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Testing for the Genuine: How to see if Christ is Truly There

November 26, 2017

Scripture Reading: Matthew 23:1-36

Mark 12:41-44 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. (42) And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. (43) And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. (44) For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

Matthew 20:20-28 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. (21)

And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." (22) Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." (23) He said to them, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." (24) And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. (25) But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. (26) It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, (28) even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

This morning's subject is directly

connected with our study of 2 Peter which we recently completed. Our topic today is of tremendous importance. We will be looking at numbers of Scriptures that will sound very familiar to you, but which, I hope, you will see in a way that perhaps you have never seen them before. Many times that which is obvious is what we so easily miss.

It is my conclusion, as you know by now, that the visible church today is in a pathetic condition and in fact that much of it is absolutely counterfeit, Christ having departed long ago (if He was ever there at all).

And I want to show you how we can know that this is the case, that we are not exaggerating, and to enable you even further to sort out the true from the false – that is to say, to see Christ and not be duped by antichrist.

I am going to read to you quite a large number of Scriptures now, and as you follow along I ask that you look for the common thread that runs through them all, what they tell us about Christ, and how they instruct us as His people to follow Him.

Here we go then:

Exodus 22:21-24 "You shall not

wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. (22) You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. (23) If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, (24) and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

Deuteronomy 27:19 "Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

Psalms 10:16-18 The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land. (17) O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear (18) to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

Isaiah 1:16-23 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, (17) learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. (18) "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they

shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. (19) If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; (20) but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (21) How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. (22) Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water. (23) Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them.

to break every yoke? (7) Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Luke 12:32-34 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (33) Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. (34) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Psalms 112:5-9 It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice. (6) For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. (7) He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. (8) His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries. (9) He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.

Luke 14:12-14 He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. (13) But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, (14) and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Isaiah 58:6-7 "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and

Matthew 15:30 And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them,

Mark 5:25-29 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, (26) and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. (27) She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. (28) For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." (29) And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

Matthew 9:9-13 As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. (10) And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. (11) And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (12) But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. (13) Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Romans 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still

sinners, Christ died for us.

Now, with those Scriptures freshly in our minds (and we know there are many, many more just like these), let's answer this question:

What characterized the Lord Jesus' ministry as seen in these verses? What kind of people did He live among and how did they perceive Him?

The first question is answered in this way:

John 13:12-17 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? (13) You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. (14) If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. (16) Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. (17) If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Philippians 2:5-8 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count

equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Paul followed the very same path:

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. (2) For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (3) And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, (4) and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The second question - *What kind of people did He live among [ie, what people were His friends] and how did they perceive Him?* is also easily answered:

Matthew 9:10 And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

Matthew 9:2 And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."

Matthew 4:24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.

The Apostle Paul, once again, reflects the very same "style" of ministry:

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; (28) God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, (29) so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (30) And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, (31) so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Of course we could go on and on with the very same kinds of Scriptures. Christ went to the lowly. And the lowly came to him. Those who were the big names, who craved power and control and prestige – they hated Him. And they hated the fact that He associated with the lowly.

Note: You will see the very same pattern if you read the Life of George Whitefield by Arnold Dallimore. In that day, just as in Jesus' time and in ours, the Pharisees were running the visible "church." When the big shots in the Church of England refused to let Whitefield preach in the church buildings (Whitefield was himself an ordained priest in that church) he went out into the fields and preached. Thousands of lowly people came to hear him. Coal miners with black faces who had been largely used and abused by the established "church."

Now, The "Ministry" of the Pharisees – what characterized them?

I maintain that in large part – far more than most Christians realize or want to admit – the Pharisees are in power and control in the evangelical, supposed "Bible believing" churches of our day. And as a result, evil has come in like a flood. *When the church ceases to be the true church, when it is led by and*

its pews are populated by people who do not know the Lord, inevitably you are going to have evil and wickedness emanating from such a place.

A Virginia youth pastor has been arrested in the shooting deaths of his wife, stepdaughter and the stepdaughter's boyfriend in their home on Thanksgiving Day, police said.

Christopher Gattis, 58, was charged with three counts of first-degree murder and three counts of using a firearm in the commission of a felony, [the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported](#).



The style of the Pharisees. What does their "ministry" and "church" look like? Here are some very plain statements from Scripture:

Matthew 20:18 "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests

and scribes, and they will condemn him to death

First of all then, we must understand this clearly, these counterfeits hate Jesus Christ. Why do you think that the Lord put so much of their wickedness in Scripture for us? It is to warn us that we can expect to face the very same kind in every age of the church, and that these wolves are not rare. They hate and oppose Jesus Christ and anyone who belongs to Him. *This is why genuine Christians today are so confused when the leaders and members of their church ostracize them or reject the plain truth of Scripture when it is pointed out.* What we all need to come to be wise about is that when this happens we need to stop wearing fault and blame and realize that we are facing counterfeits.

Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

Matthew 23:4-7 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. (5) They do all

their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, (6) and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues (7) and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others.

Here is probably one of the most telling descriptions of the evil that has infested the visible church today. Insert into this description of the Pharisees and scribes the names of so many of the celebrity notables of our day. Think about this very carefully-

- They focus their time and labor on minute points of theology and when challenged, they are merciless, mocking, and mean.
- What they do, they make certain is seen by as many people as they can – publicity, publicity, publicity
- They organize conferences in large auditoriums and sit in exalted positions at the front
- They list their academic degrees in detail for all to see

I have personally dealt with some of these kind. And I can tell you that when you disagree with them or correct them, the fangs come out. I remember years ago hearing a woman who had been very active in ministry

and teaching for decades and who was a genuine Christian, saying to a class I was in – “I have met many, many ‘leading’ Christian celebrities at various conferences, behind the scenes, and I can tell you that most all of them are fake. I only met one that I am assured is the real thing, and that is Joni Erickson Tada.”

I saw it myself firsthand at a big youth conference in Missoula. A famous, big-name youth ministry came to town and at an intermission, they asked church leaders and pastors to meet with their celeb leader for a few words from him. So, reluctantly, I went back where he was and I remember as I listened to him thinking, “this guy is an arrogant jerk.” And he was. He went on and on and on about how he was just going to “love all your kids” – it was all about him. *We need to start paying attention to this kind of thing when we see it and not just disregard it as if it were nothing.* Because it is through this kind of self-exalting arrogance that evil creeps in among us.

Paul did not let it go when he saw it. He confronted it:

1 Corinthians 3:1-5 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. (2) I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not

ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, (3) for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? (4) For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? (5) What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.

And of course when Peter and Barnabas got caught up in this superiority evil you know that Paul confronted them in front of everyone.

One of the most telling signs of wickedness and counterfeits hiding among us is this self-exalting arrogance which produces a Babel-like structure designed to glorify the few who build and maintain it. Like the Pharisees and scribes, these kind also cast aside the lowly, reject the truth of Christ and in fact reject Christ Himself. We must see it, we must oppose it, and if there is no repentance, put it out from among us. We must stop promoting Babel structures that exalt man. Make no mistake, once such a system is in place, all kinds of evil ones will come in.

I have printed a few photos in your

handout for this morning that illustrate this danger. I do not imply that every single Christian conference is wrong, nor am I saying that these are false teachers. The point I am trying to show you is how we must realize the incredible danger of making such fertile soil for men's sin to crave admiration and self-glorification. I have no doubt at all that Christ and Paul and the other apostles would ask us what in the world we are doing constructing these things.

[NOTE: If you are reading this pdf on Sermon Audio, we were not able to include the pictures. They are photos of huge Christian conferences and mega church auditoriums with platforms and spotlights for the speakers]

Now, hold these images up next to this one, a description of the Apostle Paul's ministry:

2 Corinthians 11:16-30 I repeat, let no one think me foolish. But even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. (17) What I am saying with this boastful confidence, I say not as the Lord would but as a fool. (18) Since many boast according to the flesh, I too will boast. (19) For you gladly bear with fools, being wise yourselves!

(20) For you bear it if someone makes slaves of you, or devours you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or strikes you in the face.

(21) To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that! But whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. (22) Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I.

(23) Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. (24) Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; (26) on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; (27) in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

(28) And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. (29) Who

is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?
(30) If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

Does someone claim to be a foremost servant of Christ? Do they claim to speak for Him? Are they exalted by masses of people? Are they “in” with the power-brokers of the visible church? Hold them up to the biblical portrait of a genuine servant of Christ. Look at them alongside the picture we have of our Lord when He came into this world.

I think that in most every case you will find....there is no resemblance.