



The Kingdom Coming

Religious Leaders and the Abuse of Authority

Sunday, November 19/23 --- Matthew 23:1 – 12

Ah shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?... Behold, I am against the shepherds... I will rescue my sheep from their mouths... Behold, I myself will search for My sheep and will seek them out... I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep...

- Ezekiel 34:2, 10 – 11, 15

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to His disciples, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.'...

- Matthew 23:1 – 2

Authority structures are a great blessing when discharged faithfully. But often 'authority' is seen as a dirty word because of its abuse, whether in marriage, family, government, business... or even church.

God gives pastors / leaders a borrowed authority for the shepherding of souls and the building up of His church. But that authority is abused sometimes, as it was in Jesus' day. Some of the Lord's most scathing words were reserved for Israel's religious leaders who 'fleeced the sheep' and looked out for themselves. Today and next week we look at what Jesus had to say.

Sermon Outline:

Introduction: People who Abuse Authority (23:1 – 2)

1. Preaching that Abuses Authority (23:2 – 3)
2. Practices that Abuse Authority (23:4 – 7)
3. Positions that Abuse Authority (23:8 – 10)

Conclusion: Proper Use of Authority (23:11 – 12)



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Discussion Questions:

- i. 'Abuse' is a very loaded term that often triggers a terrible experience too difficult to discuss with a group. We want to be sensitive to that. However, in the church context, have you ever witnessed a clear abuse of authority in leadership? Can you describe it?
- ii. It has been said that there are pastors that have abused churches, and there are churches that have abused pastors. How does this happen? How can it be avoided?
- iii. What were the scribes and Pharisees doing that Jesus felt the need to confront? What are some modern-day examples of these abuses of authority?
- iv. According to verses 11 – 12, what does Jesus teach are primary qualifications of leaders? How does God want pastors / leaders to lead? (see Acts 20:28 – 32; 1 Peter 5:1 – 5)

Application:

We give praise to God for the long season of love and mutual respect among the members of our Board and Staff, as well as among church members. Let's pray this week that the Lord would preserve and keep us in His grace, and under His Lordship.