

## 防备假教师——马可福音 12:38-44

### Beware of False Teachers—Mark 12:38-44

#### *Introduction and Outline*

- Scripture Reading: **Mark 12:38-44; Matthew 6:1-8.**

**Mark 12:35-37** (NASB 1995)

38 In His teaching He was saying: “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, 39 and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, 40 who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.”41 And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. 42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. 43 Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

- False religion has always been a serious problem throughout human history. Adam tried to cover the shame of his guilt with a few pieces of fig leaves. Cain and Abel both made offerings to God, but one of them has a murderous heart filled with jealousy and anger. Human history is filled with all kinds of religious lies which, claiming to lead people to God and to His blessings, lead them instead away from God and into His curses.
- The Bible uses the harshest language to describe false teachers: they are hypocrites, blind guides, sons of hell, whitewashed tombs; they are thieves, robbers, enemies of the cross of Christ; they are conceited, understanding nothing, men of depraved mind, daring, self-willed; they are springs without water, clouds without rain, autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead; they are pigs, dogs, wolves in sheep’s clothing, savage wolves, dogs, brood of vipers, unreasoning animals, accursed children.
- Outline:

Title: Beware of False Teachers — Mark 12:38-44

1. Caution against False Teachers (v. 38a)
2. Characteristics of False Teachers (vv. 38b-40a)
3. Condemnation of False Teachers (v. 40b)
4. Case-study of False Teachers (vv. 41-43)

#### **Caution against False Teachers (v. 38a)**

- “Beware of the scribes”: Learn to be discerning. Recognize the false teachers. Stay away from them. Do not tolerate them. Do not show hospitality to them. Do not be friends with them.

**2 John 10-11:** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

**2 Corinthians 6:17:** “Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord.

“And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, [a]rather than according to Christ.

**Philippians 3:2:** Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision

**Acts 20:30-31:** and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

- “In His teaching”: This is Jesus’ last public sermon. It was preached in the temple, the most sacred place in Judaism. The full sermon is in Matthew 23, where the whole chapter is fierce condemnation of the false teachers and pronounces judgment on them - ‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees’. This sermon preaches not good news but bad news. Its purpose is to wake up some sleeping souls to see the grave danger of the environment they live in.

### **Characteristics of False Teachers (vv. 38b-40a)**

- “like to walk around in long robes“: Does it remind you of the clergy in some religious circles today? The issue is not the clothes but the heart, that they like doing this. In our context, the equivalent of robes could well be suits, shirts, and ties.

【Principle】 They want to look different just to appear superior to others. False teachers want to look different so others seeing them will immediately think they are a higher class of people.

**Matthew 23:5** “But they do all their deeds **to be noticed by men**; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels *of their garments*.”

- “like respectful greetings in the market places“: The greetings they wanted to hear are not like “Hello, brother! How are you doing?” Rather, it’s more like “O great rabbi! O knowledgeable teacher! O beloved exalted godfather of us all!”

【Principle】 False teachers enjoy hearing such titles, which gives them a strong sense of personal fulfillment. They have no humility at all. Do you want to be called by those titles?

【Analogy】 Some people like to attach a string of titles to their name. Any time you see their bio, there’s always a long string. MD from WashU, PhD from SLU, visiting scholar at Harvard, guest lecturer at MIT...

【Application】 In the church, my favorite title is brother. Although the Bible does designate titles like elders and deacons, they really are titles of servanthood rather than dignity. Servants are the lowest in rank (Mark 10:42-44).

- “chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets“: noble and prominent seats. Not only in worship settings (synagogues), but their lust for noble seats even gets into their everyday life, like at the dinner table (banquets)...

【Cultural Analogy】 “Dinner’s ready, please take your seat of honor.” “Oh no, you take that seat, I’ll take this lower seat.” “No, no, you are our honored guest, you have to sit here.” “Alright... I shall gladly accept your kind offer then.”

【Application】 At our house, sit wherever you want! Wherever you feel most comfortable. There's no rule with that.

【Insight】 In some cultures, there seems to be endless external rules that people are so very particular about. Why? Because they're hollow inside. There isn't much good quality inside, so they try to make it up with all the externals.

- “devour widows' houses”: Widows in that society are the most helpless people. Not only did they neglect to care for widows, they even scammed them for profit. That shows how corrupt they are on the inside.

**Exodus 22:22** “You shall not afflict any widow or orphan.”

**Deuteronomy 10:18** “He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.”

Deuteronomy 24:19 “When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.”

**Jacobs 1:27** “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.”

False teachers “**suppose that godliness is a means of gain**” (1 Tim 6: 5). All their fake show of godliness is for personal gain.

- “for appearance's sake offer long prayers”: The issue isn't the length but that it's “for appearance's sake”. Any kind of fake prayer is a sin against God, let alone doing it for a long period of time.

**Proverbs 28:9** “He who **turns away his ear from listening to the law**, Even his **prayer is an abomination.**“

【Principle】 If a person doesn't want to listen to God's law—that is, if he has no desire to study the Bible humbly in order to obey it—any prayer he offers is a sin, let alone committing it for an extended period of time.

### **Condemnation of False Teachers (v. 40b)**

- “these will receive greater condemnation”: The fire of hell will burn hotter for them, the worm of hell will bite harder on them. Jesus's teaching here is clear: the severity of punishment in hell will not be the same for every sinner.

**Matthew 11:24** “... Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”

【Theology】 There is a difference of severity in hell, because there is a difference of severity in sin. God is perfectly just. He knows not every sin is equally severe. The reason false teachers will receive greater condemnation is because they cause greater damage to the whole human race.

### **Case-study of False Teachers (vv. 41-43)**

- “And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the people were putting money into the treasury”: The treasury is in the outer court of the temple, consisting of 13 **trumpet-shaped offering boxes** to collect all kinds of offerings. The trumpet-shape design was to enhance the sound effect of the coins clashing with each other, so when you toss lots of coins into it, you’d make a lot of noise, and everyone would see what a “godly” person you are.

**Matthew 6:2** - “So when you give to the poor, **do not sound a trumpet** before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full’

**【Key Point】** What Jesus saw here is **not a genuine offering of worship** that is pleasing to God, **but a fake show of empty religiosity.**

- “many rich people were putting in large sums“: Kling~ Klang~ Klong~ Imagine such noise resounding in the air. How would Jesus feel?
- “A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins“: Kling. That’s it.
- “she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on“: This is all she’s got to live on. She could either buy herself a last meal or give it to the treasury and go home and die. She chose the latter. Obviously, the religious leaders had **successfully fooled her** into thinking that **God would somehow bless her** for giving all she’s got to **this band of robbers.**

**【Think Critically】** Where does it say she’s our model for giving? If she were the model, why didn’t Jesus tell the disciples to follow her example and put all their money into that trumpet hole? Truth is, Jesus wouldn’t let his disciple put a single penny into that trumpet hole. Jesus had just revealed the truth of the temple that it had become a robbers’ den, how could he praise anyone for giving money to this den? Taking her as a model for giving is totally out of context. Moreover, did she not hear what Jesus just taught? Jesus just said “Beware of the scribes!”, and she turned around right away and gave all her money to the scribes.

**【Conclusion】** She’s not a model; she’s a victim! **This passage is written to show us what poor desperate victims are produced by a religious system that’s consumed with fake externalism!** If you were her, what would you do? I’d hold on tight to my last two coins and run to Jesus! And yet she turned away from Jesus to support his enemies, no doubt thinking she had done a wonderful thing...