



### Lesson 55 – Woes on the Pharisees

Based on Matthew 23; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 20:45-47; Luke 21:1-4

It was the last day of Christ's teaching in the temple. There stood the young Galilean, bearing no earthly honor or royal badge. Surrounding Him were priests in their rich apparel, rulers with robes and badges significant of their exalted station, and scribes with scrolls in their hands, to which they made frequent reference. Jesus stood calmly before them, with the dignity of a king. As one invested with the authority of heaven, He looked unflinchingly upon His adversaries, who had rejected and despised His teachings, and who thirsted for His life.

Challenge after challenge He had met, presenting the pure, bright truth in contrast to the darkness and errors of the priests and Pharisees. He had set before these leaders their real condition, and the retribution sure to follow persistence in their evil deeds. The warning had been faithfully given. Yet another work remained for Christ to do. Another purpose was still to be accomplished.

- 1) What types of things was Jesus teaching in the Temple on that day?

**Luke 20:46-47** Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest \_\_\_\_\_ in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at \_\_\_\_\_; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater \_\_\_\_\_.

The people looked upon the lowering countenances of the priests and elders, and there saw discomfiture and confusion. They marveled that the rulers would not believe on Jesus, when His teachings were so plain and simple. They themselves knew not what course to take. With eager anxiety they watched the movements of those whose counsel they had always followed.

In the parables which Christ had spoken, it was His purpose both to warn the rulers and to instruct the people who were willing to be taught. But there was need to speak yet more plainly. Through their reverence for tradition and their blind faith in a corrupt priesthood, the people were enslaved. These chains Christ must break. The character of the priests, rulers, and Pharisees must be more fully exposed.

- 2) What very plain words did use to warn His Disciples and the people?

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

- 3) What did do they do that was wrong?

**Matthew 23:4-7** For they bind heavy \_\_\_\_\_ and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their \_\_\_\_\_. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

To make a show of their piety was their constant aim.

- 4) Where did the Pharisees get the idea of a phylactery?

**Deuteronomy 6:8** And thou shalt bind them (God's Words) for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine \_\_\_\_\_.

They were accordingly written upon strips of parchment and bound in a conspicuous manner about the head and wrists. But this did not cause the law of God to take a firmer hold of the mind and heart. These parchments were worn merely as badges, to attract attention.



5) What did Jesus say about men receiving titles?

**Matthew 23:8-11** But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your \_\_\_\_\_, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_.

In such plain words the Saviour revealed the selfish ambition that was ever reaching for place and power, displaying a mock humility, while the heart was filled with avarice and envy.

6) Who alone is worthy to be given a title?

**Psalms 111:9** He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and \_\_\_\_\_ is his name.

7) What did Jesus pointedly bring up?

**Matthew 23:13** But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye \_\_\_\_\_ the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

By perverting the Scriptures, the priests and lawyers blinded the minds of those who would otherwise have received a knowledge of Christ's kingdom, and that inward, divine life which is essential to true holiness.

8) What did Jesus follow that with?

**Matthew 23:14** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' \_\_\_\_\_, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater \_\_\_\_\_.

The Pharisees had great influence with the people, and of this they took advantage to serve their own interests. They gained the confidence of pious widows and then represented it as a duty for them to devote their property to religious purposes. Having secured control of their money, the wily schemers used it for their own benefit. To cover their dishonesty, they offered long prayers in public and made a great show of piety.

9) While Jesus was teaching the people what did Jesus observe?

**Mark 12:41-42** And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast \_\_\_\_\_ into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two \_\_\_\_\_, which make a farthing.

His countenance lighted as He saw a poor widow approach hesitatingly, as though fearful of being observed. As the rich and haughty swept by, to deposit their offerings, she shrank back as if hardly daring to venture farther. And yet she longed to do something, little though it might be, for the cause she loved. She looked at the gift in her hand. It was very small in comparison with the gifts of those around her, yet it was her all.

10) What did He tell the Disciples about it?

**Mark 12:43-44** And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than \_\_\_\_\_ they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her \_\_\_\_\_.

Tears of joy filled her eyes as she felt that her act was understood and appreciated. Jesus understood her motive. She believed the service of the temple to be of God's appointment, and she was anxious to do her utmost to sustain it. She did what she could, and her act was to be a monument to her memory through all time, and her joy in eternity. Her heart went with her gift; its value was estimated, not by the worth of the coin, but by the love to God and the interest in His work that had prompted the deed.



The "two mites which make a farthing" have brought to God's treasury an amount of money far greater than the contributions of those rich Jews. The influence of that little gift has been like a stream, small in its beginning, but widening and deepening as it flowed down through the ages. In a thousand ways it has contributed to the relief of the poor and the spread of the gospel. Her example of self-sacrifice has acted and reacted upon thousands of hearts in every land and in every age.

11) After the woman left with joy in her heart, what did Jesus follow with?

**Matthew 23:16-17** Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

**Matthew 23:18-19** And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is \_\_\_\_\_; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and \_\_\_\_\_: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

The priests interpreted God's requirements according to their own false and narrow standard. They presumed to make nice distinctions as to the comparative guilt of various sins, passing over some lightly, and treating others of perhaps less consequence as unpardonable. For a money, consideration they excused persons from their vows. And for large sums of money, they sometimes passed over aggravated crimes. At the same time these priests and rulers would in other cases pronounce severe judgment for trivial offenses.

12) What did Jesus find important?

**Matthew 23:23** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have \_\_\_\_\_ the weightier matters of the law, judgment, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

They occupied men's minds with trifling distinctions and turned their attention from essential truths. The weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and truth, were neglected.

13) How did Jesus feel about their brand of religion?

**Matthew 23:24** Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a \_\_\_\_\_.

14) What did Jesus say about the religion of the day?

**Matthew 23:27-28** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful \_\_\_\_\_, but are within full of dead men's \_\_\_\_\_, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

15) What did Jesus have to say about those who say "It wasn't me"?

**Matthew 23:30-31** And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been \_\_\_\_\_ with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which \_\_\_\_\_ the prophets.

People wonder at the blindness of the Jews in rejecting Christ. Had we lived in His day, they declare, we would gladly have received His teaching; we would never have been partakers in the guilt of those who rejected the Saviour. But when obedience to God requires self-denial and humiliation, these very persons stifle their convictions and refuse obedience. Thus, they manifest the same spirit as did the Pharisees whom Christ condemned.

16) How did Jesus reveal that they plotted to kill Him?

**Matthew 23:32** Fill ye up then the \_\_\_\_\_ of your fathers.

The sin of the priests and rulers was greater than that of any preceding generation. By their rejection of the Saviour, they were making themselves responsible for the blood of all the righteous men slain from Abel to Christ. They were about to fill to overflowing their cup of iniquity. And soon it was to be poured upon their heads in retributive justice.



17) How did Jesus describe it?

**Matthew 23:35-36** That upon \_\_\_\_\_ 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, \_\_\_\_\_ these things shall come upon this generation.

The scribes and Pharisees who listened to Jesus knew that His words were true. They knew how the prophet Zacharias had been slain. While the words of warning from God were upon his lips, a satanic fury seized the apostate king, and at his command the prophet was put to death. His blood had imprinted itself upon the very stones of the temple court and could not be erased.

18) What prophetic Words did Jesus give about the New Testament Church?

**Matthew 23:34** 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 \_\_\_\_\_ them from city to city:

Prophets and wise men, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, - Stephen, James, and many others, - would be condemned and slain. With hand uplifted to heaven, and a divine light enshrouding His person, Christ spoke as a judge to those before Him. His voice, that had so often been heard in gentleness and entreaty, was now heard in rebuke and condemnation. The listeners shuddered. Never was the impression made by His words and His look to be effaced.

Christ's indignation was directed against the hypocrisy, the gross sins, by which men were destroying their own souls, deceiving the people and dishonoring God. In the specious deceptive reasoning of the priests and rulers He discerned the working of satanic agencies. Keen and searching had been His denunciation of sin; but He spoke no words of retaliation. He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness; but He manifested no irritated temper. So, the Christian who lives in harmony with God, possessing the sweet attributes of love and mercy, will feel a righteous indignation against sin; but he will not be roused by passion to revile those who revile him.

19) What lament did Jesus cry out as Jerusalem heard her last warning?

**Matthew 23:37-38** 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 \_\_\_\_\_ gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you \_\_\_\_\_.

The gems of truth that fell from Christ's lips on that eventful day were treasured in many hearts. For them new thoughts started into life, new aspirations were awakened, and a new history began. After the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, these persons came to the front and fulfilled their divine commission with a wisdom and zeal corresponding to the greatness of the work. They bore a message that appealed to the hearts of men, weakening the old superstitions that had long dwarfed the lives of thousands. Before their testimony human theories and philosophies became as idle fables. Mighty were the results flowing from the words of the Saviour to that wondering, awestruck crowd in the temple at Jerusalem.

Hitherto He had called the temple His Father's house; but now, as the Son of God should pass out from those walls, God's presence would be withdrawn forever from the temple built to His glory. Henceforth its ceremonies would be meaningless, its services a mockery.

20) What Prophetic Word did Jesus leave about earthly Jerusalem?

**Matthew 23:39** For I say unto you, Ye shall not \_\_\_\_\_ me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

21) What was He referring to?

**Revelation 21:2-3** And I John saw the holy city, new \_\_\_\_\_, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will \_\_\_\_\_ with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.