

## Message #79

Matthew 23:1-12

There is nothing more dangerous and more threatening than to be classified by God as a Pharisee and scribe.

**CAREFULLY GUARD YOURSELF FROM EVER BECOMING A RELIGIOUS PHARISEE OR SCRIBE.**

The scribes were rigid students of the Law. They copied the Law and studied it and they came to be known as real O.T. scholars. The Pharisees were religious separatists. They were very strict in their approach to not only the Law, but also to men's traditions and Judaistic religion.

**CHARACTERISTIC #1** – Scribes and Pharisees seat themselves in Moses' seat. **23:2**

Moses was a God-appointed leader of the nation Israel. He did not strive to become a leader; in fact, he didn't even want to be a leader but that is what God called him to be. Notice carefully the point Jesus makes—the scribes and Pharisees have promoted themselves to His position.

**CHARACTERISTIC #2** – Scribes and Pharisees say one thing and do another. **23:3**

Now when it came to obeying the Law, Jesus did not admonish people not to obey it; in fact, He demanded that they do obey it. Here is a great definition of a hypocrite—they say one thing and do another. That is how they work and that is how they operate. They have their rules and their traditions and their man-made codes and they are always telling others what to do—but they don't do it themselves.

**CHARACTERISTIC #3** – Scribes and Pharisees heap heavy burdens on people. **23:4**

There are burdens to be borne in the work of God, but scribes and Pharisees are continually placing burdens on people that they themselves aren't willing to have.

**CHARACTERISTIC #4** – Scribes and Pharisees do all things for public notoriety. **23:5-10**

Now there are certain specific Pharisaical public actions that scribes and Pharisees love to do:

**Public Action #1** - They broadened their phylacteries. **23:5a**

Phylacteries were little leather pouches which contained four main passages of Scripture—Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Ex. 13:11-16; 13:10. The phylacteries were worn on the forehead or forearm. What the Pharisees did is they made them larger so everyone could see them and then went out in public to be noticed by men. They loved to have people say these are great spiritual men who always have their Bible verses with them.

**Public Action #2** - They lengthened the tassels on their garments. **23:5b**

The Pharisees made their religious clothing more noticeable by expanding it. They loved for people to see them wearing their religious clothing. It made them feel important. They loved to get all dressed up in religious clothing and parade in front of people so people would say, my how great and spiritual those men are. These are men who want to kill Jesus Christ and are walking around with Bibles and all dressed up in their religious suits.

**Public Action #3** - They loved places of honor at banquets. **23:6a**

They love people to look first at them, not at God. They want the best seats at the banquets. They want to be served first.

**Public Action #4** - They loved the chief seats in the synagogue. **23:6b**

These guys want to sit up front in front of the crowds. They want the religious attention.

**Public Action #5** - They love to be respectfully greeted in public places. **23:7-10**

1) They loved to be called rabbi. **23:7b**

The actual Greek word means my master teacher. Pharisees loved this title for it showed that people recognized them to be a master over them (Smith, p. 395). Jesus says all are brothers and no religious leaders should be viewed as a master over them.

2) They loved to be called father. **23:9**

The term father means they loved to be identified as being the religious father or parent. Jesus says there is only one Father and that is the Heavenly Father.

3) They loved to be called leader. **23:10**

The word “leader” is one that refers to being a guide or master teacher, like a professor (Smith, p. 223). Jesus **never** wanted His disciples to walk around with a better than thou attitude.

**(Concluding Point #1)** - The greatest among you shall be your servant.

**(Concluding Point #2)** - One who exalts himself will be humbled.

**(Concluding Point #3)** - One who humbles himself will be exalted.