

Tugging at Our Phylacteries

Matthew 23:5-12; Exodus 13:9, 16; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18

Thesis: Showmanship religion is wrong and God has always condemned this type of religion. Wearing our religion as an external sign of our righteousness is wrong.

Introduction:

1. Judging others' motives has always been wrong. Judging usually ignores that sins that live in the heart of the judge.
 2. A quick Google search on the phrase, "Judging in the Bible" returned over 10 million results. Most of those results have to do with people judging others.
 - a. Matthew 7:1-5; "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."
 - b. Luke 6:37; "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."
 - c. John 8; the woman caught in adultery
 - d. James 4:11-12; "Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?"
 - e. The point of these passages is that it is wrong to sit in judgment of other people when we too are guilty of the same or even worse sins.
 3. Why type of Christian would go around thinking he is better than other people? The pharisaical Christian.
 4. Read Matthew 23:1-12.
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- I. Explanation of the phylacteries and tassels
 - A. Several religions use external emblems to show their religion.
 1. Christians: crucifix, fish symbols, license plate covers, etc.
 2. Jews: mezuzah (Fishkoff), phylacteries and tassels.
 - B. Phylacteries are wooden boxes with straps. One box was worn on the forehead and the other on the left arm, with the box pointing in toward the heart. This meant that the Word of God would forever be before the person and forever be close to the person's heart.
 1. The boxes contain four scriptures (Exodus 13:9, 16; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18).
 2. The Lord never commanded the wearing of such boxes, but never condemned them either. These phylacteries are not mentioned in the Old Testament. This means that they began to be used post Moses' time-about 400 B.C. (Hastings et al., vol. I-V)
 3. As time passed some people began to use larger boxes on their foreheads as competition to see who was holier.
 4. Their religion had become more show than living. They had taken the scriptures as a literal commandment instead of what was intended-live holiness don't show it. Write the Law to learn it in order to live it.

tags: phylacteries, humility, pharisees, attention, arrogance, first, tassels, seat of Moses

5. They wore the boxes on the forehead and close to the heart without (for some) allowing the Law to dwell in their hearts.
- C. Tassels are strings woven into prayer shawls (tallit).
1. According to Jewish understanding, the numerical value of the Hebrew word *tzitzit* (fringes) is 600. Each of the fringes contains 8 threads and 5 knots, making a total of 613. Based on rabbinical Judaism, this number corresponds to the 613 commandments contained in the Torah. (GotQuestions.org)
 2. As time progressed people began to wear fancy tassels, longer ones, and tugged at them as a show of their holiness.
 3. Seems like Jesus wore tassels. The woman who had an issue of blood reached and touched the hem of His garment. (Matthew 9:20)
- D. Jesus condemned the use of this items AS A SHOW of our religion.
- E. Are we modern day pharisees? How can we tell if we are modern day pharisees?
- II. How can we tell if we are modern day pharisees?
- A. I desire attention (*They* “do all their deeds to be seen by others.”) They desired to draw attention to themselves, instead of drawing attention to God.
1. They made their phylacteries broad.
 2. They made their fringes (tassels) long
 3. In order to to show how pious and spiritual they were compared to others, they made their phylacteries and tassels much larger than everyone else. This revealed their hearts which they considered themselves superior to other people.
4. **Today**, we too can be guilty of the same sin.
- a) Some might dress modestly as the Bible commands (1 Timothy 2:9-10) with the intentions of pleasing God, others, not he other hand might do it to shame others. It has to do with intentions and what is in the heart.
 - b) Some might decorate their homes with angels, Bibles, religious scriptures, etc., to help them live a holy and dedicated life. Others might do it with other means. The intentions are important.
 - c) Story of the person who had a license plate cover that read, “Follow me to the nearest Church of Christ,” and had cut off and brake checked traffic. The other that had a fish symbol and John 3:16 on their car. Police pulled it over thinking the car had been stolen because the driver was extremely aggressive and liked to wave with less than 5 fingers.
- B. I desire recognition
1. Wherever they went the Pharisees wanted to be recognized as supreme guests of honor.
 - a) At a festival (party) they wanted the best seats in the house, preferably next to the host.
 1. James and John (Mark 10) wanted to be the head of the Kingdom.
 2. Jesus came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45)
 - b) At the market places they wanted people to call them rabbi (Matthew 23:7)
 1. We should not accept the titles of teacher, pastor, father, etc., if the intent is to be recognized. Father is a title that belongs to God and not man (Matthew 23:9)

2. Too many pastors have come to love the first places everywhere, the glitz and glamor. Some have even said that they need a private jet because they cannot pray in a plane full of heathens. ,Kenneth Copeland and Jesse Duplantis> (Brice-Saddler) (Wootson Jr.)
 2. Recognition might be the most dangerous because it is often not too glaring, it is something that can be hidden in the heart.
 - C. I desire honor: Sometimes we want to do everything because “If I don’t do it, it won’t get done.” or, “If you I want something done right, I might as well do it myself.” or, “No one can do it as good as I can.” What are the motives? Are they to serve or to receive honor. There are some folks who will give a donation and demand to be recognized.
 - D. You might be a modern day pharisee if you think you are better than others.
- III. The Remedy
- A. Consider my motives
 1. The main problem with the Pharisees was not in the wearing of the phylacteries and tassels, but in their motives.
 2. Their motives were dirty, with bad intentions, with the desire to be seen as better and holier than everyone else.
 3. Why do we do the things that we do? Why do I serve? It must be in order to honor the Lord and not to receive the honor of men.
 4. These would have been the ones who would have made a distinction among the classes (1 Cor. 11:17-19; James 2:1ff)
 5. Galatians 3:28 - God is no respecter of persons, there are no class systems or economic differences when it comes to the person’s soul.
 - B. Focus on what we have in common
 1. The Pharisees focused on their service, on their deeds, on their holiness, and felt that they were better and above everyone else.
 2. Jesus makes it clear that in order to be saved one needs to accept that he is sick, lost (Luke 19:10; Mark 2:17)
 3. Paul was a Pharisee who enjoyed the privileges. But as a Christian he changed his attitude (Philippians 3:2-9)
 4. In the Kingdom of God we all have different talents and roles, but we are the same and of equal worth in the eyes of God. (Acts 10:34; Colossians 3:9-11)
 - C. Serve others
 1. Greatness is not measured by the external things. This was the Pharisees’ downfall.
 2. Greatness is measured BY GOD in how we humble ourselves and how we serve in the Kingdom. The honor comes from God and not from man. When we want the honor from man then everything is lost. (Mark 10:45-Jesus came to serve and not to be served.)
 3. A servant’s attitude is what pleases the Lord.
 - D. You might be a modern day Pharisee is you thin you are better than other Christians.

Conclusion:

1. I don’t know of anyone here who wears phylacteries, sews tassels in their prayer shawls and puts up mezuzahs, but we might be guilty of the intentions we have discussed.

2. Jesus has made it possible for us to understand and accept that we should not desire the best places in the church in order to be seen of men, that we do not do the deeds to receive the honor of men - Philippians 2:5-11; ...and Jesus was obedient even to the point of death.
3. We should not judge other people's motives, this lesson is to look at our own hearts and make the changes we need to make. (John 12:47; Jesus did not come to judge the world)
4. We must recognize that we are sick and need a doctor.
5. Plan of salvation.
 1. Hear the Good News
 - a. [Romans 10:13](#) shows us that we must hear the gospel so that we know how to obey. We must first receive the good news through the teaching of God's word.
 - b. Believe: A personal belief in the gospel is essential to God's plan of salvation: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" ([Rom. 10:17](#)). We must believe that the one true God of the Bible sent his son Jesus from heaven as a once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the world. We must believe in Jesus' sinless life, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead. This is the gospel, as defined in [1 Cor. 15](#).
 - c. Confess: [Romans 10:9](#) states that "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Many teach a confession of sins prior to the point of salvation. However, the Bible teaches that we are to confess Jesus as the master of our lives.
 - d. Repent: The Christian walk requires a complete 180-turn away from a life of sin to a life of righteousness. The Bible calls this act repentance. The word repentance literally means "a change of mind and of action." When a person commits his life to Jesus, he must turn away from their old ways and habits in order to follow a new Master.
 - e. Be Baptized: The Bible is very clear regarding the necessity and role of water baptism in the plan of salvation. We are told: "repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" ([Acts 2:38](#)). Through our submission in waters of baptism our sins are washed away by the blood of Christ, and we put on Christ like a garment ([Gal. 3:26-27](#)). We do so to share in Jesus death and resurrection ([Rom. 6:3-5](#)).
 - f. Rise to walk a new life: Just as Jesus was buried and rose from the dead, we must also rise from the watery grave of baptism to walk a new life in Jesus Christ ([Gal. 3:27](#), [Rom. 6:3-4](#)).

Works Cited

Barry, John D, et al. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Logos ed., Bellingham, WA, The Lexham Press, 2016, ref.ly/logosres/lbd?hw=Phylactery. Accessed 30 Nov. 2019.

1. mezuzah—a small box, containing scrolls bearing the same four verses, mounted to the right doorpost of the house and of each room (see Deut 6:9; 11:20); 2. tzitzin—tassels or fringes with blue cords worn at the four corners of a prayer shawl (see Num 15:37–38; Deut 22:12). The rule that Israel should wear the commandments “as a memorial between [their] eyes” was probably intended metaphorically.

Brice-Saddler, Michael. “A Wealthy Televangelist Explains His Fleet of Private Jets: ‘It’s a Biblical Thing.’” *The Washington Post*, 4 June 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2019/06/04/wealthy-televangelist-explains-his-fleet-private-jets-its-biblical-thing/. Accessed 19 Jan. 2020.

Chouinard, Larry. *Matthew*. Joplin, Mo., College Press, 1997. There was nothing necessarily ostentatious in wearing tassels, even Jesus may have worn such ornamentation (cf. 9:20; 14:36). However, the Pharisees made their phylacteries extra wide, and their tassels long, so as to flaunt their piety. Such outward displays are not true barometers of the depth of one’s religious devotion.

Fishkoff, Sue. “California Lawmakers Pass ‘Mezuzah Bill.’” *The Jewish News of Northern California*, The Jewish News of Northern California, 10 July 2019, www.jweekly.com/2019/07/10/california-legislature-close-to-passing-mezuzah-bill/. Accessed 19 Jan. 2020.

Gilbert, F C. *Practical Lessons from the Experience of Israel for the Church of To-Day.*

Nashville, Southern Pub. Association, 1972, bit.ly/2OX4A1G. Accessed 30 Nov.

2019. Pharisaical Wisdom Leads Away From God Claiming to be wise and

learned men, they depended on their own logic and philosophy to export the

Bible, which, they considered, explained the correct idea of righteousness, and

the true way to worship God. As a result, all their righteousness became self-

righteousness; all their wisdom became folly, which often led to sensuality

(James 3:13-15); all their imparting of Scripture knowledge became departing

from the right ways of the Lord. (79)It should be observed the Savior did not

condemn them for wearing either of the objects. as though it were sinful; but the

condemnation pronounced upon them was for making the objects so prominent.

Thus it must be clear that they considered there was something in these things

with had a certain degree of virtue. (Matthew 9:20; 14:36; Luke 8:45-46)

(79-80)The Garment (the Blue Fringes)After a time a degree of sacredness was

thrown around the garment; finally it became part of the synagogue service.

(80)The reason, no doubt, why god gave the color blue, was because this was

the color of the heavens, as well as a representation of royal covenant. ...

designed to teach the people a deep spiritual truth, if their eyes were only

opened to see it. (81)They might have known from the words of the prophets,

that true righteousness was not found in the wearing of those objects; but in Him,

“Jehovah, our righteousness.” (Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-16) In several of the

prophets it is recored that the righteousness of the people of God was in the lord

and that this righteousness would be imparted to them by believing god, and

obeying His will. (Psalm 4:1; 35:28; Isaiah 45:24; 54:17; Daniel 9:7; Hosea 2:19; Zephaniah 2:3; Genesis 15:6; Deuteronomy 6:25)The PhylacteriesWhile certain scriptures might be adduced as reason for the wearing of fringes, the garment, and the border, this could hardly be said for the use of the phylacteries. Nevertheless there was not task too Herculean, for the scribe or the pharisee to accomplish, if he thought that by so doing he could add some outward observance which would make him appear righteous overmuch, and a good logician in Scripture. The basis for the wearing of the phylacteries is found in four different scriptures recorded in Exodus 13:1-10, 11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-20. (84)Before this is placed in its position, however, a prayer is offered in which is contained the four scriptures already cited; it mentions the location of these objects, and concludes that these may be as acceptable in the sight of God as though the individual had performed every command of God, even to the 613 commands, upon which depend the wearing of these things. (85)From the above prayers and scripture it is evident that the Pharisee expected the wearing of these was bringing him much of God's favor, and a large amount of righteousness. He was doing something for the Lord that not a Sadducee, or a Samaritan, or any other class who professed to believe in God was doing. Hence he thought he had a right to feel that the Lord ought to have more respect to him than to any other people. Of course the broader his phylactery the more imputation of righteousness. It is then not surprising that the Pharisee should want his phylactery broad, for this would indicate a greater amount of righteousness, as well as a nearness to the Shekinah (86)When the Pharisee,

clothed in his garment with the wide border, wore his phylacteries with the broad straps, and offered all the prayers connected with them, no one felt more secure of having received righteousness and God's smile than did he. (87).

GotQuestions.org. "What Are Phylacteries? | GotQuestions.Org." *GotQuestions.Org*, 21 May 2014, www.gotquestions.org/phylacteries.html. Accessed 29 Nov. 2019.

Jesus taught that God is not as concerned with the external trappings of religion as He is with the true nature of the heart. He pointed out that it was possible to wear large phylacteries containing God's Word yet disobey God's Word at the same time. Likewise, in the church today, it's possible to wear a cross, pay a tithe, raise a hand, and quote a creed—all without truly acknowledging the Lord in our hearts. God knows the truth of our spiritual condition. "LORD Almighty, you . . . examine the righteous and probe the heart and mind" (Jeremiah 20:12). May we be able to say with the psalmist, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11).

Hastings, James, et al. *A Dictionary of the Bible: Dealing with Its Language, Literature, and Contents Including the Biblical Theology, Volumes I–V*. 1898. Logos ed., vol. I–V, University Press of the Pacific, Logos, 1911. THE PRACTICE OF MODERN ORTHODOX JUDAISM.—Every male Israelite above the age of thirteen years is required to 'lay (לְהַגִּידָם, Mishna, Shebu. iii. 8, 11, etc.) the tēphillîn'—to use the technical expression—at daily morning prayer. Article citation: Kennedy, A. R. S. (1911–1912). PHYLACTERIES, FRONTLETS. In J. Hastings, J. A. Selbie, A. B. Davidson, S. R. Driver, & H. B. Swete (Eds.), *A Dictionary of the Bible: Dealing*

with Its Language, Literature, and Contents Including the Biblical Theology (Vol. I–V). New York; Edinburgh: Charles Scribner’s Sons; T. & T. Clark.

Langfield, Weldon. *Luke: “That You May Understand the Saviour” a Commentary - Exegetical, Homiletical.* edited by William S Cline, Austin, Texas, Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1988, pp. 206–207. Verses 45-46. Christ was fully aware of what had happened. He asked the question to call forth the one who had touched Him. This healing was not the result of magical properties of Jesus’ garment, but a result of His will and further evidence of His power. Since the dawning of the Christian faith there have been those who have put faith in supposed relics of Christ and the apostles. In this century much has been written about the supposed burial shroud of Jesus now in Turin, Italy.

Maggs, J. T. L. “Phylacteries.” *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels: Aaron–Zion*, edited by J Hastings et al., T & T Clark; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906, p. 360, ref.ly/logosres/dicchrstgspl?hw=Phylacteries. Accessed 30 Nov. 2019. In order to emphasize their profession of religion, these people ‘made broad’ (πλατύνουσι, Mt 23:5) these mementoes of their Judaism, whether by enlarging the whole, the boxes and the straps, or, as the Sinaitic and Curetonian Syriac suggest, the straps only. It was the vain extension of the outward sign of an unreal religion that our Lord rebuked; it marked the externality and hollowness of contemporary Pharisaism. While this is the only NT reference to phylacteries, their use by a certain class should continually be borne in mind by the reader, as it may add to the vividness of the picture suggested by many incidents. Thus in Mt 22:34 II it may be considered as certain that the group of Pharisees with whom our Lord

held His controversy wore their broadened phylacteries, and that the passage He quoted, the Shema', the foundation of Hebrew religion, would be found in the phylacteries they carried on their heads and arms.

“Phylactery | Definition, Significance, & Facts | Britannica.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2019, www.britannica.com/topic/phylactery. Accessed 30 Nov. 2019. The phylacteries are worn in a prescribed manner so as to represent the letters shin, daleth, and yod, which taken together form the divine name Shaddai.

Wootson Jr., Cleve R. “A Televangelist Wants His Followers to Pay for a \$54 Million Private Jet. It’s His Fourth Plane.” *The Washington Post*, 29 May 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/05/29/a-televangelist-wants-his-followers-to-pay-for-a-54-million-private-jet-its-his-fourth-plane/. Accessed 19 Jan. 2020.