

Bible Stories for Adults

Scribes and Pharisees

Mark 8:11-21; Matthew 23

Opening

- Gathering: When have you seen examples of self-righteousness in the church today.
- Today's Focus: Jesus warned people against self-righteousness instead of God's righteousness.
- Key Verses: *Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.* Matthew 5:20
- You have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.* Matthew 23:23

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Darkest Days (2 Chronicles 36:11-20)

- What do the Jews remember as their darkest time in all of history?
2 Chronicles 36:17-20
- Why did this happen?
2 Chronicles 36:11-14
- Did God over-react to the faithlessness of one king, Zedekiah?
2 Chronicles 36:15-16
- Why did the Jews ignore God's warnings and efforts to call them back through His prophets?
Jeremiah 5:12-13

Repentance (Nehemiah 8-10)

- How were the Jews reminded of their history when they returned to Jerusalem after the exile in 450 BC?
Nehemiah 8:2-3, 8, 18
- Did hearing God's Word convict the Jews of their sinfulness?
Nehemiah 9:1-2
- Did they recognize that their sin had caused their destruction and exile?
Nehemiah 9:29-31
- What did they decide to do in response to what they learned?
Nehemiah 9:38; 10:28-29

Scribes (Ezra 7:10)

- What was needed for the people to be able to follow and obey God in everything?
Ezra 7:10
- What group of people accepted responsibility for this?
Nehemiah 8:13
- Ecclesiasticus 39:1, 6, 8-9 (1-11): *He that gives his mind to the law of the Most High and meditates on it will seek out the wisdom of the ancients and be occupied with prophesies. ... If the great Lord is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; he will pour forth words of wisdom ... He will reveal instruction on his teaching and will glory in the law of the Lord's covenant. Many will praise his understanding.*
- Scribes interpreted God's written Law and how it should be applied to every situation of life
Developed 50 volumes of oral law (Mishnah), Equally binding as the written law

Bible Stories for Adults

Scribes and Pharisees

Page 2

Jesus and Scribes (*Mark 7:1-8*)

When do we first see Jesus interacting with scribes (teachers of the law)?

Luke 2:46-47

How did Jesus feel about the scribes' work to clarify God's commands through their oral law?

Mark 7:6-8

What did Jesus recognize to be the motive behind the scribes' commitment to the law?

Mark 12:38-40

Scribes and Jesus (*Mark 3:22*)

How did the scribes feel about Jesus ignoring their oral law?

Mark 7:5

What did some high-powered scribes from Jerusalem conclude about Jesus?

Mark 3:22

Did any scribes recognize Jesus as being from God?

Matthew 8:19

Did Jesus accept any scribes as being faithful?

Mark 12:28-34

Pharisees (*Acts 26:5*)

What group dedicated themselves to strictly following scribal law?

Acts 26:5 (22:3; 23:6)

Alexander the Great conquered the Mediterranean world and started the Hellenistic Age (300-200 BC)

Hellenism – The influence of Greek culture, philosophy, ethics and language

Hasidim (*the faithful ones*) – Jews in 2nd Century BC who opposed Hellenism

Fought under Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus to preserve the faith

1 Maccabees 2:42 – *Then a company of Hasidim came to him who were mighty warriors for Israel, every one who offered himself willingly for the law.*

Maccabean rulers claimed high priesthood and twisted Judaism to fit themselves

Essenes – Hasidim who separated themselves from Jewish society to remain pure

Qumran (location of Dead Sea Scrolls) appears to have been an Essene community

Pharisees – Hasidim who remained to influence Jewish society

Aramaic – *Perishaiya*, Greek – *Pharisaios*

Josephus – Jewish historian and Pharisee at end of 1st Century AD:

Around 6000 Pharisees & 4000 Essenes were around in Jesus' day

Pharisees were *extremely influential among the townsfolk; and all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed according to their exposition.*

Pharisee Position

How did Pharisees feel about themselves?

Luke 18:11-12

How did Pharisees feel about Jesus?

Matthew 12:1-2, 9-10, 13-14

How did Pharisees feel about Jews who accepted Jesus?

John 7:45-49

How did Jesus feel about the righteousness of the Pharisees?

Matthew 5:20

Bible Stories for Adults

Scribes and Pharisees

Page 3

Offensive Jesus (*Luke 5-6*)

What were some of the situations where Jesus offended the Pharisees?

Luke 5:20-21

Luke 5:29-30

Luke 5:33

Luke 6:1-2

Luke 6:6-7, 10-11

Matthew 15:1-2

Silence the Lamb (*Matthew 22:15*)

What did the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders decide to do about Jesus?

Matthew 26:3-4

Why did they have to be careful about this?

Matthew 21:46 (26:5)

What did they do to try to reduce public support of Jesus?

Matthew 22:15

How well did this tactic work?

Matthew 22:22, 46 (16-46)

A Sign for the Pharisees (*Matthew 16:1-4; Mark 8:11-13*)

How important was it to the Pharisees for them to get rid of Jesus?

Mark 3:6

How had the Pharisees teamed with their Sadducee rivals against Jesus?

Matthew 16:1

How did Jesus respond to their request?

Matthew 16:2-3

A red sky at night is the shepherd's delight; A red sky in the morning is the shepherd's warning.

Would He give them a sign?

Matthew 16:4 (12:38-42)

Pharisee Yeast (*Mark 8:14-21*)

How did Jesus make sure that His disciples weren't misled by the teachings of the Pharisees?

Mark 8:14-15

Did the disciples understand what Jesus said?

Mark 8:16

How did Jesus respond to their confusion?

Mark 8:17-21

What else did Jesus say to help them understand?

Matthew 16:11-12

Beware of the Pharisees (*Matthew 23:1-4*)

Did Jesus offer any clearer warnings about the dangers of the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees?

Matthew 23:1-3

Why shouldn't people follow their traditions just to be safe?

Matthew 23:4

Bible Stories for Adults

Scribes and Pharisees

Page 4

Praise to the Pharisees (*Matthew 23:5-12*)

But the Pharisees looked righteous. Shouldn't their example be followed?

Matthew 23:5-7

Phylacteries – Small boxes worn on forehead and arm containing four verses:

Exodus 13:1-10; Exodus 13:11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Deuteronomy 11:13-21

Tassels – Reminders of God's commands (Numbers 15:37-41)

What guidelines did Jesus offer to help us keep from seeking praise from men?

Matthew 23:8-10

How can we keep all of this in perspective for ourselves?

Matthew 23:11-12

The Don't Beattitudes (*Matthew 23:13-36*)

What had Jesus taught from the start of His ministry that contradicted the wisdom of the Pharisees?

Matthew 5:1-10

How does Jesus contrast the poor in spirit (humble) with the proud in spirit?

Matthew 5:3 – *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

Matthew 23:13

How does Jesus contrast those who mourn with those who cause mourning?

Matthew 5:4 – *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

Matthew 23:14

How does Jesus contrast those who accept God's control with those who try to take control of God?

Matthew 5:5 – *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

Matthew 23:15

How does Jesus contrast those who seek after righteousness with those who seek after riches?

Matthew 5:6 – *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled*

Matthew 23:16-22

How does Jesus contrast those who give mercy to those who withhold mercy?

Matthew 5:7 – *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

Matthew 23:23-24

How does Jesus contrast clean hearts with defiled hearts?

Matthew 5:8 – *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

Matthew 23:25-28

How does Jesus contrast peacemakers and those persecuted with persecutors?

Matthew 5:9-10 – *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 23:29-33

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. Who are examples of righteousness to me?
(*Matthew 23:1-4, 13-15, 25-28; 1 Cor 11:1; 2 Cor 8:1-5; Phil 2:5-11; 3:17; 4:8-9; Hebrews 11*)
2. Am I an example of self-righteousness or God's righteousness?
(*Matthew 5:48; 23:5-7, 29-39; Luke 18:9-14; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10*)
3. How have I tried to add or change God's commands?
(*Matthew 5:17-20; 23:16-22; Mark 7:6-8; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Ecclesiastes 3:14*)
4. When have I been upset with others for not doing things my way?
(*Mark 7:1-5; Luke 5:27-32, 33-35; 6:1-2, 5-11; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33*)
5. What traditions have I permitted to interfere with my relationship with God?
(*Matthew 23:23-24; Mark 7:9-13; Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-27; Colossians 2:6-23*)