

## Tapiola Apostolic Church Newsletter March 2014

### Scribes and Pharisees

Jesus often referred to scribes and Pharisees in unflattering terms calling them hypocrites seven times in the Gospel of Matthew and whited sepulchers on at least one other occasion. While Jesus held them in low regard He yet held them up as examples to others whose righteousness one would have to exceed in order to gain access to heaven, *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:20). Of course being exceedingly good will not get one into heaven, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23)—even the ultra-religious scribes and Pharisees were unacceptable.

Scribes had their rightful place in society and as such were upstanding citizens of high regard. They, like the Levites mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy, were teachers of the Law and during Jesus’ time also served as advisors to the chief priests possibly making them high officials in the church. Because scribes had an in-depth knowledge of the Law they became influential authorities. Those who out of laziness, or for some other excuse did not diligently seek God’s guidance through prayer and meditation upon the Word, blindly followed the teachings of the scribes probably figuring that they must be correct and know the way to heaven since they knew so much.

Pharisees were a religious group that believed in resurrection, *“For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both”* (Acts 23:8). They, like the scribes, were well versed with the Law often following writings and traditions of other authorities not ascribable to Scripture. Apostle Paul, a Pharisee, spoke of his own experience with being held in high regard but nonetheless being lost, *“And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers”* (Galatians 1:14). He was absolutely convinced that evidence apart from the Bible was necessary, when combined with Scripture, to bring one into a saving faith. Paul, as a result of his unshakable unbelief, joyfully persecuted Christians such as Stephen who he had stoned to death. Because Pharisees were intimately knowledgeable with both the Scripture and the Law people looked up to them for guidance as they did to the scribes.

Together the scribes and Pharisees told people how to believe. They sought to preserve their influence over people by defending Judaism, as they defined it, against the likes of Jesus whose words pierced their consciences, *“And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him”* (Luke 6:7). Even today it is not unusual to see self-proclaimed Christians and unenlightened scholars, buoyed by followers, oppose all that is true and right most likely out of religious zeal and personal pride. Like the scribes and Pharisees described above, these individuals today have developed their religious positions largely from evidence gleaned from past traditions, writings and opinions of others, as opposed to simply from the Bible—and there always seems to be people who want to follow such good sounding but empty doctrine.

What we today hear from religious authorities—even though what they espouse might speak to our hearts—is useless unless it comes from a heart of love, *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal”* (1

Corinthians 13:1). Many people in Jesus' time adhered to the false teachings of the scribes and Pharisees largely because these teachings agreed with their own emotions and understandings. They were following good-sounding doctrine but certainly not sound doctrine. When the truth is spoken there is a recognizable difference, *“And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes”* (Mark 1:22). Jesus spoke from the Scriptures through the power of the Holy Ghost—with love—and not as the scribes who could only repeat what others had taught. Some people could sense this; most could not. People back then held on so strongly to false teachings that when they heard the truth they violently rebelled, *“Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him”* (Mark 15:14).

Do we also stubbornly follow good-sounding doctrine today? Apostle John instructs us not to believe all spirits but to try them against the teachings of the Bible and not in addition to the traditions, writings and understandings of man, *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”* (1 John 4:1).

God's peace,  
Charles Korhonen

### Worship Schedule

March 2	Ken Storm	11:00	Holy Communion
March 9	Chuck Korhonen	11:00	
March 16	Ken Storm	11:00	Medical Care 2pm
March 23	Arvo Onermaa/Paul Copponen	11:00	Potluck Meal
March 30	Nathan Ruonavaara	11:00	

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