

CLOUDS, CHRIST, AND HYPOCRITES

Presented by

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While Jesus lived on the Earth, He met many different types of people. Some were Jews, some were Gentiles. Some were rich, some were poor. Some were well educated, and some were not. However, Jesus was not interested in whether people were rich or poor, or whether they had a lot of education or very little. Instead, He was interested in their **souls**. He spent His whole life trying to teach people about God, and about how to go to heaven.

Some of those to whom Christ spoke listened carefully. When they realized that He was God's Son, and that He was teaching them the truth, they quickly obeyed Him. They wanted to do everything God said to do, in exactly the way God said to do it, so that one day they could live with Him forever.

But some of those to whom Christ spoke did not like the things He taught or the commands He brought from God. They thought they were too smart to need Jesus to teach them **anything**, and that they could do whatever they wanted. The Bible records a story in Luke 12:54-56 about Christ talking to such people on one occasion.

“Then He also said to the multitudes, ‘Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say that a shower is coming’; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say that there will be hot weather; and there is. Hypocrites! You can understand the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not understand this time?’”

Jesus called these people hypocrites. Hypocrites are individuals who are not genuine in the things they say or do. They might say one thing one day, and then exactly the opposite the next. Or they might act one way on a certain occasion, and then act exactly the opposite on another.

When Jesus spoke these words to the people of His day, He was trying to get them to see that they were **scientifically** smart, but **spiritually** ignorant. They were smart enough to look at the clouds forming in the sky, and then predict that it was going to rain. They were smart enough to see how the winds were blowing across the Earth, and then predict a searing heat. Yet they were **not** smart enough to see the signs around them which proved that Christ was God's Son. And they were not smart enough to look at the miracles He did and believe Him when He told them what they needed to do to be saved. They were hypocrites because they acted one way on one occasion, but acted exactly the opposite on another. They looked at the signs that would help them predict the weather, but they **refused** to look at the signs that would help them get to heaven.

On another occasion, Jesus used even stronger words when He spoke to the scribes and Pharisees about their hypocrisy. These were people who pretended to live godly lives, but who in reality were some of the worst sinners of their day. Listen to the blistering rebuke that Jesus gave them in Matthew 23:23-28.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! You pay one-tenth of mint and anise and cummin, yet you have neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone. Blind guides! You strain out the gnat and swallow the camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! You cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.... Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs that appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. You, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

Can you imagine Christ saying that to **you** today? Do you think that you would be able to go to heaven if the Son of God spoke to you like that? Of course you wouldn’t! Neither could the scribes or Pharisees. And that was Christ’s point. In both of the discussions by Christ that I have mentioned in this sermon, He said the things He did in order to teach people that they needed to repent and live godly lives instead of being hypocrites.

Today, when we look at the sky and see the clouds that God made, or when we feel a searing wind on our faces, let us remember the message Christ gave the people of His day. It may be good for us to know that the clouds can tell us certain things about changes in the weather. Or, it might help us to know how wind patterns can predict oncoming storms. But it is **even more important** to know the message of Christ about how to get to heaven. We should **never** want to be hypocrites like the people of Jesus’ day. Instead of having Jesus say to us, “Hypocrites!,” wouldn’t it be better to have Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master”? To ask is to answer, is it not?