

40. Jesus Warned About False Doctrine

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there are many like the scribes and Pharisees today who want to replace the Word of God with their traditions and opinions. Jesus said that such leaders will experience judgment. They not only reject the truth, but also hinder others from accepting the truth of the Word of God. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus went on to warn His disciples about the false doctrine of the Pharisees.

While Jesus was warning about the grief that the lawyers and Pharisees faced, a very large crowd of people gathered to hear Jesus teach. Luke 12:1-3 says, “In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first *of all*, ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.’” Here, we see that there were so many people gathered that they began to trample on one another.

Although there was a large crowd, the greatest concern of Jesus was to talk to His disciples. The word translated “first of all” means *first in place or first in importance*. This reminds us of the fact that the first concern of Jesus was to train His disciples, even when there was a large crowd gathered. He warned the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. The word translated “beware” means *pay attention or to listen closely*. Matthew 13:33 says, “Another parable He spoke to them: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.’” This verse reminds us that “leaven” can be used in either a good or a bad sense. The word means that *something spreads to the whole* and speaks of influence.

In this verse, the leaven of the Pharisees is called hypocrisy. In Matthew 16:12, we read, “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.” In Matthew, “leaven” speaks of the doctrine of Pharisees and speaks about all of the rules and traditions that they had added to the law. The word translated “hypocrisy” means *the acting of a stage player* and meant that they said one thing and did another. Then, Luke 11:46 says, “And He said, ‘Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.’” The Pharisees and lawyers loaded heavy burdens on others, but did not do the things that they taught because their hearts were deceitful and desperately wicked.

Jesus told His disciples that the things that He had taught them privately would one day be known by all. The things that they had talked about in the dark would be heard in the light. The things whispered in an inner room would be proclaimed from the housetops. Jesus did not want His disciples to become like the Pharisees with their hypocrisy. Instead, Jesus wanted His disciples to live what they taught. Paul summarized this thought in 1 Corinthians 11:1 which says, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.”

Jesus went on to tell His disciples not to fear those who can kill the body. Luke 12:4-7 says, ““And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”” Jesus knew that His disciples would face persecution and He did not want them to be fearful.

The only thing a person can do to a Christian is kill the body, because persecutors have no power over a person once that person is dead. In contrast, God is the one that all people need to fear; He has the power to cast those who reject the payment that Jesus made for their sins into hell. Since there was a large crowd listening as Jesus spoke to His disciples, this was a real warning to the entire group. Then, Jesus had a message of encouragement to His disciples. Two copper coins was the amount of money a person would earn by working a little more than one hour. Those two coins would be enough to buy five small birds called sparrows. Yet God knows when each one of those birds dies and falls to the ground. God does not forget any of the birds. Jesus also told the disciples that God knows the number of hairs on the head of each person. Since God keeps track of the smallest bird and also keeps track of the number of hairs on your head, you do not need to fear people. Jesus told the disciples that God had placed a much greater value on each of them than He had on many birds. The same is true today.

Jesus also promised the disciples that God would give them the words to speak when they were persecuted. Luke 12:8-12 says, ““Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”” Jesus encouraged His disciples to speak to others about Him and promised them that they did not need to worry when they were persecuted.

In these verses, Jesus promised the disciples that as they spoke to others and told them about Jesus, He would speak for them to the angels and to the Father. In contrast, those who denied Him would also be denied before the angels. These same things are true for us today. Peter may have thought of what Jesus said that day when he later wrote in 1 Peter 3:15-16, ““But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”” We are to be ready at all times to speak for Jesus to others.

Some may even blaspheme us when we speak about Jesus to them. Jesus said that even those who speak a word against Him will be forgiven when they repent. This was certainly illustrated in the life of Paul who severely persecuted the followers of Jesus until God stopped him on the road to

Damascus. Then, he became a great witness for Christ. Jesus said that only the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. John 11:47-48 says, “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, ‘What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.’” The Jewish religious leaders knew that the message of Jesus was true and Jesus had shown many signs to back up His Word. In fact, He had just raised Lazarus from the dead. Instead of accepting the signs that Jesus did, they said that Jesus had done them by the power of Satan. Luke 11:15 said, “But some of them said, ‘He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’” That same sign is recorded in Matthew 12:24-32 where Jesus warned of the danger of the blasphemy of the Spirit, because they said that the works of Jesus were being done by Satan.

Jesus also assured the disciples that they did not need to worry about what to say if the leaders of the synagogue, the magistrates or the authorities arrested them for preaching about Jesus. Instead, Jesus gave them a wonderful promise. He promised, “The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” The night of the Last Supper before His crucifixion, Jesus again reminded the disciples of this promise. John 14:26 says, “‘But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.’” Then, a little later after warning again about persecution, Jesus said in John 15:26, “‘But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.’” Jesus made it clear that the Holy Spirit would give them the words to speak when facing persecution.

In Luke 12:13-15, Jesus warned about the danger of covetousness. Those verses say, “Then one from the crowd said to Him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ But He said to him, ‘Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?’ And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’” Covetousness is a greedy desire to have more. Jesus did not come to settle disputes between brothers who had a desire to have more. Instead, Jesus came to give eternal life and the money of this world has no eternal value. Riches and possessions do not give life. In fact, 1 Timothy 6:9 says, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown in destruction and perdition.” The desire for riches destroys.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to focus on the things that have eternal value. Mark 8:36-37 says, “‘For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’” Those things that are eternal are the things that give life meaning and purpose and bring joy to our lives on this earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children why the things that have eternal value bring great meaning to your own life.