

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCT 31ST-NOV 1ST, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

LEADING ASTRAY (MATTHEW 23:13-15)

THE 7 "WOES" OF THE HYPOCRITICAL LEADERS

The word woe that is used in this chapter means to express righteous anger and to point out a catastrophic ending that will take place if the warning isn't taken seriously.

- Jesus is pointing out that the selfish and hypocritical lifestyle of the religious leaders would lead to judgment and destruction.

THE 1ST AND 2ND WOE: LEADING PEOPLE ASTRAY

Because the religious leaders were being **rebellious** to God's Word and were being **hypocritical**, they "shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces."

- People who wanted to do the right thing were being misled. **They didn't walk correctly, so those that follow don't either, resulting in a lot of people being lost.**

"TWICE AS FIT FOR HELL AS YOU ARE!"

Jesus gets extra sassy here and tells the Pharisees that they don't work hard to convert the lost, and when they do they just make matters worse by modeling bad theology.

- **How many people have we discipled and are we discipling them in a way that honors the Word of God? If we aren't teaching truth, it makes matters worse.**

LEGALISM (MATTHEW 23:16-24)

THE 3RD AND 4TH WOES: MISUSING THE LAW

Jesus chastised the Pharisees because they used the law as a replacement for having a real relationship with God. They also **put on a good outward appearance while the inside was dark and distant from God. When rules and appearances become more important than authenticity and relationship, it becomes legalism.**

SWEARING BY THE TEMPLE

The Pharisees would make promises based on the elaborate temples and the wealth inside. Essentially, they would "swear to God" and use the temple as collateral, but then break their promises. This was using the Lord's name in vain. Promises are fine, but **we must do what we say we are going to do (Mt. 5:36-37).**

THEY ALSO VALUED THE INSTITUTION MORE THAN GOD

The Pharisees valued the temple and the rules of the temple more than connecting with God and loving others. They'd become legalistic; **legally accurate but morally bankrupt.**

- **We cannot earn salvation, regardless of how well we follow rules. We must be saved by grace, then do our best to bless the kingdom with our obedient lifestyles.**

BENDING THE RULES TO BENEFIT YOURSELF

Not only did the Pharisees break promises, they also perverted the laws to fit their selfish desires. The religious leaders taught things like tithing, but they neglected "the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy, and faithfulness."

- **It was picking and choosing rules that benefited them, not the Word in its totality.**

LEGALISM MISSES THE REAL HEART OF GOD

The heart of God is to love others and help them build a relationship with Him. When we focus more on rules and less on relationship, we miss the whole point of **why** things are right or wrong.

- **A real change of behavior will follow a real change of heart. Living obediently will follow falling in love with Jesus.**

HYPOCRISY (MATTHEW 23:25-28)

THE 5TH AND 6TH WOE: HYPOCRISY

These "woes" focus on the inside of a person matching what is presented on the outside. Jesus uses a simple analogy about clean cups.

- **Jesus isn't saying that we shouldn't present ourselves well on the outside (how we act), but that our hearts must be clean before we simply focus on our presentation.**

LOOKING HEALTHY, BUT REALLY DEAD INSIDE

Jesus uses an even stronger analogy about graves. He said that the religious people were like "whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and...impurity."

- **Isn't this why so many have turned from the church? We look so good on Sunday but act like hell the rest of the week!**

IT IS ABOUT OUR TRUE CHARACTER

We have become masters at selling a persona that doesn't really exist, but this should not be so for the Christian! Humility is not a degrading view of self, but an accurate one. **We need to live honestly all the time, share our struggles, confess our faults, and celebrate our victories! Our character needs to be consistent.**

VIOLENCE (MATTHEW 23:29-36)

THE 7TH WOE: VIOLENCE

The religious leaders would build elaborate tombs and monuments to the martyrs of the past and say that, "If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we wouldn't have taken part with them in the shedding of the prophets' blood."

- The irony was that they had a hand in John's death and were plotting to kill Jesus, so **murder was in their hearts.**

"FILL UP...THE MEASURE OF YOUR ANCESTORS' SINS!"

Jesus was foreshadowing the coming violence (His and the disciples' deaths) that would be at the hand of the Pharisees. **They kept talking as if they were righteous, but their hearts were full of hatred that would soon bubble out.**

- **What is in our hearts will eventually surface. We must address the heart!**

"HOW CAN YOU ESCAPE...HELL?"

A lifestyle of sin always leads to death and destruction. Jesus' question was rhetorical because **there is no escape from hell when people refuse to humble themselves and realize they've sinned against God.** God had sent prophets, philosophers, intellectuals, and even His Son to speak truth, but they were unwilling to see it!

THOSE WHO LIVE BY THE SWORD... (V36)

Jesus assured the hate-filled religious leaders that their history of hate and violence would come back to get them (Jerusalem falling in 70 A.D.). When we live by the sword we cannot be surprised when we get cut.

- **There are always ramifications of sin, but we can escape the judgement of God if we repent and walk away from evil.**

LAMENTING (MATTHEW 23:37-39)

RIGHTEOUS ANGER TURNS TO GRIEF

In these verses we really get to see the broken heart of Jesus as He mourns for His people. Jesus was lamenting the cultural state of His nation and urging to them to repent.

- God gets no joy in punishing people. **God loves humanity, even when it is at its worst and He goes to great lengths to get our attention.**

I WANT YOU TO WANT ME...

The problem was that the people of God had grown entitled, arrogant, and self-serving. They didn't want Jesus as He was because His ways didn't serve their selfish ambitions.

- Jesus shows us the results of our way vs. His, "See, your house is left to you desolate." **In the pursuit of self the people were about to lose it all.**

THE TIME IS GROWING SHORT

V39 was a warning that the time that the religious leaders and the crowds had to accept Jesus as Lord was quickly passing them by. For many, the next time they would see Jesus is when He is coming to judge mankind. **The Bible tells us that we're not promised longevity. We're also told that we will all be held accountable.**

AND WHAT ABOUT OUR TIME? / IS GOD TRYING TO GET OUR ATTENTION?

Pr. 27:1 says not to brag about tomorrow because we don't know what it will bring. James 4:14 says our life is like a vapor. If we are not promised tomorrow, **what are we doing with this moment?** We have one shot at this life, are we seizing that time and using it to ensure our eternity? Jesus gave the "woes" of misleading people, legalism, hypocrisy, and hatred to the religious leaders, but **what sin does He want to identify and eradicate in us?** Do we humbly ask God to examine our hearts and minds? Do we want to walk in step with Him over everything else? **What will it take to wake us up?**

JESUS LOVES US SO MUCH!

- God doesn't rattle us because He hates us. **God goes to great lengths to try and get us to look at Him because He knows our ways lead to destruction.**
- God is preparing a perfect holy place for us, but we must be holy in order to enter. **He loves us, and wants to spend forever with us!**