

## **BEWARE OF BLIND LEADERS**

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Part of the battle for our minds is to know The Truth. **Jesus said it's the truth that we know that sets us free.**

**GOD'S WORD IS TRUTH.** The better we know God's Word — the sharper and more effective our "sword" will be!

Last week we highlighted the need to watch out for deception — especially from **customs and traditions** that often "grow up" around The Bible — around The Truth (and can blunt our swords).

**It was a problem in Jesus' day. Religious teachers taught traditions that made The Word of God of no effect!** That is serious! Could be life and death!

That hasn't changed today — similar problems exist today in church circles!

**Let's have a look at the Pharisees ... who were a major influence in Jesus' day — and have their counterparts today. So ... relevant to us.**

### **Matthew 23:1-3**

- 1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,
- 2 saying: "**The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.** (*"Sit in Moses' seat" = authority*)
- 3 "**Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.**

### **Matthew 23:2 NASB**

2 saying: "**The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;**

**DO WHAT THEY SAY!**

So — should we do what the Pharisees say?

### **The Pharisees teach:**

- **Passover is on the evening of 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan**
- **Pentecost is on Sivan 6<sup>th</sup>**

**We don't do that!** Are we disobeying Jesus' instructions?

We'll come back to that later!

### **First of all — who were the Pharisees?**

They saw themselves as educators of the people. They controlled the synagogues ... which is where most people would have heard God's Word. **In Jesus' day — there were about 2.5 million Jews in the Holy Land. The Pharisees numbered about 6,000 (as per Josephus) — so — about 1/5<sup>th</sup> of 1%.**

Most of the Jews back then weren't very religious. The synagogue in Nazareth could only hold about 75 people — though the city had in excess of 15,000 people.

The Pharisees were made up of teachers ... politicians ... businessmen ... ministers — and even included women.

They saw themselves as an exclusive fraternity — a closed group of self-important people — sticklers for Levitical purity and strict observers of religious duties.

**They came to believe that the scriptures were out-of-date. They were insufficient for salvation.**

**They eventually created thousands of extra rules that people needed to follow. The Talmud is about 75 volumes long.**

**According to the Talmud — the sayings of the elders carry more weight than scripture!**

The Talmud is what they base their beliefs on today.

### **Mark 7:1-13**

1 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.

2 Now **when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault.**

3 **For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.** (*Their teachings*)

4 **When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.** (*In this ritual way*) And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, **"Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"**

6 He answered and said to them, **"Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:**

**'This people honours Me with their lips,  
But their heart is far from Me.**

**7 And in vain they worship Me,**

**Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'**

8 **"For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."**

9 He said to them, **"All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."**

10 "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

11 "But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"--' (that is, a gift to God),

12 "then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,

13 **"making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down.** And many such things you do."

**The washing of hands had nothing to do with hygiene. It was to do with ritual purity. Their teachings make God's Word of no effect! They nullify God's Word.**

So — should we heed and respect teachings which contradict and nullify God's Word?

It still happens today in many churches. **Church “traditions” often carry greater weight than scripture.** Think of Christmas! Where is the scripture in the Bible showing the celebration of Christmas? The Immortal Soul ... infant baptism ... Sunday church-going ... birthdays — are they in scripture?

### **John 5:36-47**

36 "But I have a greater **witness** than John's; **for the works which the Father has given Me to finish — the very works that I do — bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.**

37 "**And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me.** You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.

38 "**But you do not have His word abiding in you,** because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.

39 "**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.**

40 "**But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.**

41 "I do not receive honor from men.

42 "But I know you, that **you do not have the love of God in you. (You Pharisees)**

43 "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.

44 "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?

45 "Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you — Moses, in whom you trust.

46 "**For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.**

47 "**But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"**

**They SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES — but — don't recognise The Messiah!**

**Verses 46-47: They don't believe The Torah!! They still don't today. It's myth. They look to their traditions.**

Listen to these men?? It doesn't sound right. Yet — didn't Jesus command us to in Matthew 23:3?

### **Luke 16:10-15**

10 "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

11 **"Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"**

12 "And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?"

13 **"No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon.**"**

14 Now **the Pharisees, who were lovers of money**, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. (*"Derided" ... turned up their nose at Jesus*)

15 **And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God"**

**The Pharisees were LOVERS OF MONEY — a root of all kinds of evil!**

They were an abomination in God's sight. Are we supposed to heed these guys?

### **Luke 18:9-14**

9 Also **He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:**

10 **"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.**

11 **"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.**

12 **'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'**

13 "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

**The Pharisee PRAYED WITH HIMSELF!!**

**He was PROUD AND SPIRITUALLY BLIND!!**

**Matthew 16:1-12**

**1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven.**

2 He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red';

3 "and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' **Hypocrites!** You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.

4 "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.

5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

**6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."**

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"

9 "Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?"

10 "Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?"

11 "How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? — but to **beware of the leaven of the**

**Pharisees and Sadducees."**

**12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread,** but of **the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

**TAKE HEED! BEWARE! WATCH OUT!**

**BEWARE THE LEAVEN — THE TEACHING OF THE PHARISEES!**

Like leaven — it spreads and contaminates.

### **Matthew 12:22-27**

22 **Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw.**

23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

24 Now **when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."**

25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

26 "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

27 "And **if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out?** Therefore they shall be your judges.

**They accused Jesus of using the power of the Devil!**

### **Matthew 12:31-32**

31 **"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.**

32 "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but **whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.**

### **UNPARDONABLE SIN?**

### **Matthew 12:33-37**

33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.

34 **"Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.**

35 **"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.**

36 "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

37 "For **by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.**"

**VIPERS! SNAKES! EVIL — WITH EVIL HEARTS AND EVIL WORDS!**

It doesn't look to me that these people should be our guides and mentors.

One man wrote to me that the Apostle Paul was a Pharisee and used his training to great advantage when he was converted. Is that true?

Let's have a look at what Paul himself said:

**Galatians 1:6-7**

6 **I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,**

7 **which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.**

**Galatians 1:11-14**

11 But **I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.**

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but **it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, (*KJV: "Jewish religion"*) how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.

14 **And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.**

Paul was an expert in Judaism — the teachings of the Talmud — not scripture — the thousands of rules and traditions of the sages.

**Philippians 3:2-9**

2 **Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!**



3 **For we are the (TRUE) circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.**

4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. **If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:**

5 **circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law (of Judaism) , a Pharisee;**

6 **concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.**

7 **But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.**

8 **Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ**

9 and be found in Him, **not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;**

Former conduct — ways — the life of a Pharisee = RUBBISH!!  
(KJV:Dung!)

**Paul didn't consider the teachings of the Pharisees to be valuable! They were Dung!**

It led him to persecute — arrest — and kill the true saints. **Zealously opposed to Jesus!**

In 2 Corinthians:3 Paul explains that even today a “veil” lies over the Jews' hearts such that they cannot understand the Old Testament. **The veil is only removed when you turn to Jesus.**

**So the Pharisees — according to Paul — can't understand The Truth.**

Let's have a closer look at Matthew Chapter 23.

### **Matthew 23:13**

13 "But **woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For **you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men**; for you neither go in yourselves, **nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.** (*"WOE" is a curse from Jesus*)

The Pharisees shut up the Kingdom. One translation: "You lock people out".

### **Matthew 23:15**

15 "**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, **and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.**

Those who follow you become sons of hell. (Off to the Lake of Fire)

### **Matthew 23:16-17**

16 "**Woe to you, blind guides,** who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'

17 **Fools and blind!** For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

**BLIND GUIDES!** Who wants a blind guide?

### **Matthew 23:27-28**

27 "**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For **you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.**

28 "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, **but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

**FULL OF HYPOCRISY AND LAWLESSNESS.**

### **Matthew 23:33**

33 "**Serpents, brood of vipers!** How can you escape the condemnation of hell? (*Gehenna ... lake of Fire*)

## **SERPENTS! BUNCH OF SNAKES! TO BE CONDEMNED!**

These are blind ... lawless ... greedy ... hypocritical snakes and fools — who turn converts into sons of hell. Who don't believe the writings of Moses. No wonder Jesus warned His disciples to **BEWARE THE DOCTRINE OF THE PHARISEES!**

### **AND THESE WERE RELIGIOUS LEADERS!**

#### **Matthew 23:1-3**

1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,  
2 saying: "**The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.**  
3 "**Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.**

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2 saying: "**The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;**

Should we keep the Passover on Nisan 15 and Pentecost on Sivan 6?

Should we look to Jewish scholars for guidance (as some Hebrew Roots people do)?

### **The translation in Matthew Chapter 23 makes no sense!**

Is Jesus supposed to say "BEWARE THE DOCTRINE OF THE PHARISEES — BUT MAKE SURE YOU DO WHATEVER THEY SAY"?!!

**A grammatically correct alternative: "Whatever they tell you to observe you are observing and doing".**

#### **MY PARAPHRASE:**

**"YOU ARE FOOLISHLY LISTENING TO THE INSTRUCTION OF THESE MONEY-LOVING BLIND GUIDES — WHO WILL TURN YOU INTO A SON OF HELL AND LOCK YOU OUT OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN!!**

**DON'T DO ANYTHING THEY DO!!!**

There are bound to have been some decent Pharisees — maybe Gamaliel — maybe Nicodemus — but on the whole — they were hostile to God ... and **they made THE WORD OF GOD OF NONE EFFECT.**

Dangerous!

**Matthew 15:12-14**

12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?”

13 But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

14 **Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind.** And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

Verse 14 Jesus said “**Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind**”.

It's not sufficient that teachers are “religious” and “quote scripture” (the Devil quotes scripture to Jesus!!)

We all need to know our Bibles. Our Sword of The Spirit needs to be sharp!

**TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY!!**