

Who Exactly are the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees? (Matthew 23) Sunday 02/18/2024

I. Review

As we come through Psalms, I'm trying to build the platform of a fundamental understanding of how the book of Psalms really lays itself out—not just on the surface but as you go underneath the surface. **Last week we looked at two key verses that really spell out the victory we have as Christians in the Lord Jesus Christ.** We have looked at Psalms, and we've seen much of the warfare we're in with the attack of our enemy and the fiery darts that come our way.

❖ The Victory in Christ

Psalms 5:11-12 shows us that the victory in Christ is there for all of us. We are to rejoice—to shout for joy! It's to be joyful in Christ, and to have the abundance of the blessings of God in our lives. The favor of God will compass us as a shield, and I used the example of Joseph and his brethren. This is a classic picture of what you'll face today when God's hand is in your life and the blessings are compassing you about, and not necessarily in somebody else's life—by their own choosing, and then how it comes back on you just like it did on Joseph.

We talked about being out of balance and how as Christians we're always to be in balance with the exception of one area—the blessings of God (the sure mercies of God) which put us out of balance when it comes to the attack of our enemies. And rejoicing in the fact that God will defend us! This is why it says in 2 Corinthians 2:14, and this is a great verse:

*2 Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to **triumph in Christ**, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*

And as I said last week, there is no reason on earth for any child of God to live in defeat. When you look at 2 Corinthians 2:14, it talks about how **when we triumph in Christ, others should see it.** And those who are struggling in their own lives will see something that you have that they don't have—Christ manifest in every place in your life.

And I showed you the victory will simply be found in two places:

1. **The ensamples and examples in the Old Testament**—the men and women you'll find there. This is why it's so important to study the Old Testament and do Character Studies; many of you teach and are familiar with the value of them. These men and women suffered just as we do in the work of God. They go through the same things and when you see how God delivered them, then you in turn get a better understanding. In I Corinthians 10:11 we are told that the things that happened to them *are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*, and we are to take our stand.

You also see it in Hebrews 11—God’s Hall of Fame where he lists the men and women who by faith withstood everything that happened to them. I showed you Thursday night (02/15/2024) with the question regarding Abraham versus Lot and how that all lays out.

2. **The principles of the word of God and the promises that form the patterns by which God always works in any given situation**—we focused on that a lot. I’ve tried to impress upon you one of the great keys to the Bible, life, and basically everything around you. That is to not just look at things that come into your life (situations, people, relationships), but to learn by observing them. Just seeing things doesn’t always give you the answer.

❖ Don’t Just See Something—Observe It

Somebody sent a book the other day addressed to “the spiritual leader of the church” which was probably mailed to every preacher in the country. (I didn’t open it at first because I wasn’t exactly sure who this leader was 😊). When I finally opened it, I had an idea of what it was from simply seeing it; however, I had some time, so I started looking through chapter one which was about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. I thought to myself—this is an incredible book. Chapter by chapter this guy looks like he goes through and gives great detail on the sufferings which they went through in the Old Testament and how they’re going to foreshadow the sufferings which are coming. I can’t wait to get through the rest of the book, but my point is this—When I first saw it, I thought it was just another crazy book. **I was just “seeing” it, but once I looked at the first chapter and introduction, and I observed a little bit, it was a whole different story.**

You know, life is that way. Relationships are that way. Everything in your life and my life—the Bible, people, the ministry—everything comes down to not just seeing it as it appears, but through an observation of it, seeing what you really have. It’s quite incredible...not just seeing it but observing it.

This is the basis for I Thessalonians 5:21 *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.* **The proving of it is through the observation of it.** So much of what we are faced with today will be masked in deception. There’s no question about that. It’s in the world in general, our own country, the news media, life, the things that we find ourselves involved in, and I told you many times that the Bible warns us in Matthew 24:4 that we are not to be deceived. **Unfortunately, Christianity has not escaped the attack of the devil in the deception of God’s people.** You see this in almost every aspect of Christianity.

❖ All Through Church History and Today—The Devil is Alive and Well

I’ve always been interested in the history of the New Testament church. For probably 45 years, I have spent much of my time connecting it to the word of God and really getting an understanding of church history. I can’t get enough of it. **Once you start studying church history, which is where you start, then it evolves itself out into the world. Most people get it backwards...they start with the world, and they never get to Christianity.** Once you start

with New Testament Christianity, it envelops the whole world. That's the difference between seeing it and observing it.

I remember, and I still have these books, the deception of almost every writer of church history. I've got a book put out by a guy named Newell called *The History of the New Testament Church* which I'm sure is long out of print. Philip Schaff, who was a theologian, wrote seven volumes on church history which are pretty much the standard in every Bible college or seminary in the country if not the world. There was a man by the name of Cairns who wrote a book called *Christianity Through the Centuries*. Another guy by the name of Dowie wrote *Handbook to the New Testament Church*. All these books bring forth one great misconception, or deception as far as I'm concerned. **In their writings, they all thought the devil died some place in church history.**

Philip Schaff wrote seven volumes on church history which is probably the most in-depth, non-biblical account of church history. He writes it like the devil got on a bus to Topeka, Kansas and never came back. **Where was the devil in church history? Not one chapter on the devil's work in destroying the church through the Roman Catholic Church; not one chapter on the devil's work in manuscript evidence.** These books, which every pastor is given to study on church history, are all a deception. There is no mention of the devil's work in 2,000 plus years of church history. You see...when you observe things like that, and you start with your Bible, then you have the ability to cut through the smokescreen to see the truth because believe me, **all through church history and today, the devil is alive and well.**

II. The Scribes, Pharisees, & Sadducees at the First Coming of Christ

❖ An Excellent Question from a Listener and What the Writers of Church History Missed

Now today is going to be a little add on to Psalms which will happen from time to time. I had a question come in this week from a pastor, actually two different pastors. Normally I would answer these during our Thursday night Bible study, but this one was such an incredible question given the time and the place where we're at in Psalms and what we're studying about—the enemy, the victory, our work here, our ministry, and observing versus just seeing. I thought that this question would serve as a great example of everything I've been trying to give my people.

His question was if I could I lay out and explain who exactly are the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees at the first coming of Christ. I can think of no better question or study to illustrate seeing versus observing than to look at the three groups he asked about. **So, let me give you today what the writers of church history missed.** Let me show you how you observe instead of just watch something or read something.

❖ The Historical Perspective

First, as I always do, allow me to give you the historical perspective of these three groups. We want to learn from history, and I've already told you that the pattern of history will be set. The

pattern of history is so basic and so simple, yet every writer of those books and most of the teachers of church history missed it. **Every part of history will simply be God moving in a direction to accomplish His plan and the devil moving in to stop it.** History is built around those two patterns.

1.) The Scribes

In the Old Testament, the scribes are of the tribe of Levi. They must be priests. **They are given complete control and custodianship of the Old Testament Scriptures.** No other tribe could record or transcribe anything; it had to come through the tribe of Levi through the scribes. Their job was to protect the integrity of the word of God. They kept it pure and made absolutely sure no error crept in.

You'll find today that when some Bible college professor someplace wants to pick at the Bible and finds some discrepancy he doesn't like—for example the Bible says 300 people did something which seems impossible, he takes out the miracle aspect saying the scribes made an error and that it should be just 30—that some bleary-eyed scribe at 4:30 in the morning put in another zero. That's not true. The scribes didn't make mistakes; they were right on the money.

2.) The Pharisees

The second group are the Pharisees. They are a non-Biblical group. **You never find them anywhere in the Old Testament.** They are never authorized by God. When Israel went into the captivity of 606 BC under Babylon and earlier Assyria, for 400 or so years God gave no revelation to man other than what was already written before the 400 silent years—the Old Testament. It's during this time that the devil floods the world with counterfeits and satanic implants knowing that just 400 short years down the road Christ is coming at the first coming of Christ. He wants the stage set with corruption to be able to stop that.

Since the last revelation of God, when we got our King James Bible, it's also been a little over 400 years. The devil brings back everything that was corrupt, and we find today that the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees are alive today—just like they were in the time of Jesus.

During the 400 silent years, the apocrypha was written. The Septuagint, which every Bible college will tell you is a Greek Old Testament which Jesus used, was written around 285 BC. That's 285 years before Christ was born—God was writing NOTHING during that time. It is a counterfeit put out by the devil that when we get into the church age today, saved and unsaved scholarship would try to divert you to something that is satanic to try to destroy the Scripture. I don't know how else to say it.

During these 400 years you'll find the devil giving us all the "lost" books of the Bible. I've been asked over the years what I do with all the books that should be in the Bible—the book of Enoch, the book of the Acts of Solomon, the Chronicles of Gad and Seer. I say the same thing God did with them...put them in the trash can! They're nothing to do with God. They were written in a time period when the Old Testament was sealed, and there's nothing to be added. Scholarship tells you this because they see it, but they don't observe it. A lot of people drink that Kool-Aid.

Then around 165 or 160 BC, 160 years before Christ, the Pharisees show up. They are a satanic implant to take the power from God and set up the opposition to Christ's first coming by taking over the people of God. It's very important that you see this. There was no Biblical authority or justification for the Pharisees to come into being anywhere. They're nowhere in the Old Testament; they popped up in a time when the devil is putting in the counterfeits, and they stand in opposition to Christ at the first coming. So, it's a counterfeit system to destroy the work of Christ behind the scenes.

3.) The Sadducees

They too are a non-biblical counterfeit group. They're satanic in their origin, and they are also set up in place to destroy everything at the first coming of Christ. They show up around 167 BC. Now observing, and this is important, you'll want to mark the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees as it relates to what we're going to look at today.

Even though the Pharisees were a satanic group, they were basically fundamental in their beliefs. They held to the resurrection of the dead, they believed in angels, and they believed in spirits...they just rejected Christ and His word. The Sadducees, however, denied both. They did NOT believe in a resurrection, and they didn't believe in angels or spirits. You'll find that laid out for you in Acts 23:8. It's very important to remember these two things with where we're going today.

III. The Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees Today

Now these three groups, as I said, are alive and well today. **And just as they were used of Satan to confuse and destroy Christ's first coming to Israel, they are at work today to destroy the work of the church before the second coming of Christ and to destroy the church.** These three groups will be our primary enemy. When we talk about the enemies of God, you'll find that the people who are your enemies will be in one of these three groups. The pattern is set. If you're observing it, instead of just reading it or seeing it, as it starts in the word of God and works its way through, you can't miss this.

1.) The Scribes

The scribes today will represent the New Testament church—Christianity as a whole. If you're saved here this morning, you are a priest. Hebrews 7 tells us that believers are priests after the order of Melchizedek which is Christ's priesthood. **So the New Testament church is made up of priests, and they are the only authorized structure in the New Testament just like the Levitical priest class was the only authorized structure with the word of God in the Old Testament.** See how it works?

It was the church that had the custodianship of the word of God, it was the church who was to keep the word of God pure, it was the church through the priests (us) who kept the error from coming in. It was the church that decided which books would be in the New Testament and the Old Testament. It was the church who threw out the apocrypha. It was the church that said the Book of Enoch goes in the trash. It was the church that set up the two offices for the church—

pastors and deacons. It was the church that set up the two ordinances—communion and baptism. It was the church that decided because Christ rose on the first day of the week to meet on the first day of the week to keep that perspective together. It was the church that decided which doctrines they would follow and hold to. Yet all those writers of church history which I mentioned earlier thought the devil didn't give a flip about the church.

We buy our Bibles, many of you have them in your hands, from *Bearing Precious Seed*. From time to time we have to buy them from Oxford or Cambridge, and there are also other churches out there that print Bibles. We don't usually buy Bibles from worldly publications because **we believe that the local New Testament church is the only one that has the authority to print and sell Bibles**. If you have a King James Bible, you will find that there is no copyright. If you have any other translation, there is a copyright on it which means you can't reprint any part of it. If you have an authorized King James 1611, you can print it off in your basement. **That's why we deal with *Bearing Precious Seed* or some of the other places—they're New Testament local church based, and they understand that it's the church's job...the priesthood (us). We have been given custodianship of the word of God, and we reproduce it.**

It was the church until up to around 1900 that kept the word of God from being corrupted, but just like the scribes in the Old Testament, the scribes today got corrupted. They turned the keeping of the word of God and the teachings and doctrines of the word of God over to a non-biblical system that God never authorized to have anything to do with the word of God—higher education, Bible colleges, seminaries, and universities. They sold their birthright, not for a mess of pottage, but for a doctor's degree or some kind of higher education that the Alexandrian cult likes to put out there. And let me be clear...**it's the New Testament church's job to teach, train, and equip men and women for the ministry.** It's not a Bible college or a university, and I can't help that the scribes corrupted themselves and turned it over to them. I've got to stay with the Bible which is clear that we as the priest class are the only ones—it's not a Bible college; it's the church.

2.) The Pharisees and Sadducees

Now we come to the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Here's what I gave you the last couple of weeks about the enemy that we face. These two groups will represent our enemy in the two formats I gave you. The unsaved Sadducees will be open for everybody to see. They will be the ones who believed in no resurrection. They will be the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Church of Christ...all those satanic groups out there who completely deny anything that is fundamentally true with the Bible just like the Sadducees.

And then you'll have one that is saved but hidden in New Testament Christianity underground. It looks good, but when you observe it, you see it as it really is—a non-Biblical system to destroy the body of Christ and keep it in defeat by taking the word of God from them. This will be the Pharisees—a group who claims to believe the fundamentals but denies that you have a Bible you can read that is without error. And they build a non-Biblical, fake spirituality that looks so good, but as you observe it...connect it to the Bible, and it's as phony as a three-dollar bill. Today, I want you to meet the Pharisees.

IV. Matt 23—Definitive Chapter on Scribes & Pharisees

Our definitive passage on scribes and Pharisees will be found in Matthew 23. I say this all the time, but with anything you're going to get into with the Bible, you'll always want to start with a definitive chapter, sometimes a definitive verse, and sometimes a definitive word—but here we've got a chapter. **In this chapter you will find Jesus Himself (not Bob Alexander, Peter S. Ruckman, or somebody else's sermon you heard) is addressing this crowd and defining them.** And He builds his sermon/address/rebuke to them around eight woes—like woe is me! These are found in verses 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, and 29.

Now the next thing I want you to see is that there are no Sadducees here. You've got to mark that—just the scribes and the Pharisees. Now that we've defined those two and I've shown you what they represent in New Testament Christianity, **what you have here now by observing is the definitive of saved people who will infiltrate New Testament Christianity just as they did at the first coming of Christ with a fake, phony spirituality that looks good but is just not biblical.**

Now within the definitive chapter, you will find nine characteristics which will identify today with what you see in New Testament Christianity, and hopefully this will turn the lights on for some of you—if you observe.

One of the things you're going to see today, and I've talked about this for years, is that there is a difference between being spiritual and being biblical. **A lot of things look spiritual, but when it comes to really observing them, they have nothing to do with the Bible. This is where the Pharisees live.**

❖ Going on the Record

As we always do, we are going to break this chapter down. From time-to-time I think it's vitally important, for any pastor who has a nationwide or worldwide ministry like we do, that the pastor goes on the record. **Going on the record means that you make a statement that this church stands behind, so with this study today, I want to go on the record.**

Matthew 23:1-3 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, 2. Saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: 3. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, [that] observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

Here is the warning that Jesus gives all of us before He gets into the eight woes. If you're on a horse that is running off with you and it looks like you're going to get killed, what do you say? Whoa! You'd better stop when Jesus says woe.

He tells them in verses 1-2 that the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat which is the authority of leadership with Israel, and they have taken over that control. They have taken over Israel's religious system and have completely corrupted it, and Jesus tells us in verse 3 to do not after their works. As you go down through this chapter, you can 100% match these works up with the works of the scribes and the Pharisees within the body of Christ today who have a non-

biblical, fake spirituality...a phony Christianity that will in time destroy you. Don't take my word for it. Look at verse 13 and the title that Jesus gives them— *scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*

V. Eight Characteristics in Matthew 23 which Identify Today with what you see in New Testament Christianity

1. Enlarging the Borders of Their Garments

Now I want to go through these showing you and matching them up—what they did back then to clearly what you can see men doing today—keeping in mind what is spiritual versus what is biblical.

Matthew 23: 5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

Here we see the first characteristic that a Pharisee has. He thinks that dressing up in a special garment will make him spiritual. Phylacteries are little leather boxes which they wore on their wrists which contained scriptures, and nowhere in the Old Testament are they told to do that. That comes in after the captivity when the Pharisees come to power to show everybody that the word of God is connected to their hands; therefore, on the garments, never seen in the Old Testament, now we see that they're enlarging their borders.

Numbers 15: 37-41 tells us that the priest's garments had borders to them. **These guys are now making the borders much broader and much more traditionalized so that each border they put on raises them to a higher spiritual level. This is exactly what the Pharisees do today. You're not really spiritual unless you go to church in a suit and tie.** Now I get it. There are a lot of people who like to dress up when they go to church, and I have no problem with that. I've preached at churches where the pastor required whoever preached in his church to wear a suit, so you know what I do when I preach in his church? I wear a suit. To me it's not a doctrinal issue whether you do or you don't. **To me the problem comes when you think that if you do, it makes you more spiritual.** If somebody wants to wear a dress to church, or someone else a suit or tie, I have no problem with that. The problem is when you wear it, as many of them do, because that is your broadening of your borders. If you think encasing this godless flesh in a \$300 suit makes you more spiritual, you are out of your mind. These guys actually thought a special garment that the ordinary people didn't have elevated them to a point where—look how spiritual they are by the way they dress.

Now let's observe this for a minute. If better clothes make you more spiritual, and that's the mindset, don't stop with the suit and tie—go get an \$800 tux. Now you're really spiritual. I've known pastors who thought that wearing a suit and tie was so spiritual that they wouldn't be caught dead without one—some will mow their lawn in July in a suit and tie. Another went on a ski trip and wore his suit and tie under his ski suit! They think it keeps you closer to God and that if Jesus was here, that's what He would wear. Hey! If Jesus showed up today, He'd be wearing camo. He's a soldier—Captain of my salvation.

Ever been to a church in India, Africa, or Central America? I have. I've seen them come to church, sing the same songs that we sing, just wearing a loincloth and a t-shirt or a wrap-around towel. And American missionaries try to get them to wear a shirt and tie when these people make about \$10 per year, but this is the mindset. I think that it comes to the point where the Pharisee crowd will judge you by what you wear.

I Samuel 16:7 ... for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

When you get dressed to come to church, you get dressed to please the Lord, not some standard by which somebody has put rules up for you. It's the difference between spiritual and being biblical.

2. Titles Attached to Their Names

*Matthew 23:6-12 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7. And greetings in the markets, **and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.** 8. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, [even] Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9. And call no [man] your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, [even] Christ. 11. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

The next thing these Pharisees like is the titles they get attached to their names which sets them over the common man. One of the key marks of a Pharisee will be the title he gets which he thinks makes him more spiritual. Here, it's Rabbi, Master, and Father. So today, you can get a BA, MA, PhD, or a ThD, and now you're supposed to be more in tune with God—just like the Pharisees of the time of Jesus. Now, let's observe some things. Why does any Christian need a title? I'm not talking about a medical doctor, nurse, vet, dentist, lawyer...I get that, but never in Christianity. Why do you think you need to impress everybody with your title? Some will say they don't, but why do they keep talking about it? Why when somebody gets up to introduce you before you preach do they say, "Now tonight we have Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine with three PhD's, and they're going to come speak to you". Why do you need to sell yourself to the crowd you're going to preach to or the people in your church? Why do you need to tell them what you've learned that makes you more spiritual than they are? At the end of the day, I don't care how many degrees you've got behind your name, as far as God is concerned, He tells you right here...you're all the same.

I went out to lunch one time with a guy who was a doctor in Christian Psychology. I overheard him tell the hostess, "Excuse me, ma'am, my name is Dr. So and So, and if I have any calls, would you bring them to my table"? Why does any man do that? Why does a man when he writes a book, and it may be a good book, have to detail it with all the degrees he has? Does that really make you better? Does it make you more spiritual? Let's assume for a second that it does....my next question is why would you tell anybody? **The Bible tells you right here that if you want to be exalted, you've got to be humbled.** You don't need to exalt yourself. *But if any man love God, the same is known of him (I Corinthians 8:3).*

*But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. **The mark of your spirituality is not the degrees you have after your name or the Bible colleges you went to, it's if you are a servant to the people around you.** You don't exalt yourself before men, you humble yourself. It's the difference between being spiritual and being biblical.*

Everybody likes to pretend they're a great Christian like the Apostle Paul. He's the standard for the New Testament Christian. These guys get in their mind that if they do some good work, and they're always quoting Paul, but they pick and choose. In Philippians 3:8-21, Paul says there is nobody smarter than him or with more degrees than him, and when he met Christ, everything he learned was dung. I asked a guy one time to let me hear him say that he had a PhD, but it was just a bunch of dung. Let me hear you say you spend \$100,000 and four years of your life at this Bible college, and all you got was a bucket of dung. They won't say that. You know why.... Pharisees. *For man looketh on the outward appearance, so the Pharisees wanted to prop that up with a title, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*

3. A Fake System of Prayer

They will all hide behind a fake system of prayer.

Matthew 23:14 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.

A pretense is an attempt to make something that is not the case appear to be true. **Every Pharisee you're going to meet is going to hold themselves up as some great prayer person. That's because it's hard to criticize someone who says they pray a lot.** Here is the favorite hideout for the Pharisees. Years ago there was a young guy in a church I was in at that time, and he was a Pharisee—there's no question about it. At the end of a Sunday night service when three or four of the pastors were standing around talking, this guy comes up and asks for a key to the church. He said very piously that he would like to come in at 5:30 every morning and pray. That sounds really good, but do you think God listens better at 5:30 in the morning than 3:00 in the afternoon? Do you think because you come into the church, God will hear you better? You see, what he was doing was trying to show the pastors how spiritual he was because none of them would be there at 5:30 in the morning. Most Christians who just "see" that might think that he's a young spiritual guy. Really? So, prayer is based on the place you pray and the time you pray—is that correct? When you "observe" this guy after 4-5 years (we didn't give him a key by the way), he lost his marriage and doesn't go to church anywhere, but he was a prayer warrior. It's the difference between seeing and observing. **I say it all the time...when nothing else tells, time will tell.**

I know churches, and this is not a criticism, which have a men's prayer meeting at the church every Saturday morning at 6:00 AM. The obvious observation is that if you don't show up to that, you're not as spiritual as the guys that do. We don't have a 6:00 Saturday morning prayer meeting, because it proves nothing. You all work all week long; you put in overtime and work hard. You have one day off to rest and get caught back up, and some pastor because it's a

spiritual thing...if you don't do it then you're really not spiritual. I'd rather just have you do what the Bible says.... *Pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17).*

I've had people ask me about Sunday School, and I know where they're going with it...if you don't have a Sunday School than you're not spiritual because most Baptist churches have one. Sunday School started in the 1800's by Robert Raikes in England who created a Sunday School for all these kids on the streets without parents. Now Baptist churches make it a doctrine that if you don't have one, you're not spiritual. It's the same thing with Wednesday night prayer meetings and Sunday night services. We're working with people all throughout the week. What is magical about Sunday night or Wednesday night? If you want to do it that's fine, but don't judge spirituality by it. Pharisees.

4. Laying Heavy Burdens on People

Matthew 23:4 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.

Now I hate to keep bringing up the Bible, but in Matthew 11:30 Jesus says *For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light.* **This will be what we call in the broad sense—legalism.** This is where if women wear anything other than a dress, they are not godly, and it must be a shirt and tie for men. Now, I observe. Now personally, it's your choice. But if you want to go back to the Bible, do you realize that every guy in the Old Testament or New Testament wore a short skirt robe? The bottom line is that you can wear whatever you want, but these are the rules they put up.

A friend of mine and his wife went to a church to listen to an evangelist who was unbelievably legalistic. The wife was wearing a dress because they knew the system, but she wore shoes with open toes. They were standing there before the service started, and the evangelist saw them. He came back and pointed to her shoes and asked if she would wear them to her mother's funeral. He said she was exposing the flesh of her toes to the men. Then later, a quarter way through his sermon, he switched subjects and started preaching about open-toed shoes. So, because she had open-toed shoes, she was godless. That is where legalism is at today. It's unbelievable.

It was the same with Covid-19. The Pharisees got on that bandwagon big-time. You had the extremes that said the shot had the antichrist's DNA in it. I've got news for you: your flesh already has the devil's DNA in it more than any shot could give you. People also came to me and asked me when I was going to take a stand against the vaccine. They thought that if you took the vaccine, you weren't trusting God and you weren't spiritual. The only real spiritual people were the ones that would stand and say they weren't taking the shot. The vaccine never was or will be a doctrinal issue. Incidentally, did you ever know a doctrinal issue that just went away? Vanished. It's not an issue now because it wasn't an issue then. The Pharisees wanted me to stand up and tell you folks that got the shot that you weren't spiritual.

Then there was the mask mandate. People would ask me when I was going to take my stand against the masks. Somebody actually told me that it was a doctrinal issue, and I told him, "You want me to defy the mask order and get shut down, but you go to work on Monday wearing a

mask so you won't lose your job." See how it works? Pharisees always want somebody else to pay the price that they're not willing to pay themselves.

The day they tell me I can't preach the word of God anymore, or I'll go to jail...that's where I'll be. Don't tell me you've got this great doctrinal stand and you're not willing to pay the price all the way to the end for what you say is doctrinal. **The Pharisees like to lay the heavy burdens on people.**

5. Picking and Choosing

Matthew 23:23-24 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. 24. [Ye] blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

He's telling them that they pick and choose out of the Bible what they want to do. You see this all the time. You ignore what the Bible says about this when it doesn't fit into what you want to believe, but then you'll swallow the whole camel—picking and choosing out of it what you want to believe.

6. Appearing Righteous Outwardly – Within full of Hypocrisy and Iniquity

Matthew 23:27-28 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. 28. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Now this is Jesus Himself speaking to them, and He's saying to this crowd that they are hypocrites. **They look good on the outside, but the inside is full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.** Even so, and here it comes, outwardly they appear righteous. There's I Samuel 16:7 again.... *for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

Why would you stay in a church like this? Why would you follow a guy like that when Jesus just told you based so far on Matthew 23 and the first six things that we've looked at that they're full of hypocrisy and iniquity? I'll tell you why—because you have a Bible but you don't use the Bible, and this crowd will take over your life just like the Pharisees took over the nation of Israel. It's just that simple.

7. Deceiving God's People into Leaving What God Has for Them

The scribes and the Pharisees never built anything; not one record in history of them building anything for God. Now, you have got to get this. **They deceived the people of God (the Jews) into leaving what God had for them (the Old Testament law) to become part of a non-biblical system that is completely outside any principles of the word of God any way, shape, or form.** They started with a lie and a deception and then carried on with the fake spirituality of the Pharisees. That's what they did.

8. Attacking the Real Work of God

Number seven and number eight go together. Now observe this—the way that they stayed in power once they deceived the people and tried to show the people how spiritual they really were. The scribes and Pharisees set themselves up as the real spiritual identity to the nation of Israel, and to keep the illusion and fake spirituality going, what they did (and they all do this) was prop themselves up as the real deal and then they attack the real work that God was doing through His Son, Jesus. **The Pharisees will always prop themselves up with a fake spirituality and then attack the real work of God.** That's what they do all through history. You have got to see that.

They were telling people that Jesus and His ministry, based on the word of God, was not the real spiritual thing; that Jesus was not really the Son of God; that He wasn't really their Messiah. They attacked Him, they lied about Him, they formed a conspiracy against Him, and told the people that THEY were the real deal. Follow us. I'm telling you—not learning to observe will give you a lot of heartache at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

9. Your House Left Desolate

Matthew 23:38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Back in the 70's and 80's, there was an organization under the name Bill Gothard, and he put together what was commonly called Bill Gothard seminars. It was a complete non-biblical system of rules that were nowhere in the Bible, yet God's people by the tens of thousands bought into this guy. There were nationwide seminars that destroyed so many lives. It was the most blatant, legalistic, satanic system that you could ever see. Old Bill Gothard taught that if you were ever divorced, you could never do anything for God ever again. He even said if you were divorced before you got saved, you could never do anything for God again. They made divorce the unpardonable sin. In fact, churches back then created special classes for divorced people. They wanted to corral them so they wouldn't mingle with the single people. Why don't we just look at I Corinthians 7—God's answer to divorce, marriage, and remarriage for the New Testament Christian. But, no; Bill Gothard was supreme. For 20 plus years, he'd fill up the churches with 4,000 to 5,000 people; right up to when he was exposed and lost everything for the hypocrite that he was all along. That time in churches produced some of the biggest Pharisees you've ever seen. Pharisaism blinds you.

I know a national known pastor with a church of thousands of people, and his boy committed suicide. What do you do with that if you're in his church and you have problems with your kids? Are you going to go to him for advice? There has to be a standard. There has to be somebody that holds the line. It's tragic, but what is more tragic is how the kid got there. His dad can minister to everyone around the country and 5,000 people in the church, but he can't take care of his own son. That's the difference between seeing and observing.

Last Wednesday at the Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl Parade, there was a horrible massacre. It was a terrible thing. Everybody was talking on the news about the tragedy, but in my mind, I'm thinking this is the second massacre at Union Station. The first one was 1936 with Frank Nash and Pretty Boy Floyd. I'm listening, but everybody's missing the point. They talk about the gun

violence in Kansas City and the gangs in Kansas City, but let me ask you this—where were those kids' parents? There lies the problem. That's the difference between seeing and observing. They don't go far enough to get to the end of the problem.

The other night I saw a candlelight vigil, and this is not a criticism. If people want to express their emotions and feelings that way—I'm okay with that. But I look at it from the Bible. When I see any candlelight vigil where some tragedy happened, you know what goes through my mind? **A candlelight vigil is reactive—after it has happened. For me, the seven-pronged candlestick of the Holy Spirit of God is proactive.** You get the Holy Spirit of God through the word of God and the light of that candlestick in their lives, and you won't have to have a candlelight service. It's the difference between seeing it and observing it; understanding what the real problem is and how to solve the problem. You don't solve the problem by taking the guns away—then they'll stab each other. You've got to change man's heart, or nothing is going to ever change. You don't do that with a set of rules. **You do that with the seven-pronged candlestick which is the Holy Spirit of God.**

We like to pick and choose what we follow. I Timothy 3:4 says a pastor must rule well his own house having his children in subjection with all gravity. I've seen in my own ministry, Pharisees who are proud and puffed up, and I can see that their kids are going to go down the wrong road long before those kids get there. You can't tell the parents. They think they've got it all together. Then when the kid(s) bail out and head for the world, the parents, in any church that holds a standard for your kids, can't deal with it. So they pretend that God is calling them to do something else. They'll never admit their kids need help and they've lost control. No, Pharisees can't do that. They'll always blame it on somebody else and walk out the door.

VI. Summary

Now that's the Bible definition of being a Pharisee, scribe, or a Sadducee. Your best example in the Old Testament of a Pharisee versus the right way would be David and Saul. It's clearly laid out for you now in Matthew Chapter 23.

I just went on the record answering this good fellow's question so you can learn from it, or you can reject it, but the eight woes are right from the Lord. You can apply it or you can pick and choose what you want to follow, but you'll always want to remember something. And I leave you with this. **Obviously, everyone is entitled to their own opinion; no question, but you're not entitled to your own facts. The facts will always be based on the word of God, and they will stand alone against anybody's opinion.** And to the pastor who asked this question—thank you. It gave me a chance to go on the record for my people because my people here love their kids, love their families, love the word of God, and they're smarter than that, but there are many other pastors out there who are struggling with what you're struggling with, and I hope this helps you.