



46: *Jesus Judges Hypocrisy* - Part 1 (Mt 23:13-26)

We live in a culture that often quotes 'build-a-bear Jesus', the version they like - the version that only loves and never judges - the contemporary version greatly distorting the authentic Jesus found in the Scriptures. "Jesus never judges"? Today we continue to study Matthew chapter 23 and see if this claim is legit.

beourguest

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We live in a culture that often quotes build-a-bear Jesus, the version they like - the version that only loves and never judges.

❓ So *what do you do if you run into someone who says "Jesus never judges"?* Well, here's an entire chapter you could have them read to see if the claim they made is true - **Matthew 23**.

Yes, Jesus judges. And yes, Jesus is more than a man, a great prophet, & a miracle worker. He is the sinless God-man who came to live among people He created (Jn 1:1-3,14).

👁 Check out "**Beware Hypocrisy**", where Jesus reminded His followers that while they were to **do everything the religious leaders told them to do** (as long as it doesn't disobey God), they were NOT to **DO WHAT THEY DO**, because most of them didn't **practice what they preached**.



BEWARE HYPOCRISY

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were in attendance, along with an audience of acquaintances & the disciples of Jesus - as Jesus spoke inside or just outside the Temple Courts. *Some scholars think this could have occurred on the Southern Steps* at the Temple Mount. Here they're are 30 steps, with every other step of different depth - one is 12 inches and the next is 35 inches, the next is 12 inches and the following is 35 inches - allowing places for people to sit and stand - a place where rabbis often taught.¹ It could be here that Jesus unleashed this powerful judgement against His hypocritical enemies.

Judgement on Those who Keep Others Out of the Kingdom

Matthew 23:13 (NIV)

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

[There is no verse 14 as the KJV used later manuscripts. As older manuscripts were found without this, it is a variant likely not originally in Matthew's gospel, but added to harmonize Matthew's text with Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47.]

Jesus warns them of the impending judgement to come.

- The NLT translates **woe** as, "what sorrow awaits".
- **WOE** is the language used by the Old Testament prophets to warn of impending judgement to their own people who are disobeying Yahweh.

Jesus warns of the judgment that is to come for those who keep others out of the kingdom.

Matthew 23:15 (NIV)

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a **child of hell as you are**.

You don't have to be a Bible scholar to determine that Jesus is throwing some major jabs at these selfish shepherds, noting that they are not citizens of the kingdom, but children of hell. Further, they are leading other people there as well.

❓ Could there be anything worse on **judgement day** than for **God to hold us accountable for keeping others out of the Kingdom?**

¹ Paul H. Wright, "Indicting Hypocrisy with Imagery from the Temple Mount," in Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels, ed. Barry J. Beitzel and Kristopher A. Lyle, Lexham Geographic Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 417-418.

Judgement on Those Making Finger-Crossed Oaths

Matthew 23:16-22 (NIV)

Woe to you, **blind guides!** You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, **it means nothing;** but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is **bound by that oath.**' You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, **it means nothing;** but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is **bound by that oath.**' You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it **and by the One who dwells in it.** And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God's throne **and by the One who sits on it.**

Blind Guides. Imagine going on a sightseeing trip and you hire a guide online before you get there. When you arrive, you are shocked to find out that your guide is blind. Jesus gives an example of their blind hypocritical guidance: **they have allowed finger-crossed oaths** - promises people make *which they intend to break*.

What kind of manipulative mangled mess this is! Jesus is sick of these man-made traditions which allow people to dilute the truth.

☀ **William Barclay:** "We will regard all promises as sacred if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God."²

Jesus expects His followers to be humble & honest, not conniving wordsmiths who make oaths that can't be trusted.

❓ This does NOT mean we can never make oaths nor sign on the dotted line (loans, verbal covenant w/marriage partner, or telling others that you covenant with Jesus, to live the rest of your life for Him). The Scriptures DO speak about taking oaths before Yahweh found in Num. 30:2, & Deut. 23:21, & Lev. 19:12. Typically we shouldn't have to swear to God or to some holy place that represents Him, to be bound by the truth.

✓ Instead, **our WORD should be our BOND**. According to Jesus earlier in Mt 5:37, "All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'..."

🔍 Hear more on this from "**Promise Keepers**" (fom.life website or APP. Search by title.)

❓ Could there be anything worse on **judgement day** than for **God to hold us accountable for being LIARS who claim to know the God of TRUTH?**

Judgement on Those who Give to God But Don't Care for People.

Matthew 23:23-24 (NIV)

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—**justice, mercy and faithfulness**. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

Note: the New Testament does NOT teach 'tithing', but generous giving. See our teaching on **Giving and the New Testament**.

The Old Testament law required a **tenth** of garden produce like grain, wine, & oil, but the Pharisees had once again gone beyond what was required in the law to include **mint & dill and cumin** - small garden herbs, used to season food. So these men give to the temple ministry - even giving small leaves that God doesn't command be given - but they don't care for the people who need to be shown **justice, mercy, & faithfulness**. It's good to practice the former - give extra to GOD, but you can't substitute that for the latter - showing **justice, mercy, & faithfulness** to PEOPLE.

They **strain out a gnat but swallow a camel**. This is a hilarious hyperbole demonstrating the ridiculousness of what they've been doing. Gnats and camels were considered unclean (cf. Leviticus 11:4, 23, 24, 41). Jesus uses an Aramaic wordplay as the words are so similar: *gamla* ("camel") and *galma* ("gnat").³

The Pharisees would strain their wine using a thin cloth to make sure no small insects got into it ("strain out a gnat").⁴ They are more concerned about the **LITTLE THINGS** - giving more than what they are told to give **rather than being concerned about the BIG THINGS** - like treating people with justice, mercy, & faithfulness.

❓ Could there be anything worse on **judgement day** than for **God to hold us accountable for giving to God but not caring for people?**

² William Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew, 2 vols. [rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 1:160.

³ Craig Blomberg, Matthew, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 346.

⁴ Barclay, The Gospel of Matthew, vol. 2, p. 294.

Judgement on Those who Care More About What People See Than What God Sees

Matthew 23:25-26 (NIV)

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! **First clean the inside** of the cup and dish, and **then the outside also will be clean.**

🌿 What would parents say to the child who washes the OUTSIDE of the cup or bowl...while the inside remains untouched?

This is the point Jesus is making. The **Pharisees** were more concerned with being clean on the OUTSIDE instead of being clean on the INSIDE. They TALKED a good game, but they were **full of greed and self-indulgence**. Once again we are reminded of what Jesus began with earlier in this scathing rebuke, "Everything they do is done for people to see." (Mt 23:5)

❓ Could there be anything worse on **judgement day** than for **God to hold us accountable for caring more about what people think than what God thinks.**

❓ What IF our children, grandchildren, & and friends followed OUR example?

- Would they be living lives full of hypocrisy and leading others AWAY from Jesus instead of TO Him?
- Or would our example of humility & sincerity lead those we care about right to the feet of the Savior?

PRAY - God, what do you want me to do with what I heard today?

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156), **Rob & Rebecca Leatherberry** (229-232-1087), or **Mark & Dot Mancil** (850-253-5405).

discussionquestions

Take some time to discuss these questions with your family, friends, or group.

1. What does the word "**woe**" mean and why should it lead people to heed the warning?
2. **Read Matthew 23:13,15.** What are some hypocritical actions that might cause us to keep others out of the Kingdom? Why should this concern us and challenge us to do something about it?
3. **Read Matthew 23:16-22.** Why should we work hard to do what we tell others we will do? What impact might we have if we do/don't do what we say? Why is it important that Christians are known for speaking the truth rather than breaking promises?
4. **Read Matthew 23:23.** What are some practical ways that we can demonstrate **justice, mercy, & faithfulness** to others?
5. **Read Matthew 23:25-26.** Throughout today's teaching, there is a continual focus on being clean on the inside, not just on the outside. Take a few moments and share some practical steps to help ensure that your focus is on internal righteousness rather than external displays only meant for others to see.
6. How might pointing others to Matthew 23 impact them, especially those who claim that 'Jesus never judges'?
7. What does God want YOU to do with what we studied today?
8. How can we pray for/care for one another this week? (Pray for one another.)