



THE VOICE OF EVANGELISM INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

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WOE YOU SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

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We want to take our Scripture text today from **Matthew 23:1-4**, "**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, they observe and do; but do you not after their works: for they say, and do not. 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.**"

The scribes and most of the Pharisees who challenged Jesus were members of a learned class in Israel who studied the Scriptures and served as copyist, editors, and teachers. The era of the scribes began after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon. This was the appointed time that Ezra the scribe, a truly God ordained scribe, directed that the Law be read before the entire nation: **Nehemiah 8:1-2**, "**And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all they could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.**" Ezra was signaling a return to its exact observance of all the laws and rights that had been given to Israel by the law giver Moses. Jesus said that Moses was the law-giver found here in **John 1: 17**, "**For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.**" At first the priest was responsible for the scientific study

and professional communication of this legal code. But the job eventually was passed to the scribes. Unfortunately, their official interpretation of the meaning of the Law soon became more important than the Law itself. This is where bigotry and self-righteousness begins to blossom within Christianity. Men begin to impose their interpretation of the Scriptures over what the Scriptures are actually telling us. No man has any private interpretation of the Word of God. But we live in an hour in which many are twisting the Scriptures to their own demise and destruction. We know this to be factual because the apostle Peter declared in **2nd Peter 3:15-16**, "**And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.**" Please, do not ever under estimate the chicanery that Satan seeks to impose upon the people of God? This is where we get the term legalism in Christianity. From their position and strength, the scribes began to enforce their rules and practices with binding authority. By the time of Jesus, they had become a new upper class. Large numbers of priest in Jerusalem joined the profession, including the Jewish historian, Josephus. Jesus admonished us in our Scripture text that the scribes and the Pharisees would say one thing but in retrospect do another, therefore the entire

twenty third chapter of Matthew is filled with woes to the scribes and Pharisees. The word woe in the Greek simply means, great will be your grief. It is absolutely astounding at the usurpation of religious leaders not only in Jesus's day, but in our day. Jesus said these Pharisees would bind heavy burdens grievous to be carried and they would seek to lay these burdens upon men's shoulders; but they being the scribes and Pharisees would never attempt to move one of those burdens with one of their fingers! That, my friend, is the absolute personification of a hypocrite? A hypocrite is someone who feigns one thing but behind their mask they portray another. Others came from the ordinary classes, including merchants, carpenters, tentmakers, and every day laborers. Most of the ordinary classes probably kept their former occupations, since scribes were not paid for their services and had to earn a living in other ways. Those who sought to be a scribe went through a set course of study for several years, centered at Jerusalem. Students were in continual contact with the teacher, listening to his instruction. The disciples-scribe first had to master all the traditional material along with a unique method of interpretation. The purpose was to give the apprentice competence in making decisions on questions of religious legislation and justice. Without a doubt, corruption began to pervade the purported sacred institution and injustices and inequities exploded exponentially. Because of this Jesus warned us of the leaven of the Pharisees found here in **Luke 12:1**, "**Beware of the leaven of the**

Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

Looking closely at the word *hypocrite* here: it not only demonstrates "false pretense", but disrespect and wickedness. If we are not careful, we can become easily ensnared by false doctrine and teaching by blind guides. Within this purported course of study, according to tradition, there were "secrets" of interpretation to be learned, forbidden degrees of knowledge, which were not to be expounded before three or more persons. It sounds like the so-called "secret society" with which we have come to learn and hear about lately. There are always those in our midst who are vain and worthless believing they are far superior to the humble Christian who seeks to walk in the spirit of Christ. Satan would have us believe we are ignorant and the world and its hypocrites have all the answers. Some chapters in the Bible-Torah were to be explained only by sages, and certain teachings were hidden from the masses because they could not be trusted to understand and apply the law correctly. I want to share the verse that indicts the hypocrisy of those who feel superior to the remaining body of Christ found in **2nd Peter 1:20, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."** The word interpretation here in the Greek simply means explanation or application. Be careful to not lend your hearing to those who try to apply and explain the Word of God contrary to the leadership of the Holy Ghost. God the Father gave us two forms of truth, the Word of God and the Holy Ghost: both are true. The Psalmist declared in **Psalms 119:160, "Thy word is true from the beginning."** Then Christ declared in **John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."** To be ordained in this purported august institution required constant study, often beginning at age 14 and continuing until the age of 40. Once qualified, scribes could

then act as judges, be called rabbis, and occupy positions in law, government, and education. Paul the apostle declared that knowledge could puff a person up if not careful. This, friend, is exactly what you are witnessing in our government today. Some today pursue higher learning and education so that they might become a part of the corrupt institutions and continue to be purveyors of lies and false doctrine. These deceivers are fixed within our government all the while infiltrating our schools of theology. This is why every generation loses a measure of quality in wholesome doctrine and teachings. Regretfully, every new generation seems to take away a portion of truth from our very foundation if we do not stop them. It has been said: in the beginning the first generation receives the truth, the second generation becomes the purveyors of that truth, the third generation memorializes that truth, and the fourth generation knows nothing about that truth. Stop and ask yourself a question: what place or generation do you find yourself concerning the truth? Where are we as a nation and the church concerning the truth? These scribes and Pharisees joined the chief priest and aristocratic families who made up the Jewish Council. They were held in great esteem by the people, as only ordained teachers could transmit and create the tradition. To demonstrate the corruptness look with me please at **Acts 4:4-6, "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the rulers, and elders, and scribes, And Annas the high priest, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem."** What you have just read addresses the Sanhedrin or the grand Council of the Jews. The fact that they were kindred simply means they were all family. The fact that they were family allowed them to

keep a stronghold within the internal leadership. Satan never likes to forfeit his power once he has gained control. Sometimes the Gospels refer to scribes as lawyers, a title which identified them as experts in the Mosaic Law: **Matthew 22:35, "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all my heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."** This lawyer being a scribe or Pharisee thought he would tempt Christ by luring him into a trap question. Jesus declared, if you will love your neighbor as yourself you have completely fulfilled the Mosaic Law. Between the two groups the Pharisees and the scribes they developed attitudes of pride based upon their professional privileges. Jesus strongly warned against that posture and boldly attacked the religious hypocrisy of those religious leaders. I want to encourage you today to not fall into legalism but to be led by the Holy Spirit of God. Any type of legalism is nothing but sheer bondage. Whom the Son hath set free is free indeed! Embrace your Godly freedom and do not become entangled with the world a second time. Thank you for allowing us to come into your home, or place of business, and heart each and every week. Please keep our president and nation in prayer daily. Look for an open door in the coming days.

We Serving With You All,

Pastor / Evangelist David W. Lankford