

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson 20: "Woe unto You...Hypocrites" (Matthew 21-23; John 12:1-8)

- Mary anoints Jesus' feet.
- Jesus makes a triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
- Jesus gives the parable of the two sons and the parable of the householder.
- The scribes and Pharisees try to trap Jesus.
- Jesus condemns the sin of hypocrisy.

A study of this lesson will help us recognize and avoid hypocrisy and thus strengthen our commitment to Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Consider two glasses of water identical in appearance, volume, and apparent purity. Visually there is no difference. And yet they differ from one another. There might indeed be invisible, even deadly differences not identifiable by appearance alone.

A class member is invited to sample each. The teacher tastes as well to assure that no danger is involved. The taste test convinces the class member at once that there is a difference. In fact, one receptacle holds liquid from the fountain in the hallway, the other, distilled water.

Both vessels contain water that is medically pure—one could drink either and not suffer ill effects—but only one of them holds water that is chemically pure.

Distilled water is H₂O and nothing else. Tap water, if examined under a microscope, reveals such things as a revolting collection of dead organisms and traces of the chemicals that killed them.

This object lesson illustrates that it is one thing to seem pure, good, and wholesome, but it is quite another thing to be pure. Elder Wirthlin said: *"Do we, indeed, actually live the gospel, or do we just manifest the appearance of righteousness so that those around us assume we are faithful when, in reality, our hearts and unseen actions are not true to the Lord's teachings? Do we take on only the "form of godliness" while denying the "power thereof"? Are we righteous in fact, or do we feign obedience only when we think others are watching? The Lord has made it clear that He will not be fooled by appearances, and He has warned us not to be false to Him or to others. He has cautioned us to be wary of those who project a false front, who put on a bright pretense that hides a darker reality. We know that the Lord "looketh on the heart" and not on the "outward appearance." The Savior taught us to "judge not according to the appearance" and warned us against wolves who "come to [us] in sheep's clothing" and whose deception can only be discovered "by [examining] their fruits"* (Joseph B. Wirthlin, "True to the Truth," Ensign, May 1997, 15).

Jesus compared the Pharisees to a cup that is clean outside but dirty inside (Matthew 23:25-26). The Pharisees paid a great deal of attention to outward ordinances and actions that would make them appear righteous, but they were not as concerned with actually being righteous in their hearts. For this Jesus referred to them as hypocrites. This lesson discusses the Savior's condemnation of hypocrites—people who try to appear righteous but who do not try to live righteously.



NEXT WEEK:
#21 "What Is the Sign of Thy Coming?" (Joseph Smith—Matthew [Matthew 24])

Mary anoints Jesus' feet. (John 12:1-8)

Five days before his Crucifixion, Jesus spent an evening with his friends at Bethany. There, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, anointed the Savior's feet with spikenard, a costly ointment (John 12:1-3). **Elder James E. Talmage** explained why she did this: *"To anoint the head of a guest with ordinary oil was to do him honor; to anoint his feet also was to show unusual and signal regard; but the anointing of head*

and feet with spikenard, and in such abundance, was an act of reverential homage rarely rendered even to kings. Mary's act was an expression of adoration; it was the fragrant outwelling of a heart overflowing with worship and affection" (Jesus the Christ, 3rd ed. [1916], 512).

Mary anointed the Lord's feet to show her love for him. The question we need to consider is "How do I

show my love for the Lord?"

John 12:4-5 records Judas' criticism of Mary's actions. While he tried to indicate concern for the poor by stating that the ointment could have been sold and the proceeds used for relief of the needy, Judas was a hypocrite.

John 12:6 According to this scripture, Judas was a thief, not a concerned defender of the poor.

Jesus makes a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. (Matthew 21:1-11)

When Jesus returned to Jerusalem for the Passover, many people came to see him because they heard that he had raised Lazarus from the dead (John 12:17-18). As Jesus approached the city, he was greeted by a great multitude of people who spread their garments in his path and hailed him with palm branches, an honor usually reserved for kings and conquerors. This fulfilled a prophecy by Zechariah (Zech. 9:9) and was a further witness that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Matt. 21:9, 11; Luke 19:38 The people who hailed Jesus with palm branches recognized him as a prophet and king, but others misunderstood his mission or rejected him. People misunderstand or reject the Savior today. Consider how you can more fully accept and welcome him into your life.



Jesus gives the parable of the two sons and the parable of the householder. (Matthew 21:23-46)

Matt. 21:28-30 In the parable of the two sons, the first son proved to be more obedient than the second son.

Matt. 21:31-32 shows Jesus' application of this parable to his listeners. (See also JST Matt. 21:32 in footnote 32d.) The publicans and harlots were like the first son because initially they rejected the commandments of God, but when John preached to them, they accepted Christ and repented of their sins. The chief priests and elders were like the second son because they claimed to follow God, but they rejected John's teachings and rejected Jesus even after they saw him in person. The second son was a hypocrite.

Think about the promises we have made to the Lord such as those we make at baptism, when taking the sacrament, and when receiving the priesthood. In that context, think about how we might sometimes be like the second son.

Matt. 21:33-41 In the parable of the householder, Father in Heaven is represented by the householder, or lord of the vineyard; the husbandmen represent the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day; the servants are representative of the prophets; and the son killed by the husbandmen is obviously Jesus Christ.

Matt. 21:41 The Jewish religious leaders were like the husbandmen who betrayed the trust of the lord

of the vineyard and killed his servants and his son.

Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:10-12 Jesus Christ was "the stone which the builders rejected". He prophesied that the builders would be destroyed because of their hypocritical actions.

Matt. 21:45-46 records that the chief priests and Pharisees responded with anger when they realized that Jesus was speaking about them in these parables, but they also feared the multitudes, so they did not lay hands on the Savior. Obviously, to apply this lesson, we must overcome any indignation we may feel when we are called to repent.

The scribes and Pharisees try to trap Jesus. (Matthew 22:15-46)

The following passages, **Matt. 22:15-46**, record three times when the Pharisees and Sadducees tried to trap Jesus into saying something that would allow them to discredit and condemn him.

Matt. 22:15-17 describes the Pharisees' first try to trap Jesus. If Jesus said yes to the question, they could accuse him of supporting the hated Roman government. If he said no, they could accuse him of rebellion against the government.

Matt. 22:18 Jesus perceived the wickedness of his questioners. The Lord knows our hearts and thoughts. We cannot hide anything from him.

Matt. 22:19-21 Jesus answered the question with counsel to guide us in giving allegiance to God and to earthly governments. (See also the

12th Article of Faith.)

Matt. 22:23-28 records how the Sadducees tried to trap Jesus with a hypocritical question. They pretended to be concerned about marriage in the resurrection, but they did not believe in resurrection. **Matt. 22:29-30** gives Jesus' answer. **Doctrine and Covenants 132:15-16** clarifies Jesus' teaching. Those who do not make and keep the covenants of temple marriage will be single in heaven. For those who do make and keep these covenants, marriage will last for eternity.

Matt. 22:34-40 records the third attempt to trap Jesus and his answer. **Elder Howard W. Hunter** said: "*He loves the Lord with all his heart who ... is ready to give up, do, or suffer anything in order*

to please and glorify him. He loves God with all his soul ... who is ready to give up life for his sake and to be deprived of the comforts of the world to glorify him. He loves God with all his strength who exerts all the powers of his body and soul in the service of God. He loves God with all his mind who applies himself only to know God and his will, who sees God in all things and acknowledges him in all ways" (Improvement Era, June 1965, 512).

Jesus condemns the sin of hypocrisy. (Matthew 23)

Matt. 23:5, 14, 23-28 The scribes and Pharisees paid tithing, gave to the poor, attended worship services, and went regularly to the temple, but the Lord condemned them. They did these things not out of faith, but out of a desire to be seen as righteous by others.

Matt. 23:23 The Lord said they had omitted the "weightier matters" of judgment, mercy, and faith. It

would be wise for us to assure that we do not omit these "weightier matters" in our own lives.

Consider how we as Church members might sometimes be hypocrites. For example, when we attend Church meetings we may be more concerned with being seen by others than with worshiping God. We may complain about Church assignments where we do not receive

much attention for our service. We may sustain our Church leaders and then criticize their decisions.

To avoid hypocrisy, ask yourself: Am I paying tithing, giving to the poor, attending my meetings, and serving others for my own glory or for the glory of God? In all my actions, do I seek to draw closer to my Father in Heaven and Jesus Christ?

Conclusion

What is our eternal goal? Are we truly seeking to gain eternal life, to enjoy the blessings of an eternal family, and desire to live with Heavenly Father? Or are we simply trying to impress others with the amount we pay in tithing or the position we hold. Being mortal, we sometimes tend towards hypocrisy. Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, we need to check ourselves in this and repent. If we have a sincere desire to serve and obey Jesus Christ, motivated by love for and faith in him, we will come closer to him and increase our love and faith.

