"MASKS"

Matthew 23:13-39
11-4-2018

INTRODUCTION: *** Are you guilty of wearing a "Christian Mask"?**

Beware of the "7 Acts" of the religious hypocrite!



Act One: ***False*** ***PREACHING****(v.13)*
They teach of Heaven, but slam the Door in people's faces



Act Two: ***False*** ***PIETY*** ***&*** ***PRAYERS*** *(v.14)*
They serve the needy, but rob for their services



Act Three: ***False*** ***PROSELYTIZING****(v. 15)*
They diligently make converts, but mold them for hell



Act Four: ***False*** ***PROMISES*** *(v. 16-22)*
They make promises to God, but plan "loopholes" to get out of them



Act Five: ***False*** ***PRIORITIES*** *(v. 23-24)*
They give money, but omit ethical and moral values



Act Six: ***False*** ***PRETENSE****(v. 25-28)*
They are clean on the outside, but corrupt on the inside



Act Seven: ***False*** ***PRAISE*** ***(tribute)****(v. 29-36)*
They venerate dead saints, but persecute living ones

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INTRODUCTION:

How is it that one can profess salvation, serve the Lord, go to Bible school, teach Bible classes, witness to others of Christ, pray in public, etc., and then apostacize, leave church, abandon his Christian principles, and embrace the world?

Answer: He/she was a hypocrite (who played a part for a time, but wasn't really the person he/she portrayed).

Note the phrase repeated seven times: *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"* (v. 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29)

The word ***"woe"*** occurs 8 times in this chapter, expressing the woeful, horrible, miserable fate that awaits the hypocrite.

". . . The hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job 8:13).

When asked, "Why don't you get saved?" - many respond "Because there are too many hypocrites claiming to be saved." When asked "Where do hypocrites go when they die?" they answer, "Hell." The question now is, "Why do you want to go to hell and be with them forever??"

The word ***"hypocrites"*** *(hypokritai)* means one who answers or speaks out from underneath a covering; the word was used of actors who pretended to be someone they were not. These Greek and Roman stage actors would speak behind large masks and alter their voice to conceal their real identity and to match the person they pretended to be.

Matthew 23 is arguably the most scathing, denouncing, humiliating message in the Bible.

Christ's sermon is very pointed, very honest (true), and very hot!

The fervor with which this message is delivered shows how repulsive hypocrisy is to God.

Hypocrisy is totally the opposite of the nature of God. It is a lie, while God is truth; it is fake, while God is real and genuine; it is deceitful, while God is trustworthy.

One is never more like the devil [who can disguise himself as an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14)] than when one pretends to be something he/she is not.

*** Are you guilty of wearing a "Christian Mask"?**

Beware of the "7 Acts" of the religious hypocrite!



Act One: ***False*** ***<u>PREACHING</u>****(v.13)*
They teach of <u>Heaven</u>, but <u>slam the Door</u> in people's faces

"Shut up" - to close off; to slam a door shut.

These people who boasted of Heaven, taught of Heaven, actually thwarted others from entering Heaven!

Why? Because they denied that Jesus was the <u>way</u>. They did not teach that He was the <u>door</u>! They did all they could to steer people away from Christ, to "turn people off" from Him.

Does your life, testimony, and witness attract people to Christ or repel them from Him?

(EX: the Jewish false prophet Elymas Barjesus who sought to turn Sergius Paulus away from the Gospel of Christ - Acts 13:6-8)

"By teaching man-made traditions instead of God's truth, they *'took away the key of knowledge'* and closed the door to salvation (Lk. 11:52)" (Wiersbe, p. 84).

Any cult or religion that minimizes Christ's deity, humanity, and complete, finished, substitutionary work is a road block to salvation!

The J.W.'s, etc. ***"shut up"*** the Kingdom because they deny His deity.

The R.C.C. ***"shuts up"*** the Kingdom, because they minimize and detract from His complete, finished work on Calvary.

The Pharisee Saul of Tarsus was such a man, who sought to prevent people from coming to Jesus (Acts 8 - 9:1ff), but such a person can (by God's grace) be saved.



Act Two: ***False*** ***<u>PIETY</u>*** ***&*** ***<u>PRAYERS</u>*** *(v.14)*
They <u>serve</u> the needy, but <u>rob</u> for their services

"Ye devour widow's houses" (KJV) - (cp. Mark 12:40; Lk. 20:47) They would visit the widows and make long prayers for them, but would charge for their services. They would take advantage of these husbandless women. They would "eat up" the will money, the estate, and everything the husband left behind. They ministered for money. Filthy lucre was the motivating force behind their service.

Do you have a "what's in it for me?" attitude? (Do you minister for fame and fortune, recognition, honor of men, etc.?)

Do you pray to impress men or God?

"Ye shall receive the greater damnation" - Those who feign spirituality with selfish motives will be judged most severely.

The ones who exploit the gullible by sifting their funds in the name of Christianity will experience the hottest temperature in the Lake of fire.

To use God or His Word or His Christianity for selfish gain infuriates Him like nothing else!



Act Three: ***False*** ***<u>PROSELYTIZING</u>****(v. 15)*
They diligently make <u>converts</u>, but mold them for <u>hell</u>

The scribes and Pharisees would board ships and travel aboard; they would walk for miles to make <u>one</u> convert to "Scribianity" or "Phariseeism." They would go to great lengths to win converts. Not converts to God, but to their brand of religious distinctives.

Note: Just because a religious group is zealous for converts does not mean their motives and message are true.

Do you seek to make converts to Christ or to your "pet doctrines" or to your denomination or to your cult or clique?

Someone once said to D.L. Moody, "I saw one of <u>your</u> converts in a bar drunk on liquor!" Moody responded, "He must be one of 'mine'; he certainly is not one of Christ's converts."

The Scribes and Pharisees had such influence, persuasive ability, and respect that their converts would be so indoctrinated in their interpretations and man-made laws that they ended up more deeply entrenched in falsehood than their teachers were!

*Don't be a man follower!



Act Four: ***False*** ***<u>PROMISES</u>*** *(v. 16-22)*
They make <u>promises to God</u>, but plan "<u>loopholes</u>" to get out of them

A hypocrite makes promises with no intention of keeping them.

Oh, the hypocrisy of those who swear to tell the truth in court -- those who vow loyalty and chastity at the wedding altar -- those who make promises to God and God's people and do not intend to fulfill them!

Deut. 23:21 - *"When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee."*

Num. 30:2 - *"If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."*

V. 16

"It is nothing" - it means nothing; i.e. the vow is invalid (not under obligation).

When the Scribes and Pharisees would make oaths (vows or promises), they would "get out of it" and go back on their promises by discrediting the binding nature of that upon which their vow was made.

They would swear (take an oath) by the ***"temple"*** and then say, "Well, the temple oath is not binding anyway; if I had sworn by the "<u>gold</u>" of the temple I would be debtor (obligated) to carry out my oath."

EX: Oath-taking with your hand on the Bible (some might get out of it [or justify their lie by saying, "Well, it was not an authorized 1611 KJV Bible.")

V. 21-22

Any oath or promise we make, we make in God's presence and are obligated to keep it!



Act Five: ***False*** ***<u>PRIORITIES</u>*** *(v. 23-24)*
They give <u>money</u>, but omit <u>ethical</u> and <u>moral</u> <u>values</u>

V. 23

"Tithe" - one tenth; 10% (Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:12; Dt. 14:22-23)

One-tenth of the herbs, grain, fruit, wine, and oil were to be given to God (via His Tabernacle), but the Scribes and Pharisees had "expanded the items required to be tithed to include even the smallest of herbs" (Ryrie note).

They would go to extremes and legalistically count out 10% of their smallest seeds.

All of this giving was to impress men (Mt. 6:1-4).

Many give religiously on Sunday, and live like the devil on Monday.

God can't be "bought off" or bribed.

Giving to God is NO substitute for Living for God!

They made a big deal about insignificant kitchen spices and neglected basic ethics and values (i.e. like the media making a big deal about the murderer of one abortion doctor but ignoring the issue of the millions of children murdered annually by abortionists).

"Weightier matters" - meatier, more important matters; higher priority matters.

"Judgment" - justice, righteousness (fairness to others and obedience to God)

"Mercy" - Showing pity and compassion on others, especially those who do not deserve it.

"Faith" - Trust in God, belief in His Word.

Many give great sums of money to charitable organizations, but are unethical at work, immoral at home, unmerciful to sinners and distrusting of god.

Note: <u>Attitudes</u> of righteousness, mercy, and faith matter more than the <u>actions</u> of religious benevolence (cp. I Cor. 13:1-3).

"Not to leave the other undone" - Tithing is commendable and should be done; but remember: right living, compassion toward others, and faith are indispensable virtues.

V. 24

"Blind guides" - blind spiritual leaders!

In an effort to "guide" others without them being affected by the smallest of doctrinal or religious errors, they would sift out a gnat (so as to not drink the bug), but would end up swallowing a camel!

A hypocrite is a "perfectionist" when it comes to non-essentials or lesser issue of importance, but blind about the truly important matters of life (namely, right relationships with God and others).

The "Pharisees would drink their wine through clenched teeth in order to filter out any small insects that might have gotten into the wine" (MacArthur, p. 385).

Many major on the minors and minor on the majors.

They are "sticklers for details, but blind to great principles." (Wiersbe, p. 85)



Act Six: ***False*** ***<u>PRETENSE</u>****(v. 25-28)*
They are clean on the <u>outside</u>, but corrupt on the <u>inside</u>

The religious leaders were careful to keep the outside of their lives clean, because this is what could be <u>seen</u> by others.

V. 25
For practical purposes, what matters more - the cleanliness of the <u>outside</u> of the cup or dish, or the <u>inside</u>?

"Extortion" - greed and robbery (stealing)

"Excess" - no self-control; self-indulgence; no power to control one's appetites and desires

When we allow God to clean our insides (our filthy hearts), the outside will take care of itself.

--People are transformed from the inside out.

--Our preaching at VBC is not a legalistic blasting of external failures and faulty dress and hair standards, but by God's grace we deal with the heart of the problem.

V. 26
D.L. Moody: "If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself" (cited by Wiersbe, p. 85).

V. 27
"Whited sepulchres" - Graves or burial tombs that have been white-washed.

Many focus on sanitizing the extremities of our lives (that which people can see), but fail to deal with the rotten bones and impurities hidden deep in our lives.

We need to clean out the inner caverns of our lives; we need to do some house-cleaning (not dusting off the surface, but ridding ourselves of the garbage and clutter).

V. 28
Things are not always what they "seem" to be.

Don't major on appearance.

Spend more time being what you should be than hiding what you are!



Act Seven: False <u>PRAISE</u> (tribute)*(v. 29-36)*
They venerate <u>dead</u> saints, but persecute <u>living</u> ones

V. 29

"Garnish the sepulchres" - adorn or beautify their monuments

V. 32

"Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers" - Put the finishing touch on the diabolical work of your ancestors; complete their hideous crime.

V. 33

"Serpents" - snakes (Satan hypocritically disguised himself using a serpent - Gen. 3)

"Generation of vipers" - offspring of venomous snakes

One who dies a religious hypocrite has no chance of escaping the eternal ***"judgment of gehenna fire"***!

The day of escape is today!

V. 35

They killed the saints from A to Z (Abel to Zacharias).

It's amazing how the Roman Catholic Church venerates St. Peter, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John, St. Paul, etc., yet do not follow their epistles and gospels (and historically without apology persecuted and martyred those who did follow them).

They venerate (honor) great first-century Christians (build statues in their names and canonize them as Catholics), yet do not believe God's Word as they did.

You may praise D.L Moody, quote C.H. Spurgeon, adore John Calvin, and honor Martin Luther - but this does not matter if you mistreat your fellow church member, despise the brother/sister who rubs you the wrong way, or speak evil of the preacher or deacons of this church.

CONCLUSION: Verses 37-39

The perfect balance of Christ's character is seen in V. 37-39. He was righteously indignant at Jerusalem's hypocrisy, yet at the same time His heart was broken over them.

Jesus loves even the hypocrite. He wants to save the hypocrite.

V. 37

"O Jerusalem" - The word *"O"* is added to express the deep grief and anguish in Christ's heart over Jerusalem's people (cp. Luke 19:41-42).

"Jerusalem" - means "the city of peace" (it had become a city of bloodshed)

"I would have. . . ye would not" - divine sovereignty and human responsibility (John 5:40 - *"And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life."*)

Jesus desired to save and shelter Jerusalem's people under His protective wings, but they were unwilling; they did not desire to come to Him.

V. 38

"Their house" (the temple and their city) - Would be left desolate - devoid of Christ's presence and protection, as Rome would burn their temple and city in 70 A.D. and scatter its occupants all over the earth.

V. 39

Until one sees Christ as the ***"Blessed Lord"*** they will never see Him.

One day 1/3 of Israel will see Him and consider Him their Blessed One (Zech. 12:10 - *"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.")*.

If you are a religious hypocrite, one day your "mask" will be removed; you can't wear it forever.

The real You will eventually be known (when the situation and circumstances are right; when the temptation is overwhelming; when the pressure is turned on).

Take off your masks now yourself, so God does not have to do it for you later!

ILLUS: Aesop's fable of a wolf that disguised itself as a sheep
(MacArthur, Matthew, Volume I, p. 353)

God is interested in the heart, not mere external, insincere displays of piety.

Phony "spiritual" practices cannot fool the Lord.

"You are what you really are when you are all alone."

What you do when no one is watching you reveals your true character.

Too many today, like the ancient Pharisees love "*the praise of men more than the praise of God"*

Christianity is not theatrics, it is not an act, it's not a game of pretending; it's to be a real, genuine relationship with God that results in real, genuine works for God.

In a world of facades, fake appearances, false impressions, deceitful image, masks, artificiality, we can make our greatest impact by just simple being REAL (genuine)!