3ABN SABBATH SCHOOL PANEL
07 – Wednesday – November 11, 2026

Hypocrisy

Have you ever looked at things that others have done in the past and thought to yourself, *If that were me, I never would have done what those people did!* However, if we are honest with ourselves, we may not do the exact things that others do, but we often behave in similar ways, repeating the same mistakes while, perhaps, blinding ourselves willfully to what we are really doing. This is the principle Jesus Himself addressed when He said:
" 'Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye' " *(Matt. 7:5, NKJV).*

The Painful Point Jesus Was Making

1. Religious People Often Honor Dead Prophets but Reject Living Ones

"If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets."—Matthew 23:30, NKJV

The religious leaders built monuments to prophets who were no longer able to confront them, while rejecting Jesus and persecuting God's current messengers. It is easier to praise yesterday's prophets than to obey a prophetic message that challenges us today.

2. Their Claim of Spiritual Superiority Revealed Their Self-Deception

"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets."—Matthew 23:31, NKJV

They believed they were more faithful than their ancestors, but they possessed the same resistant spirit. Their problem was not a lack of religious knowledge; it was their unwillingness to accept correction and repent.

3. Rejecting God's Messengers Can Lead to Rejecting God Himself

"I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify."—Matthew 23:34, NKJV

Their opposition would not stop with the prophets. They were preparing to reject and crucify Christ Himself and later persecute His followers. When people repeatedly silence God's correction, their hearts may become so hardened that they oppose the very God they claim to serve.

The Warning for Us We must not assume that belonging to the right church, knowing biblical truth, or honoring past prophets guarantees that we will accept God's truth today.

“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”—Hebrews 3:15, NKJV

The real test is **not whether we admire God’s messengers when their work is finished**. The test is **whether we accept biblical correction when it confronts our present beliefs, habits, traditions, and sins**.

The warning is clear: We can celebrate the prophets of yesterday while possessing the same spirit that rejected them. True respect for God’s messengers is demonstrated not by building monuments to them, but by obeying the truth God sends through them.

There is a sense in these verses that Jesus hated the behavior of the Pharisees because their hypocrisy was made even worse by a determined refusal to change. Jesus had had enough of the religion of the Pharisees. He was finished with spiritual elites in long flowing robes who were little more than whitewashed tombs filled with the bones of the dead *(Matt. 23:27, 28)*. They would not confess or forsake their sins, even when the sins were pointed out to them, even when Jesus again and again gave them a chance to repent and be saved.

How Do We Avoid Outward Religion and Inward Rebellion?

1. Allow God to Examine the Heart

We must ask God to reveal motives, attitudes, and hidden sins that religious activity can conceal.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me.”—Psalm 139:23–24, NKJV

The goal is not merely to appear righteous, but to become honest before God.

2. Respond to Conviction With Repentance

Knowing truth is not enough; we must surrender whenever Scripture or the Holy Spirit exposes sin.

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”—James 1:22, NKJV

Correction should lead to confession, changed behavior, reconciliation, and restitution where necessary.

3. Stay Connected to Christ Daily

We cannot produce genuine righteousness through religious effort. Only an abiding relationship with Jesus can transform the heart.

“Abide in Me, and I in you… for without Me you can do nothing.”—John 15:4–5, NKJV

Prayer, Scripture, and surrender keep religion from becoming an empty performance.

4. Examine How We Treat Other People

Our treatment of others often reveals our true spiritual condition more accurately than our public religious behavior.

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”—John 13:35, NKJV

Greed must be replaced with generosity, hatred with forgiveness, pride with humility, and rebellion with obedience.

5. Welcome Biblical Correction

The religious leaders rejected messages that threatened their position and exposed their sins. We must cultivate a teachable spirit.

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”—Proverbs 27:6, NKJV

We should ask, “Is this correction biblical?” before becoming defensive or rejecting the messenger.

6. Seek Inward Transformation, Not Outward Reputation

“For man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”—1 Samuel 16:7, NKJV

Christianity is not merely controlling appearances; it is allowing God to change our desires, motives, and character.

The safeguard against hypocrisy is daily surrender. We must give God permission to expose what is hidden, remove what is sinful, and reproduce the character of Jesus within us.