

The Character of Jesus 75
Denouncing the Scribes and Pharisees
(Matthew 23:1 - 39, Mark 12:38 – 40, Luke 20:45 – 47)

- **Characteristic: Demanding consistency**
 - Following the Matthew account. Rather than analyzing the errors of the Jewish leadership, Jesus focused on being consistent. This scene presumably occurred in the Court of the Gentiles on the Temple platform because it was the most convenient, largest, and customary. The Court of the Women, the Court of the Men, and a few public plazas around the city also were available.
 - (1 – 3) Jesus spoke to the multitudes and His disciples, introducing the subject: the scribes and Pharisees were inconsistent. They did not practice what they taught. (*c.f.*, Matthew 5:48)
 - (4) The leaders made the religion difficult and expensive for the common people and failed to use their own wealth to help. The inconsistency is not the rules themselves, but that they did not appreciate how the rules affected people. (*c.f.* “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27)
 - (5 – 12) The leaders were prideful, failing to recognize the role of God and the Messiah in the religion they directed.
 - (13 – 15) The leaders failed to discern the objective (the kingdom of heaven), so not only did they not reach the objective, they prevented others from understanding it.
 - (16 – 22) The leaders had developed rationalizations to avoid having to emulate the character of God (the objective).
 - (23 – 28) The focus on rule-keeping caused the principles to be obscured.
 - (29 – 36) Revisionist history caused them to fail to learn from their own history, and miss the Messiah.
 - (37 – 39) The citation, Psalm 118:26, followed immediately upon “The stone which the builders rejected shall become the chief corner stone.” The leaders overlooked the compassion and mercy of God, who wanted to protect them. The result would be destruction.
- **Application: Demanding consistency**
 - How can this message of consistency be applied to the modern church, not just condemning but fixing?
 - In what ways do we make Christianity too expensive or too difficult for some who are interested?
 - How can we avoid pride of accomplishment without overdone humility?
 - Do we keep God’s overall objective in view in every teaching and practice? Do the people we teach understand God’s objective, or the rules?
 - Do we rationalize bad behavior?
 - Does every practice pass through faith? Are the character traits of Jesus connected to every action?
 - Do we learn from church history?
 - Do we respond to God’s redemption, forgiveness, mercy, love, and comfort, or His authority and justice?