah. The majority of Christians reading Matthew's account do not know why John and Jesus resorted to name calling. He was exposing a hidden teaching among the Jews known as the Kabbalah and revealing these evil men masquerading as God's representatives.¹ **Matthew 23:33a**

The religious leadership were acutely aware of their wickedness even if they didn't admit it publicly. The God-man was merely informing them of the punishment that awaited after death if they refused to repent. **verse 33b**

ACCOUNTABILITY

Jesus promised to send prophets, wise men, and scribes in the near future. **verse 34a**

And just like their rebellious, wicked, and bloodthirsty forefathers, the God-man predicted the religious leadership would persecute, physically abuse, and even slay His disciples. **verse 34b**

Here are just a few examples:

- ❖ Stephen was stoned to death. **Acts 7:59**
- ❖ James was killed with the sword. **Acts 12:1-2**
- ❖ Paul persecuted the church before Jesus recruited him. **Acts 22:19-24**
- ❖ Paul was scourged on five separate occasions. **2 Corinthians 11:24**
- ❖ Paul was beaten with rods in three separate incidents. **verse 25a**
- ❖ Paul was also stoned to death – but was subsequently resurrected. **verse 25b**

The God-man was making it clear that He was going to hold the Jewish leadership responsible for the innocent blood that had been shed down through the ages. While they were not responsible for the sins of their forefathers, nevertheless, the consequences of their ancestors' wickedness would be passed on to them. **Matthew 23:35**

Everything predicted by Jesus would be fulfilled. This was not limited to just the religious leadership, but also included their followers, and encompassed the nation of Israel. **verse 36**

LAMENTING OVER JERUSALEM

Even after speaking harshly to the Jewish leadership, Jesus still wished to see Israel repent. God had sent prophets to warn the nation and they were all greeted with hostility. **verse 37a**

The God-man spoke with affection for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The grand idea – begun thousands of years earlier – had been derailed by sin; yet there was still a desire by Jesus to gather the Israelites together even if though they stubbornly refused to repent. **verse 37b**

¹ See the link if you want to know more about the Kabbalah and the future religion of the Antichrist. www.eaec.org/bookstore/kaballah.htm

The temple and the city of Jerusalem was effectively abandoned by the Son of God. The glory of the Lord would not appear anymore in the holy of holies. Jerusalem would be surrounded by the Romans four decades later, and when the fighting was over, the city of David and its beloved temple would be in ruins. **verse 38**

The parting words of the God-man were a warning to the religious leadership and future generations that He was done with them. He had given them over to Lucifer because they stubbornly refused to recognize His divinity. They would see Him again until the second return. **verse 39**

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?