

## Matthew 23:5-7 Seeking to be Seen of Men

Introduction: In verse 1 Jesus began to warn the multitude and His disciples against the scribes and Pharisees. In our text He continues that warning.

### I. The motivating factor in all their actions, verse 5a.

- A. "But all their works they do for to be seen of men..."
- B. This was not only the prime motive in all their other activity, but also of their religious activity.
- C. A man's chief concern should be about pleasing God, especially in his religious activity. (When one sings, prays, gives, preaches, teaches, etc., it should be to please God and honor Him and not bring the praises of men on self.)

### II. Classic examples, verse 5b.

- A. They make broad their phylacteries.
  - 1. Phylacteries were small leather pouches with parchments of Scripture folded and inserted inside.
  - 2. These were worn as a misunderstanding of some Old Testament Scripture.
    - a. Exodus 13:9 and 16 instructed that their deliverance from Egypt was to be a sign on their hands and frontlets before their eyes.
    - b. Deuteronomy 6:8-9 instructed that God's words were to be bound on their hands and as frontlets before their eyes.
    - c. These were figurative expressions meaning that their hands were to be guided and their eyes guided by a remembrance of God's deliverance and the teachings of His word.
    - d. But the Jews began to literally wear the parchments with certain Scriptures inside.
  - 3. Tradition began to affect the way they wore them.
    - a. They wore one on the forehead fastened with a leather strap tied behind the head.
    - b. They wore the other tied at the bend of the left arm fastened with a knot which looked like one of the Hebrew letters. The long leather strap was wrapped around the forearm and tied at the hand.
  - 4. The people wore these everyday to the morning prayer services and sometimes the evening service.
  - 5. Some of the people came to think of them as having power to protect and bring blessings.
- B. The border of the garments spoken of by Jesus was a ribbon worn by all Jews as commanded by the Lord, Numbers 15:38-40; Deuteronomy 22:1-2.
  - 1. It was an identifying mark of the Israelite wherever he was.
  - 2. It was a constant reminder that he was to do the will of God all his life.
- C. The scribes and Pharisees made their phylacteries bigger; they made the leather straps wider and they made the blue ribbons on the border wider.
  - 1. They wanted to impress everybody that they were so much more religious and devoted to God than others.
  - 2. If little pouches and little borders made you religious then big ones made you super sanctimonious.

### III. Other examples.

- A. At the religious feasts they tried to arrange it so that they would have the seats of honor, verse 6. (They were offended if they did not get them.)
- B. They did the same thing at the synagogue, verse 6.
- C. At the market places they loved to be greeted with titles which gave them honor, verse 7.

### IV. The reason Jesus gave this warning.

- A. He warned the multitude and He warned His disciples lest they should follow their evil

leadership. (It does make a difference what kind of religious leadership we follow and what kind we train our children to follow.)

- B. If Jesus were here today He would surely warn the people of America and His disciples in particular against much of the religious leadership in our land. (He is surely not pleased with religious leaders who deny the inspiration of the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus, the bodily return of Jesus, and the moral standards of God's word.)
- C. Jesus certainly does not want men today to try, as the Pharisees did, to get to heaven by our own works of righteousness.
  - 1. It takes genuine repentance and a genuine faith in Jesus to get saved.
  - 2. Men may look on the outside, but God sees the heart.
- D. Then after one is saved, God wants him to live a life genuinely dedicated to God.
  - 1. It is not how other people see you that determines how good a Christian you are.
  - 2. It is how God sees you.
- E. God does want saved people to serve him, but He does not want them to serve him in order to get the praises of men, I Corinthians 10:31.

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