

# Hypocrisy Condemned

**Key Verse:** “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.”  
—Luke 11:44

**Selected Scripture:**  
Luke 11:37-44

**THE PHARISEES WERE THE** ultimate religious people among the Jews during Christ’s life on earth. In their supposed righteous zeal, over time they had devised an intricate system of oral tradition to keep them from breaking the Mosaic Law. One might suppose that with such a desire to obey God, they would have recognized the perfect obedience of Jesus and affirmed and followed him. Yet they constantly

proved to be his most bitter and relentless opponents.

In today’s lesson we find Jesus accepting an invitation to dine in the home of a Pharisee. (Luke 11:37) Jesus had just declared the Jews a wicked generation for asking once again for a sign to prove his claims about being the son of God. He said the only sign they needed was that of Jonah.—vss. 29,30,32; Matt. 12:40

We quote the narrative of what follows from today’s Selected Scripture: “The Pharisee noticed with some surprise that he did not wash before the meal. But the Lord said to him, You Pharisees are fond of cleaning the outside of your cups and dishes, but inside yourselves you are full of greed and wickedness!” (Luke 11:38,39, *J.B. Phillips New Testament*) When it came to following the rules, the Pharisees excelled, but they ignored the greater importance of demonstrating mercy, seeking justice, and practicing faithfulness. They sought the chief seats in

the synagogue and salutations in the marketplaces, but lacked benevolence toward those they served.—vs. 43

Later in Luke's Gospel Jesus identifies another of the failings of the Pharisees as that of covetousness—that is, according to the Greek, they were “money-lovers.” (Luke 16:14) Near the end of his earthly ministry, the Lord similarly told the scribes that their love of money led them to disregard the property rights of others. “Ye devour widows' houses,” meaning that they would take advantage of widows to accumulate property for themselves.—Matt. 23:14; Mark 12:40

Today's Key Verse is a condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees, but also a warning to believers. Jesus spoke similar words in 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.” Here the graves become invisible, and the risk is that of being in the presence of what is corrupt without knowing. As one might unconsciously walk over a grave concealed from view, and thus be a victim of ceremonial defilement, so the righteous-looking exterior of the religious leaders of Jesus' day kept people from perceiving the evil influences they contracted from encountering such corruption.

Attitudes and practices such as those of the scribes and Pharisees still exist today, even among professed Christians. Many believe that simply showing up for Sunday services makes you right with God, yet in daily life they largely ignore important scriptural principles such as doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. (Mic. 6:8) Others read the Bible only to justify certain pre-conceived convictions, rather than to be conformed to the will of God. (Rom. 12:2) Let us not be deceived by such practices, for “God is not mocked. ... He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”—Gal. 6:7,8 ■