

Introduction:

- Chapter 23 enters with a wide ranging denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites.
 - This chapter becomes severe in that it begins to predict the consequences of a failed Jewish leadership regarding the nation and people. (23:36-38).
 - The fate of the Temple is bound up with the Jewish leadership.
- *“the scribes and the Pharisees, as the self-appointed arbiters of all matters of religious law and practice, must bear the blame for a nation which has spiritually lost its way.”* NICNT Matthew
- What is attacked in this chapter is the attitude of religious externals verses the Kingdom attitude at the heart of the externals. To do the externals without the heart attitude is hypocritical.
- When religious form takes on more that substance there is a big problem. This is where most religious traditions begin to break down.
- The chapter breakdown is:
 - 1-12
 - 13-36
 - 37-39 the Woes and lament–Which bridges this chapter to chapter 24.

I. A Word To the Wise (Jesus speaks to the crowd and disciples about the Pharisees and Sadducees) 1-12

- A. This section begins with Jesus still on the Temple Mount, we know this because in chapter 24 he is leaving the Temple Mount. Vs. 1 Tells us that he is talking to his followers and the crowds.
1. Jesus is warning them against those who they have been taught to regard as teachers and leaders.
 2. In verse 8-10 the warning is directed more specifically to His disciples.
- B. Three charges
1. Jesus criticism of Pharisees is not about their role but about their heart as they do their job.
 - a) They are charged with inconsistency of behavior. *“So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don’t follow their example. For they don’t practice what they teach.”* (Matthew 23:3, NLT)
 - b) This charge will go much deeper and direct in verses 13-ff.
- C. Two more specific chargers
1. vs. 4 their teaching puts burdens on people.
 2. vs 5-7 their concern for appearance and reputation.
 3. It is the latter charge of Jesus that He ‘drives home’ to his disciples so that they do not fall into this trap.
- D. A Word to the Wise
1. vs 1 The Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses. It literally reads “they sit in the authority of the seat of Moses.” We know that they love the place of honor at banquets and synagogues, how much more the Seat of Moses! (All about appearance)
 - a) Jesus, by His own seat of authority, has been challenging their heart as they sit in the seat of Moses.
 - b) He does not deny their place in the seat of Moses, just that One greater than Moses was there with them.

2. Obey what they tell you, just do not do what they do!
 - a) His own words later will declare that they are unfit for leadership of God's people.
 - b) vs. 23 they keep minor parts of the commands but ignore the greater.
 - c) Another translation reads, *"Follow their teaching if you must but do not follow their example at all."*
 - d) Their behavior nullifies their Seat of Moses teaching.
 3. The Pharisees put loads of expectation on the people without giving them a hand to bear it.
 - a) The difference with Jesus:
 - (1) *"For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."* (Matthew 11:30, NLT)
 - (2) *"Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'" (Matthew 11:28, NLT)*
 4. Everything they do is for show. This is Jesus second charge of the Pharisees to the people. 5-7
 - a) They love attention vs 5
 - b) They love position vs 6
 - c) They love recognition vs 7
 - d) Those three things are the opposite of what we see on the Sermon on the Mount. 6:1-6; 16-18.
- E. A Word to the Disciples
1. Don't let people call you Rabbi - you only have teacher, you are all equal.
 2. Don't call anyone Father - you only have one spiritual Father.
 3. Don't let anyone call you mentor (this word used only once in NT) - you only have one mentor/example...Messiah.
 4. Do humble yourself. vs 11-12. The Pharisees look for status...Not you!
 - a) If you want to be great be a servant.
 - b) If you want to be lifted up then humble yourself.

Conclusion:

- Jesus says to the crowd follow those who practice what they preach.
- Jesus says, follow what you yourself preach.
- Don't put burdens on people to perform, make the load light like Jesus.
- This walk is not for attention, position or recognition.
- To be great you must be servant.