MATHEW 22:15-46; 23:15-39

Israel’s culture, history and daily life centered around its relationship with God. The religious leaders in Jerusalem were the best known, most powerful and most respected of all leaders.

The Pharisees traditions and their interpretations and application of law had become as important to them as God’s law itself. Their laws were not all bad-some were beneficial. Problems arose when the religious leaders held that manmade rules were equal to God’s laws, told the people to obey these rules but did not do so themselves or obeyed the rules not to honor God ,but to make themselves look good. By getting caught up in the details of their laws and regulations they completely missed God to whom the laws pointed .They were meticulous about the details of ceremonial cleanliness but they had lost their perspective of inner purity. The religious leaders are not letting others enter the Kingdom of Heaven and not entering themselves. They are converting people away from God to be like themselves and blindly leading God’s people to follow man made traditions instead of God’s Word.

But Jesus exposes the hypocritical attitude of the religious leaders. Jesus condemns the Pharisees and religious leaders for outwardly appearing upright and holy but inwardly remaining full of corruption and greed .They knew the Scriptures but did not live by them. They didn’t care about being holy-just looking holy in order to receive people’s admiration and praises. The leaders’ hunger for more power, money and status had made them lose sight of God. Today like Pharisees we also say we know the Bible, but do not let it change our lives. We say we follow Jesus, but we don’t live by His standards of love. To Jesus, greatness comes from serving-giving ourselves to help God and others. Mathew23:11 say, “The greatest among you must be a servant” .Service keeps us aware of other’s needs and it stops us from focusing only on ourselves. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus says that if we truly love God and our neighbor, we will naturally keep the commandments. This is looking at God’s law positively. Rather than worrying about all we should not do we should concentrate on all we can do to show our love to God and others.

As Christians, we must make sure that our actions match our beliefs.