

The Spirit of Hypocrisy

Matthew 23

Whenever you are at a social gathering, and the topic of religion comes up; what is the usual comment that people make? They say that they would like to go to church, but... it is full of hypocrites. While that is usually a cop-out, there is truth in it. And we, the hopefully, non hypocritical believers need to reflect on the matter, because it makes us all look bad.

Luke 6: 39 to 46 - And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Politicians don't fare any better in the court of public opinion.

And if anyone needs more incentive to pray over the elections.

Job 34: 30 - That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.

The definition of hypocrisy in the Cambridge Dictionary is: "when someone pretends to believe something that they do not really believe or that is the opposite of what they do or say at another time. "

Hypocrisy is mentioned 40 times in the Bible, and I encourage you to study it. In Strong's, it's 5272, hupokrisis - the acting of a stage player 02611 chaneph AV-hypocrite 13; 1) hypocritical, godless, profane, hypocrite, irreligious

There were situations in Israel mentioned in the Bible. One of them was with Eli, the high priest, at Shiloh. And when he refused to clean up his families hypocrisy, Our Lord God stepped in to correct the situation.

1 Samuel 2: 27 to 30 - And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my

sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Our Lord God dealt with the hypocrisy under Eli. And He even told him twice what was going to happen. He dealt with it under Annas & Caiaphus. Jesus Christ again warned them twice when He cleared the temple. So He will also have to deal with it in the modern Church. And how much longer will it be, before He cleans shop again? 1 Peter 4:17 - For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Now is hypocrisy really that big a problem? I don't know of another subject that Our Lord dealt with so severely. He even warned His disciples of it, and told them what He was going to do. Luke 12: 1 to 3 - In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

And as Our Lord Jesus Christ promised, He took on the religious hypocrites. It is recorded in Matthew 23, and we will look at the encounter in 3 parts. It reads like a trial; first the evidence, then the judgment, and lastly the sentence. Verses 1 to 12 have Our Lord's description of the situation. This is the trial, and the evidence is being presented. Matthew 23:1 to 12 - Then spake Jesus to the multitude, & to his disciples, Saying, The scribes & the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore what soever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens & grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, & enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, & the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; & all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; & he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

The priesthood had lost its vocation; its God called service.

Deuteronomy 30: 6 - And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Is it any different today? Romans 2: 28 & 29 - For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; & circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Verses 13 to 33 have Our Lord's Judgement. And it is guilty on 8 counts.

When Our Lord Jesus says woe to someone, it's very serious.

Luke 10: 12 to 16 - But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre & Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you heareth me; & he that despiseth you despiseth me; & he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

So let us look at each count. Matthew 23: 13 to 33 - But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools & blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, & swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup

and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, 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. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Verses 34 to 39 have the victim's impact statement and the sentencing.

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me hence forth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

And we know that 40 years later, God's judgment fell on them by the sword of the Romans. Their general, Titus, gave the glory to God for the over-whelming victory. It was the fulfilment of the prophecy that Moses gave.

Leviticus 26: 32 & 33 - And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

Our Lord God dealt with the hypocrites then, and He will deal with the current ones. But thankfully, with deliverance, we can confess these sins, the sins of the fathers, and cast out those terrible, religious spirits.

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