

Matthew 23:1-12

A folly of phylacteries



These twelve verses form the introduction to Jesus' last lengthy speech, as Matthew records things. Having evaded the verbal traps set by his various opponents, Jesus now turns to his disciples and the crowd (as with the Sermon on the Mount at the beginning of the book), teaching them humility by means of several counter-examples.

But his speech does not just allude to the failings and follies of the Pharisees. By the end of this section, "they" has been replaced by "you". This is not *against them*, but *to us*.

➤ A mistake about authority (1-3)

"Moses' seat" - perhaps a literal seat in synagogues of his day, but probably more likely something symbolic: these people claim to be the true successors of Moses.

What honour is still to be attached to certain positions, irrespective of who holds them (see Acts 23:1-5)? Examples?

"They preach, but do not practice" - but perhaps the choice of words is a bit too fancy: it's literally "they say but do not do". And that means it's not just about "preaching", but *all kinds of speech*. So ..

... what advice that you have recently given someone else are you ignoring?

... what advice that you have recently given *yourself* are you ignoring?

➤ A mistake about ministry (4)

Serving (2 Corinthians 13:10), not throwing weight around.
What "burdens" do we *have* to lay upon people?
How can we make those burdens more bearable?
What is Jesus' "yoke" and his "burden" (Matthew 11:30)?

➤ A mistake about greatness (5-12)

What comparable mistakes can *we* make (5-7)?
Are titles for church roles wrong, then (8-10)?

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