

Doctrine of Pharisees

1. The Pharisees were a religious sect that probably had their origin during the Maccabaeen period where they separated themselves from pagans and things that were ceremonially unclean. Unfortunately with the passing of time the religious zeal of the Pharisees turned to spiritual elitism and an oppressive spirit towards others. By the time of John the Baptist, and Jesus, the Pharisees were so entrenched in their own self righteousness they invoked the strongest condemnation. John called them “vipers.”
 - *Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*

2. For those who were relying upon their own goodness to merit God’s grace, Jesus said their righteousness had to exceed that of the Pharisees who tried to keep all 613 codexes of the Mosaic Law and more.
 - *Matthew 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

3. Like so many critical people, the Pharisees were basically cowardly. Rather than confront Jesus personally, the Pharisees tended to roam in spiritual wolf packs and question the Lord’s disciples knowing they were a weak point of contact to Him.
 - *Matthew 9:11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

4. As part of their religious zeal, the Pharisees would fast often though the Law required only one fast day a year, on the Day of Atonement.
 - *Matthew 9:14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?*

5. The Pharisees were quick to ascribe a source of evil to Jesus He did not possess. Such is the nature of the religious but unregenerate person today. They ascribe evil to others without foundation.
 - *Matthew 9:34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.*
 - *Matthew 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.*

Special Note.

It is possible to speak with absolute authority and assurance and be totally wrong.

6. The Pharisees were legalistic to the core and demanded that everyone else strictly adhere to the letter of the Mosaic Law and to the Oral Law of Israel as well.
 - *Matthew 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day.*
7. Murder resided in the hearts of the Pharisees.
 - *Matthew 12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.*
8. Because they lived by sight and not by faith the Pharisees demanded a sign from the Master.
 - *Matthew 12:38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.*
9. The Pharisees would raise questions, not to receive information but to challenge the authority of the Lord and to find fault with Him.
 - *Matthew 15:1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.*
10. The feelings of a Pharisee are easily offended at what is said even though it is the gospel truth.
 - *Matthew 15:12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?*
11. The Pharisees would unite with their theological enemies against Christ, so great was their hostility towards the Lord.
 - *Matthew 16:1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.*
12. Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the leaven or the doctrinal teaching of the Pharisees.
 - *Matthew 16:6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*
13. The Lord expects the leaven or doctrinal teaching of the Pharisees to be understood.
 - *Matthew 16:11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?*

14. When properly taught, the leaven or doctrinal teaching of the Pharisees can be understood.
- *Matthew 16:12 Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.*
15. When one doctrinal inquiry of entrapment of Christ did not work, the Pharisees would raise another one with the same goal in mind, to discredit the Lord.
- *Matthew 22:15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.*
 - *Matthew 19:3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*
16. Because the heart of a Pharisee is sensitive and easily offended, they listen carefully to what is said about themselves.
- *Matthew 21:45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.*
17. Pharisees take counsel of one another on their best course of strategy to discredit and hurt others including the Lord of Glory.
- *Matthew 22:34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.*
18. The Lord was not afraid to confront the Pharisees when they were gathered together.
- *Matthew 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,*
19. The Pharisees considered themselves an authority on the Law and enjoyed telling others what to do.
- *Matthew 23:2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:*
20. Jesus pronounced a series of “woes” upon the Pharisees for their hypocrisy.

Special Note.

“The Greek word for woe is *ouai*; it is hard to translate for it includes not only wrath, but also sorrow. There is righteous anger here, but it is the anger of the heart of love, broken by the stubborn blindness of men. There is not only an air of savage denunciation; there is also an atmosphere of poignant tragedy” (William Barclay).

Special Note.

“The word hypocrite occurs here again and again. Originally the Greek word *hupokrites* meant one who answers; it then came to be specially connected with the statement and answer, the dialogue, of the stage; and it is the regular Greek word for an actor. It then came to mean an actor in the worse sense of the term, a pretender, one who acts a part, one who wears a mask to cover his true feelings, one who puts on an external show while inwardly his thoughts and feelings are very different.

To Jesus the Scribes and Pharisees were men who were acting a part. What he meant was this. Their whole idea of religion consisted in outward observances, the wearing of elaborate phylacteries and tassels, the meticulous observance of the rules and regulations of the Law. But in their hearts there was bitterness and envy and pride and arrogance. To Jesus these Scribes and Pharisees were men who, under a mask of elaborate godliness, concealed hearts in which the most godless feelings and emotions held sway. And that accusation holds good in greater or lesser degree of any man who lives life on the assumption that religion consists in external observances and external acts” (William Barclay).

First Woe

- First Hypocrisy: Pretending to be concerned about the Kingdom of Heaven. *Matthew 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

Second Woe

- Second Hypocrisy: Pretending to be pious. *Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.*

Third Woe

- Third Hypocrisy: Pretending to believe in righteous gospel evangelism while instead leading people into religious Pharisaism. *Matthew 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*

Fourth Woe

- Fourth Hypocrisy: Substituting money for mercy and faith. Here is the sin of evasion. Here is the sin of fidelity to the letter of the Law while forgetting the spirit of the Law. *Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

Fifth Woe

- Fifth Hypocrisy: Pretending to be socially appealing while being scheming and greedy. Here is the sin of the magnification of matters of no importance which wreck the peace. *Matthew 23:25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.*

Sixth Woe

- Sixth Hypocrisy: Pretending to be outwardly morally good while being inwardly corrupt. *Matthew 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

Special Note.

“As Shakespeare had it, a man may smile and smile and be a villain. A man may walk with bowed head and reverent steps and folded hands in the posture of humility, and all the time be looking down with cold contempt on those whom he regards as sinners. His very humility may be the pose of pride; and, as he walks so humbly, he may be thinking with relish of the picture of piety which he presents to those who are watching him. There is nothing harder than for a good man not to know that he is good; and once he knows he is good, his goodness is gone, however he may appear to men from the outside” (William Barclay).

Seventh Woe

- Seventh Hypocrisy: Pretending to honor the prophets while persecuting the righteous. Here is the sin of murder. *Matthew 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,*

21. The Pharisees used every political and religious resource to advance their evil agenda.

- *Matthew 27:62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,*

22. The Pharisees were critical not only of publicans and sinners but anyone who showed mercy and kindness to them, as Jesus did.

- *Mark 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?*

23. The Pharisees did not hesitate to use guilt to control the behavior of others.

- *Mark 2:18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?*
24. The first and foremost appeal of the Pharisee was to the Law, not to the needs of the individual.
- *Mark 2:24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?*
25. A willingness to commit a literal murder resided inside the soul of the Pharisee.
- *Mark 3:6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.*
26. Sometimes the Pharisees did raise legitimate theological questions, though their intent was far from noble.
- *Luke 5:21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?*
27. Like all self-righteous individuals, the Pharisees rejected the judgment of God against themselves.
- *Luke 7:30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.*
28. Despite His harsh condemnation of the Pharisees, the Lord was gracious and fellowshiped with individuals when possible.
- *Luke 7:36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.*
- Still, they watched Him.
- *Luke 14:1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched him.*
29. In summary, the leaven or doctrine of the Pharisees can be classified as that of hypocrisy.
- *Luke 12:1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*
30. Not every Pharisee rejected Jesus Christ. Some saw Him as a teacher and were interested in His message; others did not wish to see the Lord hurt.

- *John 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*
 - *Luke 13:31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.*
31. As the Pharisees would ask penetrating questions of Christ, so Jesus would ask the same of them.
- *Luke 14:3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?*
32. The great crime of Jesus, in the eyes of the Pharisees, was that Christ dared to receive sinners and eat with them.
- *Luke 15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*
33. In addition to being hypocrites, murderers, and self righteous, the Pharisees were covetous.
- *Luke 16:14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.*
34. Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus could answer any question posed to Him.
- *Luke 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:*
35. Feigning respect for Jesus by calling Him “Master”, the Pharisees really wanted to control the Lord and tell Him what to do.
- *Luke 19:39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.*
36. Jesus understood that jealousy in the heart of the Pharisees produced hatred and murder in their heart and danger for Himself.
- *John 4:1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) 3 He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.*

37. Being sensitive to social sentiment, the Pharisees used civil unrest to their advantage, especially when it seemed the Lord was growing in popularity among the people.
- *John 7:31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done? 32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.*
38. By use of insulting and intimidating language the Pharisees tried to control others.
- *John 7:45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? 46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. 47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? 48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?*
39. The Pharisees did not hesitate to pass moral judgment on others though their own hearts were full of corruption.
- *John 8:3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,*
40. Growing in unholy boldness, the Pharisees did not hesitate to not only reject but contradict the words of Christ.
- *John 8:13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.*
 - *John 9:16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.*
41. So full of legalism were the Pharisees, they could not rejoice even when a blind man was made to see.
- *John 9:13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. 14 And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. 15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.*
42. In their spiritual arrogance, the Pharisees could not comprehend they were spiritually blind.
- *John 9:40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?*

43. Because of their fear of the Pharisees, many who believed in Christ were afraid to confess their faith.

- *John 12:42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:*

44. Though Rome officially executed Jesus, it was the chief priests and the Pharisees who had the Lord of Glory arrested.

- *John 18:3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

45. In matchless marvelous grace some of the Pharisees came to faith in Christ following His resurrection, but found it difficult to give up their legalism.

- *Acts 15:5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses.*

46. In certain theological areas, the Pharisees were not wrong. They believed in the resurrection from the dead while the liberal Sadducees did not.

- *Acts 23:6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. 9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.*