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# Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks Baptist Church**  
Grand Prairie, Texas

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## Jesus Criticizes Unjust Leaders Matt 23:1-8, 23-26

### Aim and Application of the Lesson

The lesson helps us to understand why **Jesus Criticizes Unjust Leaders**. The study's aim is to understand that God's attitude toward hypocritical religion has not changed and never will. The study's application is to resolve never to enter into the sins of selfishness or hypocrisy.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Lesson Introduction and Background

Of all the things the Lord Jesus said and taught, He reserved His most condemning language for unjust religious leaders. In this text, He focused on the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes were a class of people who had expertise in the Jewish law and were supreme over the people in teaching, always careful to enforce strict compliance with the law and their interpretation of it. In the Gospels, we see them demanding to be honored and respected. The Pharisees were the scribes' "partners in crime," a religious party that was characterized by extreme devotion to the practice of the law, including many laws that were man-made. They wanted to be extra clean and righteous in all that they did. As we read the Gospels, we see that these groups frequently condemned others for supposed violations of religious law and duty, however minor. These religious Jews were dominant among the Jews of the Lord's time. Notice that they sat in "Moses' seat." Moses' seat was the honored place of teaching in a synagogue, and those who sat there had positions of authority over the people. Later in the passage, the Lord uttered a lengthy and pointed rebuke of these leaders, calling them such things as "blind guides" (Matt. 23:16), "serpents," and a "generation of vipers" (vs. 33). He pointed to numerous vices and failures such as hypocrisy, public displays of feigned religious piety, lack of humility, a focus on man-made rules, greed, corrupt inner lives, and hatred of true prophets. To paraphrase our text, the Lord essentially told His disciples and the multitude that if the unjust leaders taught the right things, they should listen to them but that they should never do what they did and live the way they lived. They were leaders who lacked integrity and honesty and did not practice what they preached. In the Christian life, we all have to learn discernment about what we are taught and who is doing the teaching. Is what we are being taught by our leaders sound and in agreement with God's Word? If so, we are to listen and follow it. If not, we need to find a place that is faithful to God's Word. That is a key element of discernment. We must also look at the lives of those who teach us. Are they sincerely committed to living what they teach from God's Word? No one lives in a completely blameless way, but we should be able to discern true sincerity and godliness in leadership. When we see godly teachers who have integrity, we should draw near and learn to follow them. Nothing is better for our own discipleship than to follow good and godly teachers. We must realize that the Lord Jesus was not attacking the idea of leadership for God's people. He was attacking false leadership and the way some leaders fail to properly teach God's people, setting a poor example. We are not to follow unjust, dishonest, or corrupt leaders. Instead, we should look to those who love God's Word, teach it plainly, and obey it.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:**

God's ways are not our ways. We tend to equate leadership with lordship; He equates leadership with servanthood.

**COMMENT FOR THE WEEK:**

God lets leaders fall off their pedestal. Failure, indecision, and underachievement bring them to a humbling realization of their own inadequacy—and can cause followers to lose their illusions and overdependence on those leaders

**SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:**

*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*

(2 Cor 3:5 NKJV)

*(from "Our Daily Bread", Mar 25, 2001)*

**Series: Justice in the New Testament**

**UNIT: Jesus Calls for Justice and Mercy**

**NEXT WEEK**

**The Widow and the Unjust Judge  
(Matt Luke 18:1-8)**

## NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

### **Do Not Imitate Unjust Leaders (Matt 23:1-8)**

#### *Beware of spiritual inconsistency (1-4)*

- Inconsistent in judging faults (Matt 7:3)
- Inconsistent in motives (Luke 6:46)
- Inconsistent in involvement (Luke 11:46)
- Inconsistent in judgments (Rom 2:1)
- Inconsistent in associations (Gal 2:14)

#### *Do not seek self-exaltation (5-6)*

- Self-exaltation through desiring greater honor (Prov 25:6-7)
- Self-exaltation through praising self (Prov 27:2)
- Self-exaltation through seeking to be greater than others (Matt 18:1-4)
- Self-exaltation through seeking noble treatment (Luke 14:7-11)
- Self-exaltation through assuming greater righteousness (Luke 18:9-14)

#### *Beware of seeking to be teachers (7-8)*

- Teachers will be judged more strictly (James 3:1-2)
- Teachers sometimes misjudge their knowledge (Rom 2:17-21)
- Teachers will have more demanded of them because of more responsibilities (Luke 12:48)
- Teachers must be proven faithful in what has been given them (1 Cor 4:2)

### **Woes to Hypocrisy (Matt 23:23-26)**

#### *Neglecting spiritual piety (23-24)*

- Neglecting piety by not showing mercy to those in need (Luke 10:30-36)
- Neglecting piety by not helping the poor (Prov 21:13)
- Neglecting piety by not doing good deeds when given the opportunity (James 4:17)
- Neglecting piety by not abiding by the golden rule (Matt 7:12)
- Neglecting piety by not showing mercy over assumed duties and sacrifices (Matt 12:7)

#### *Neglecting spiritual purity (25-26)*

- Neglecting purity by considering outward appearances over spiritual ones (1 Sam 16:7)
- Neglecting purity by judging by appearances (John 7:24)
- Neglecting purity by not riding themselves from everything that hinders (2 Cor 7:1)
- Neglecting purity by not being a vessel of honor (2 Tim 2:20-21)
- Neglecting purity by not being near to God and not resisting sin (James 4:8)