

## *A note from Kathy*

*This chapter has some harsh words from Jesus. We must never assume that because our Lord is full of grace and mercy, he is not just and ready to call sin, sin. And yet even here we see he is grieved that many will not turn to him in repentance and be restored. These are serious words from the One who is about to lay down his life for sinners. We must consider them carefully and prayerfully.*

## *Observation*

1. Jesus was teaching to the crowds and his disciples. He stated the fact that the scribes and the Pharisees put themselves up as authorities. "They sit in Moses seat." This was the place of authority for all Israel. Moses had been called by God to miraculously deliver his people from the bondage of Egypt. He was used to lead the Israelites through the wilderness. Exodus 24:7 - Then he (Moses) took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." God gave Moses his laws for the people of Israel. Exodus 33:11 says, "The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend." According to verses 1-3, what did Jesus say the Israelites were to do when the scribes and the Pharisees taught God's commands?
2. What instructions did Jesus give them in verse 3 concerning the scribes' and Pharisees' actions?
3. What was the truth about their actions and dealings with other Israelites?
4. What was the main motivation for all they said and did?
5. According to verses 8-12, what are all true followers to remember?
6. In verses 13-33, Jesus declared 7 woes on the Pharisees and Scribes. List them. What exactly had they been doing to bring each of these indictments against them? Some of these may take a bit more thinking in order to answer.

1)

3)

5)

7)

2)

4)

6)

7. The Pharisees and scribes were standing right there while Jesus spoke. They heard very clearly the things Jesus had to say that day and the descriptive words he used concerning them. List some of them.
8. In spite of all Jesus had spoken of against these religious leaders of that day, in verse 34 we see Jesus telling them that he would be sending more prophets, wise men, and teachers. What did Jesus say would happen to those he would send?
9. Look up Acts 8:1-3 and Acts 9:1-2; who do we find here fulfilling Jesus' words?
10. Read Matthew 23:30 again; did these Pharisees and scribes really even know their own hearts? What had they said about themselves in comparison to their forefathers?
11. Verses 37-39 show the tender compassion and love Jesus had for Israel. What was the word picture Jesus used here? What was he telling them?

## *Application*

1. Jesus spoke very clearly to the religious leaders of his day. They led by the philosophy, "do as I say, not as I do." This is the worst kind of leadership for a parent, a boss, a teacher or a religious leader. Take a few minutes and consider how you are leading. Are you more like Christ, the servant leader, or those religious hypocrites?
2. Look back over the Beatitudes, those truths taught by Christ in Matthew 5:3-10, and contrast the condition of the heart of the blessed believer and the wicked heart of the hypocrite mentioned in the 7 woes. Write down the differences you see.

<b>Blessed believer in Matthew 5:3-10</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Those who realize they are spiritually bankrupt.</li><li>2. Those who mourn over their sin will be comforted.</li><li>3. The meek, those who accept God's dealings as good, without disputing or resisting.</li><li>4. Those who have obtained true righteousness.</li><li>5. Those who are merciful, who show and receive mercy.</li><li>6. Those pure in heart will receive salvation.</li><li>7. Those who by their words and deeds strive to bring others to peace with God.</li></ol>

3. The Pharisees and scribes (teachers of the law) loved being thought of as authorities to be looked up to and obeyed. Jesus said they were to be obeyed as long as what they taught was in accordance with God's law. Do we see teachers today who say one thing but practice something else?

Read Proverbs 30:5-6; how are we, as followers of Christ, to handle and share God's word?

4. Verses 23-24 are often quoted in reference to those who pride themselves on the legalistic issues of the law, yet neglect the more important matters. What are some of the more important matters that Jesus is referring to in this passage? Can you think of examples of these?
5. Jesus said his measurement for true greatness is opposite that of the world. What did Jesus say was the mark of a truly great person? (Think back over the Beatitudes.) What are some practical applications for this?
6. In verses 8-10, Jesus told those who would follow him that they were not to have others call them Rabbi; why do you believe he said this? He went on to say that they were not to call other followers Father; why not? In verse 10 he said not to be called teacher; who is the great instructor that is to be followed?
7. Jesus desired to draw the Israelites to himself. They would not have it. What would happen if they ignored him for too long? What will happen if we do not heed his call?
8. When is the best time to heed the promptings of God? (Read 2 Cor. 6:2.)
9. Have you responded to the prompting of God's spirit? If so, why not share your testimony with someone this week?
10. The hypocrites that Jesus referred to were very busy making the outside (what other people see) look just right, but this was not true of their hearts.  
Are you overly concerned with what others think of your walk of faith?  
Whose opinion should we be concerned with?  
What should you be most concerned about?

11. The work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is an ongoing work that will never be fully accomplished this side of heaven. Are there areas of your heart that the Spirit of God has brought to your attention this week, changes that need to be made? Why not stop and consider how you will respond in obedience to the prompting of God's Spirit?
12. The Pharisees said that they were different from their forefathers. What was the truth about these self-righteous leaders?

Jer. 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it?"

Jump ahead to Matthew 26:1-4; what will we see these religious leaders doing in just a short time?

13. Jerusalem was the capital city of Israel. It was the location of the temple, the place intended for the worship of God. They should have recognized those who were sent by God. They should have recognized their Messiah. Jesus was saddened by the many times and ways he had reached out to them, yet they did not want to listen. What was the prophecy concerning their future in Matthew 23:38? This would come into being a mere 40 years later. Has God been waiting on you to respond to his call?

John MacArthur said of this chapter

"Remember that even Jesus' most scathing denunciation – a blistering diatribe against the religious leaders of Jerusalem Matthew 23 – ends with Christ weeping over Jerusalem.

**Compassion colored everything He did."**

If only that could be said about us.