

Day 1

This week in our lesson we discussed God's pursuit of our hearts. I know this may seem off topic, but as we discuss living our lives in a manner worthy of the Gospel, it is not lost on me that without ample balance of understanding the whole of what Scripture teaches, we could easily get lost in the trap of legalism and self-righteousness. So my heart this week is to walk through that with you, so that we can place our obedience in the proper perspective.

Begin your time today in prayer, first, seeking forgiveness from God for your sin and asking Him to illumine His Word to your heart.

Read the following making observations:

Genesis 4:1-16

4 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with *the help of the Lord.*" **2** Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. **3** So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. **4** Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering;⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. **6** Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? **7** If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." **8** Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

9 Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" **10** He said, "What have you done? The voice of your

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brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.¹² When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." ¹³ Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is too great to bear! ¹⁴ Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." ¹⁵ So the Lord said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Observe with me:

1. Compare Cain's offering with the offering of Abel (vs. 3-4):

In verse 5 we learn that Cain's "countenance fell", countenance is when our face reveals what is in our hearts. Cain's offering revealed what was in his heart regarding God, he offered just enough to get by, but not what God had required. God established what was an acceptable offering, and Cain chose to do his own

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thing, and not only to do his own thing, but his offering was just “some” of his harvest, not the best, not his first fruits. His heart wasn’t in it.

2. Are we offering to God just enough to get by? Or serving Him in the way we want to serve instead of obediently serving Him as He has called us to serve as revealed through His Word? What ways might you improve here?

3. Has your countenance fallen before God? If so, why?

Cain outwardly walked through the motions of obedience, but God knew his heart, and God, in His great mercy, called him out on it. (vs. 6-7) God gave Cain a way of escape, to flee the temptation but he chose to harden his heart.

4. He chose anger over repentance. And then the first tragic murder of all time happened. But, before we jump to judge Cain, let’s look at how Christ views anger. Read Matthew 5:21-22, what does Christ say should be done to the one who holds anger in his heart for his brother?

How about the one who slanders his brother in anger?

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5. If we serve God with impure motives, what is within us will be revealed, our countenance will fall and we will find ourselves grumbling and complaining, angry at our brothers and sisters in Christ. In what ways are you leaving your life vulnerable to the schemes of the enemy, in what ways are you failing to “guard your heart” and by doing so allowing your countenance to fall?
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Close out your time today in prayer, seeking a wisdom that can only come from above, confessing any ways you may have been seeking an outward approval when God is and has always been looking at your heart.

Day 2

Begin today with prayer, confessing your sins and worshipping the Lord for giving us His Word.

Yesterday our focus was on understanding that God is not interested in a merely outward display of following Him. One of the most prominent examples of this in Scripture is the Scribes and Pharisees. For the next three days we will study what is known as the “Eight Woes” that Christ taught the crowds and disciples.

Today read through the following twice, making observations. Mark it up!

Eight Woes

Matthew 23:1-7;13-36

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23 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples,² saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;³ therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*.⁴ They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as* a finger.⁵ But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their [phylacteries](#) and lengthen the tassels of *their garments*.⁶ They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues,⁷ and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men.

13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.¹⁴ [Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.]

15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

16 “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, *that* is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’¹⁷ You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold?¹⁸ And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, *that* is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it,

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he is obligated.¹⁹ You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? ²⁰ Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears *both* by the altar and by everything on it. ²¹ And whoever swears by the temple, swears *both* by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. ²² And whoever swears by heaven, swears *both* by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ and say, ‘If we had been *living* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in *shedding* the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹ So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those

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who murdered the prophets.³² Fill up, then, the measure of *the guilt* of your fathers.³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

³⁴ “Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city,³⁵ so that upon you may fall *the guilt* of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.³⁶ Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

After reading through the text twice, making observations of the text, close your time in prayer.

Day 3

Begin today with confession, asking the Lord to illumine His Word to your heart!

We will be revisiting the Matthew 23:1-7;13-36, so ask the Lord to give your fresh eyes!

Observe with me:

1. What was the motivation of the Scribes and Pharisees? (vs. 5)
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2. Who had the Scribes and Pharisees forgotten? _____

3. Is that easy for us to do? _____

We may not do this in a sense of seeking a “seat of honor” as they did, but maybe we are motivated out of a fear of man, “what will they think of me if they know...” this

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is an equally destructive man-pleasing mentality that takes our focus off of God and causes our hearts to be distracted and distraught as we will never please all men.

4. What are the “Eight Woes?

5. These “Eight Woes” can be summed up in one, very pointed sin, list that here:

6. Can you think of any common day Scribes and Pharisees, who ascribe to a works or ceremony-based salvation, leading thousands away from truth?

Close out your time today asking God to search out your heart, revealing any hypocrisy or man-pleasing, confessing that before Him, praise Him for His goodness in revealing this to your heart and His Word!

Day 4

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We have looked at how God looks at the heart, the hypocrisy and false works-based salvation that was taught by the Pharisees, now we will look to Christ and what He taught matters most to Him. I know we may have already covered this text, but as Stuart preached this past Sunday, repetition is important!

Read the following text, making observations.

Matthew 5 1-12

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. **2** He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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Observe with Me:

1. What is meant by “poor in spirit”?

2. What is meant by “those who mourn”?

3. How many promises from God do we find in these verses? _____

4. Sometimes it is easier to recognize something we are struggling with by the fruit of that issue in our lives. So if we analyze this text based off of the promised fruit or benefit the believer is promised to experience we might find where we are lacking. Take time to read through this text again, prayerfully considering your personal life...do you find yourself satisfied? If not, what are you hungering and thirsting after?

Close out your time today in prayer, praising God for His revealed truth and the impact it is having on your personal life!

Day 5

As always, begin your time today in prayer confessing your sins and adoring your Savior!

Complete the chart below, choosing 8 observations you made from the passages we have studied this week. I would encourage you to do this with each observation you made as time allows.

This chart has been adapted from Fundamentals of the Faith by Dr. John MacArthur.

Observations	Interpretive Questions	Interpretations
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(what do I see?)	Asking questions of each observation.	What does it mean? What conclusion can be made?

Now that we have made observations, and used interpretive questions to better understand the text, let's make some applications, because we all know that without applying the Word to our lives, we will remain unchanged.

A helpful tool as we seek to apply Scripture to our lives is: SPECS.

1. S – Sins to avoid. Are there any sins in this passage that I should be intentional in avoiding?

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2. P – Promises to cling to. Are there any promises in this text that I can hold on to?

3. E – Examples to follow. Do I see any examples in this passage that I should follow?

4. C – Commands to obey. Are there any commands to obey?

5. Scriptures to memorize. Are there any verse(s) here that I should hide in my heart to increase my ability to meditate on and further apply the truth to my life?

As our week comes to a close, spend time praising God for the fullness of His Word and the immense blessing it is!