

The Divine Rebuke of Corrupt Religious Authority by Mike Gendron

Proclaiming the Gospel Ministries

Two streams of Christianity have been operating side-by-side for 2000 years. One is the body of Christ, the apostolic church which includes all who have been born again with the Spirit of God. This true church holds to the faith of the apostles and submits to the authority of Scripture. The other stream is apostate Christianity; those who profess Christ but hold to a different gospel and therefore have never experienced the second birth ([1 John 2:19-20](#)).

Since apostasy also occurred in Judaism, there is a critical question to consider. Was the action that caused the Jews to depart from the only religion God ordained, the same action that caused apostates to depart from the only Church Christ established? Yes! The fatal error common to both occurred when religious leaders replaced God's authority with an authority of their own.

The Pharisees used the Chair of Moses to distort God's word with their own traditions and the Roman Catholic Church has used the Chair of Peter to do the same. It is indeed astonishing to see how the Catholic clergy resembles the Pharisees of first century Judaism. Both became corrupt when they rejected the absolute supreme authority of Scripture. While we know how Jesus condemned the hypocritical Pharisees for their character and conduct, we can only wonder if the same rebukes would apply to the Catholic clergy today. The Pharisee's stubborn refusal to submit to God's authority ultimately led them to reject Jesus as the Messiah, while the same stubborn refusal has led the Catholic clergy to reject Him as their all-sufficient Savior.

In Matthew 23 Jesus gives His last public sermon and it is filled with sharp rebukes against the corrupt religious leadership of the Pharisees. The sermon is also a warning for those who follow false shepherds instead of the True Shepherd. It is therefore my prayer that Catholics will take an objective look at their religious leaders. Have they become just as corrupt as the shepherds of God's chosen people? Let us look at the similarities between the Pharisees and the Roman Catholic clergy.

They Oppose Divine Authority

In [Matthew 23:2](#), Jesus says: "The scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses," the position of authority. Notice that they seated themselves, God did not put them there. In doing so, they opposed divine authority by establishing their own. This is analogous to Catholic priests. They stubbornly continue a sacrificial priesthood which was divinely terminated 2000 years ago. When Jesus, the High Priest offered Himself once, as a sacrifice for sin, for all time, there was no longer a need for priestly sacrifices. Our merciful God made this clear when He tore open the veil that once prevented access into His presence by anyone other

than sanctified priests ([Mark 15:38](#)). We now "have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" ([Heb. 10:19-22](#)).

Catholic priests are not called by God, nor are they in the will of God. Their bogus offerings can never take away sin nor can they do what Jesus has already done: "by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" ([Heb. 10:11](#)).

They Prevent Entrance into Heaven

In [Matthew 23:13](#), Jesus condemns the Pharisees for doing the same thing Catholic priests are doing. Jesus declares: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." Both the Pharisees and Catholic clergy have kept people out of the Kingdom with their legalistic teachings that nullify God's sovereign grace. They bar the gates of heaven with a works-righteousness system that leaves their followers hopelessly guilty and without assurance or peace. Many Catholics, who are zealous for God, are working to establish their own righteousness because they have been taught a perversion of the Gospel. Their priests "malign the way of truth" and point them to the wide road that leads to destruction ([Mat. 7:13](#); [2 Pet. 2:1-2](#)).

Their Converts Become Sons of Hell

In verse 15, Jesus again curses the Pharisees. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte [convert]; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." The Catholic clergy also makes their converts "sons of hell." Their ministry is not one of conversion but of perversion. Instead of proclaiming the good news of Christ's finished work of redemption, they pervert the message with continuous offerings for sin that keep converts in ritualistic bondage (Catechism [CCC], 1367). Priests deny the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice by insisting Catholics must make their own satisfaction for sins (CCC, 1459). After doing their penance, Catholics are given the false hope by priests that their sins have been forgiven.

Catholics are instructed that Jesus merely opened the gates of heaven with His death and resurrection. Since He only made salvation possible, a perversion of the true gospel is necessary to instruct Catholics what they must do to enter the gates of heaven (CCC, 2027). Converts to this damning gospel of works and sacraments remain under God's wrath. Their destiny remains unchanged – a Christ-less eternity of torment.

They Are Self Indulgent and Robbers

In verse 25, Jesus cursed the Jewish leaders for their external piety which hid their internal corruption. "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." The Catholic clergy is also guilty of robbery and self-indulgence. Although their subjects view them as trustworthy with a supernatural touch of holiness, they have a long history of sexual immorality that includes raping and robbing children of their innocence. Some of the pedophile priests have been caught and exposed, but their bishops relocated them to other parishes where they continued indulging in sexual perversions. Rather than being godly shepherds who protect their flock, they are wicked wolves who destroy the flock.

There is no gentle way to expose the Catholic clergy who rob and extort millions of dollars each year from their congregations with the ungodly practice of indulgences. Priests perpetuate the fraudulent scam of indulgences and purgatory in order to collect stipends from grieving individuals who want to reduce the time of suffering for their loved ones. This may be the cruelest hoax of all time. It is a deceptive practice that holds people in bondage to their church not only in this life but even after death.

They Are Hypocrites

In verse 27, Jesus curses them for their hypocrisy. "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." This hypocrisy is also common among the Catholic clergy. They appear pious in their liturgical robes, but underneath the vestments are spiritually dead men. Their unregenerate hearts cause others to fall into hypocrisy. Since they do not have hearts controlled by the Spirit they must hide their wicked hearts with outward pomp. They say they represent Jesus Christ but, by means of hypocrisy, they follow doctrines of demons ([1 Tim. 4:1-3](#)). Since they reject "doctrines conforming to godliness," their lives are marked by sin instead of godliness ([1 Tim. 6:3](#); [Jude 4, 8-16](#)).

They Are Boastful and Proud

In verse 29, Jesus condemns the religious leaders for boasting that they were better than their forefathers. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 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.'" Recently we have heard apologies from the Vatican for the persecution of Jews and

Christians throughout history. The Catholic clergy of today is saying, we are not like our forefathers, we no longer kill the servants of God; you can trust us. We would agree they are better today than in the past, but that is nothing to boast about. History reveals that previous popes were guilty of committing nearly every sin and crime possible, including assassinations, murder, rape, adultery, fornication, incest, robbery, conspiracy, bribery, fraud and perjury. The corruption of 29 popes as so contemptible that the Vatican has listed them as "anti-popes." However, its attempt at revising history cannot erase the ungodly scandals and crimes of the papacy.

Jesus accentuates his rebukes with a sobering question. "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?" May we all learn from biblical history and urgently and forcefully warn our loved ones, who are following false shepherds, to turn to the only True Shepherd!