

## Matthew 23:1-4 A Warning from Jesus

Introduction: Later in this chapter Jesus gave the scribes and Pharisees the most severe tongue lashing imaginable. But before He says anything else to them, talks about them. He issues a warning about them.

### I. To whom the warning was given, verse 1.

- A. Jesus had been talking to various groups of Jewish leaders, but temporarily He turns from them.
- B. He addresses the multitude in general.
  - 1. These are the people influenced the most by the scribes and Pharisees.
  - 2. These are the people who were most accustomed to looking to the scribes and Pharisees for leadership.
  - 3. But they are people about whom Jesus was concerned and so He gave them warning.
- C. He addresses also His disciples.
  - 1. Like others in Israel, all of their lives they had looked to the Pharisees for spiritual guidance.
  - 2. However for about three years they had been under the guidance of Jesus.
  - 3. Before going off the scene He warned His disciples not to go back to the scribes and Pharisees for leadership.

### II. Who the warning was about, verse 2.

- A. We have already noted that it was about the scribes and Pharisees.
- B. Jesus says that they "sit in Moses' seat."
  - 1. Moses was the giver of the Law of God.
  - 2. The scribes and Pharisees were the recognized teachers concerning the Law of Moses.
  - 3. Every sabbath day it was the scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat and read and explained some portion of Old Testament scripture.
  - 4. They were the rabbis of Israel.

### III. What the warning was about, verses 3-4.

- A. Jesus endorsed the scriptures which they would read and try to explain, verse 3a.
  - 1. This is not to be taken as a blanket endorsement which would include the many traditions of the Pharisees, Matthew 15:2, 3, 6.
  - 2. He does give a blanket endorsement of the Holy Scripture even though it was read by unholy men.
- B. The problem was that the scribes and Pharisees were good at telling others what to do but they themselves would no do, verse 3b.
  - 1. It was bad enough that they would tell others and not do themselves.
  - 2. What was worse is that they would not even try, verse 4.
  - 3. What do you call a person like that? A hypocrite? (That is what Jesus calls him too.)
  - 4. Every preacher and teacher ought to be able to say, "You try to live your life the way I try to live mine." (Anything less is hypocrisy.)

### IV. How the warning applies today.

- A. The warning does not mean that we should necessarily turn from a leader just because he makes a mistake. (If we did, what leader could we follow?)
- B. The warning does mean that we are to be careful not to follow Christian leaders who make no effort to put into practice the teaching of God's word.

1. It is not enough to preach and teach God's word; it is to be lived.
  2. The preacher and teacher is to lead the way and set the example.  
(At the very least, he is to try.)
- C. The warning certainly means that we are to be on the watch for religious leaders who preach and teach that it is necessary to keep the Law in order to be saved.
1. Salvation does not depend on our keeping of the Law, Ephesians 2:9; Titus 3:5;  
Galatians 2:16; 2:21; 3:11.
  2. Yet how many religious teachers teach that it is?
  3. How many preachers preach that it is?
  4. How many churches hold to that idea as their basic doctrine?
  5. How many denominations hold to that doctrine?
- D. How many who claim that the keeping of the Law is necessary to salvation keep it?
1. None! Not one single one.
  2. If it were necessary, they would not make it.
  3. Nor would anybody else.
- E. The way of salvation is repentance and faith, Acts 20:21. (If any sinner will repent and trust Jesus to save his unworthy soul, Jesus will save him.)
- F. To live for Jesus. (Anyone who is saved ought to love Jesus enough to want to live good and do right.)

Conclusion:

1. Are you saved?
2. If not, then trust Jesus now to save you.
3. If you are saved, live for Jesus.

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