

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 23, verse 13.

As you’re finding your place this morning (Matthew chapter 23), let me tell you that I can almost guarantee you that this chapter of Scripture is rarely, if ever taught in liberal seminaries or preached from liberal pulpits across America. Why? Because this chapter does not depict the Jesus that liberals want to portray in our 21st century culture. They don’t want a Jesus who offers up woes and rebukes and condemnation and correction. They ONLY want a Jesus who offers love...no judgment. Grace...no justice. Pardon...no righteousness.

And you see Church family, we live in a world today that says (even in many so-called “Christian” circles), if you speak against anyone or anything and call it wrong or sinful or false, then you are pronounced as unloving, unkind and ungracious. Well, that’s why the liberals of the world don’t like Matthew 23 and seldom teach it or preach it. It’s just not the Jesus they want, because this passage warps their liberal perspective on Christ.

Yet, I would tell you this morning as a pastor...if you give your people the “full counsel of Scripture,” you will give people the Biblical Jesus and not the cultural Jesus and it’s the Biblical Jesus that saves souls instead of just patting them on the head to placate them...all the while knowing that in their sin, they will be doomed to Hell. How unloving is that!

It’s Tuesday of Passion Week and Jesus is in the Temple courtyards teaching and it’s been a public showdown with these guys:



The Pharisees. And as we saw last week, Jesus didn’t pull any punches as He taught the crowds and His disciples. They were packed in the courtyard like sardines...



Jesus has been telling them, “Don’t take the fake! These guys are fakes...don’t believe them!”

Remember last week, we saw the...

5 Characteristics of Spiritual Fakes

1. Claim ultimate authority
2. Hypocrites: saying one thing and doing another
3. Burden people
4. Want to be seen

5. Want to make a name for themselves

Today we're going to move from 5 characteristics about these guys to 7 Woes about these guys... Jesus is going to offer up some of the most scathing words of rebuke in all of Scripture to the Pharisees and Scribes.

Matthew 23:13-33

¹³“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.” ¹⁵Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. ¹⁶“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’” ¹⁷You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’” ¹⁹You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. ²²And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it. ²³“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” ²⁴You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! ²⁵“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.” ²⁶You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. ²⁷“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.” ²⁸So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. ²⁹“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous,” ³⁰saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’” ³¹Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. ³³You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

This is Jesus' final public sermon...and I find it interesting that He does not offer a sermon about salvation or a sermon about heaven. He doesn't offer a sermon on the power of God in the life of a believer. Or a sermon of peace... Instead...He offers a sermon of Woe against false teachers. His most blistering words, His most strong condemnation for any group, is chronicled here in Matthew 23 about these guys...



Scribes and Pharisees...the religious leaders of the people of Israel. And yet, mingled into this last sermon is a sense of great sorrow from our Lord. I'm convinced this sermon is NOT a scathing rebuke of judgment that's angry and unhinged. Instead

it's a rebuke that's melancholy and sorrowful. In fact, I would say to us today, Church Family, that Jesus was grieved in His soul as He offered up this last sermon. Why do I say that? Because of what the word: **“Woe”** means.

See the screens. Here's the Greek word for Woe: It's an *onomatopoetic word*...sounding like what it means. Like “splash,” or “squish” or “thunder.” It's pronounced: **“Oh-I”**

Ouai: alas, woe

It's a word that we'd say means: “Oh no! I can't believe it's come to this!” It's a resignation of remorse, dissatisfaction, grief, sorrow and pain. Look down **with me at verse 37**. It summarizes Jesus' pain in pronouncing these woes...

Matthew 23:37

³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

You see, it's that verse that summarizes how Jesus feels. He's in pain as He teaches the people. It's almost like a parent who looks at a rebellious child with tears in their eyes as they say: “I have no choice...you have brought this upon yourself.” Oh, agony and pain...why the pain? Because you love them! He loved them!!

Listen, in just three days, Jesus will be hanging on a cross...suffering in agony...for the very ones who are now seeking to kill Him! That's love! And that's the pain Jesus carried for those who were so obstinate toward Him. And so, that's the backdrop of Matthew 23.

Now, let me show you where we're headed. We just read about the 7 Woes Jesus offered to the Scribes and Pharisees. Here they are summarized:

The Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees:

1. Hide the Door of Salvation
 2. Pervert Others
 3. Swear to What Is False
 4. Reversed Values
 5. Self-Indulgent
 6. Deceptive
 7. Pretenders
-

Let's look at the first one. Look at verse 13 again...

Matthew 23:13

¹³ “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

Now as we look at these woes...I want to remind you that we've seen Jesus use this word “Oh-I” before. See the screens...

Matthew 11:21

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

You see, Jesus preached repentance...because you must repent to surrender your life to Him. Jesus wanted the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida to repent and He desired the same for the Scribes and Pharisees, but since they wouldn't, they have brought judgment down upon their souls. Jesus said, “You are shutting the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You are trying to keep people from entering into the doorway of heaven.”

Church family, who is the door to heaven? Jesus! He described Himself that way many times.

John 10:9

⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

What is the first WOE? It sets the tone for the rest...

The Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees:

- 1. Hide the Door of Salvation**
 - 2. Pervert Others**
 - 3. Swear to What Is False**
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It's like this... The Pharisees knew Jesus was the Messiah. They could not dispute the miracles. The only thing they could do was to try to discredit Him publicly and call Him names. (They even said that He performed His miracles by way of Satan).

By the way, if they did that to Jesus, modern-day Pharisees will do that to you today. They'll try to discredit you publicly and call you names. (Billy Graham said as much.) Just know that you're in good company. Listen...the Pharisees were HIDING the door of salvation...in essence the Pharisees were blocking off the door and hiding the key to the kingdom. JESUS! Luke described it like this...

Luke 11:52

⁵²Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.”

The key is Jesus and they're blocking the people from seeing Him and Jesus says: “Woe to you!”

Oh let it never be said that we're blocking people from seeing Jesus by the way we're living! Never let it be said that we're taking away the key of knowledge of who Jesus is because we are living a life that points people away FROM Jesus instead of TO Jesus.

Listen, there are people today looking for salvation and yet they come to liberal religious leaders of many of the denominations of our day and they ask questions about sexuality and marriage and life...and yet, many of these religious leaders deny the very Word of God, or misinterpret the Word of God, and block the way to Jesus. I say, “OH-I”

In grief I watch many liberal denominations today deny the deity of Jesus. They deny the need for confession and repentance of sin...because nothing is sin today! And so, they hide the door to Jesus from the very people clamoring to find Him! And Church family, that's why I'm going to stand...just like Jesus...against anyone who claims an area of authority in religion...seeking to point to their made-up version of Jesus and not the real Jesus. **Look at WOE #2.**

The Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees:

1. **Hide the Door of Salvation**
 2. **Pervert Others**
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 4. **Reversed Values**
 5. **Self-Indulgent**
 6. **Deceptive**
 7. **Pretenders**
-

Matthew 23:15

¹⁵Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

Do you know what proselyte is? It's simply a convert to someone's religion. A proselyte is someone you win to your faith. If you have come to Christ, you are a proselyte of Christianity...the only true way to God. But, you can also be a proselyte to any other religion or faith. Remember, the Pharisees had disciples. Earlier that day, (on Tuesday), the Pharisees had sent their disciples, their proselytes to Jesus to try to trick him. Jesus says, "You are making them doubly worse than you are." And that's what happens to people who are trained in false religions, they become even more zealous than those who trained them. Jesus called the proselytes of the Pharisees, "Children of Hell." Can you fathom a stronger condemnation than this!

Yes, even today... false religions and cults prey on the innocent and the weak and try to suck them in. It's so sad, because once they latch on to them, Satan uses the false teaching to deceive people to the point that they actually believe that what they're being told is the truth. But, Jesus told us how we could recognize them in the Sermon on the Mount... **FRUIT!**

Matthew 7:15-17

¹⁵"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

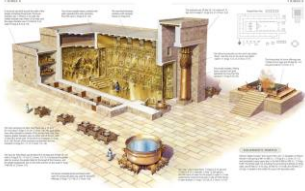
Watch people's lives...not what they say...but, how they act...what they do. WOE **#3**

The Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees:

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6. **Deceptive**

7. Pretenders

We've actually gone over this one in detail before, so I'll just show you a picture to remind you... This is inside of the Temple... See what's it's covered in... GOLD!



The Pharisees said you weren't allowed to swear or make an oath on the Temple. But, you could swear by the GOLD of the Temple, if you wanted someone to believe you. Jesus said that was ridiculous. Jesus said, "Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no.'" Bottom line...we shouldn't swear and say ridiculous things like, "cross my heart and hope to die...stick a needle in my eye." Just say, "You have my word, I'm going to do it."

Can people take you at your word or do you have to swear on a stack of Bibles for them to believe you? Hopefully, your character and your word are good enough. **#4**

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Reversed Values. Watch this in verse 23...

Matthew 23:23-24

²³ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!"

See this picture...



That's mint, dill and cumin. Mint is a sweet-smelling herb used for many things...mint is very familiar to us. Dill is used in dill pickles and is good for stomach ailments. And Cumin is a very pungent seed used most often as a spice for flavoring bread, cakes and stews. What is Jesus saying? Well, these are common, household herbs that the people most likely had in their homes. And Jesus was saying to the people...these guys will even tithe off of the

smallest herbs grown on their kitchen counters, but they won't lift a finger to help people. They show no mercy and not justice to anyone except themselves.

And get this...one of the smallest insects, the gnat, was considered unclean and so as not to swallow a gnat when they drank, they would put a piece of cloth over their cups to strain out any gnats. And if they didn't have cloth, they would drink like this...with their teeth clenched so as to strain out the gnat, while letting the water run down their robes. Ridiculous! But, they wouldn't help anyone. They weren't like the Good Samaritan...no, no...they'd walk on by! That's reversed values.

It's interesting, as I studied this week, I read about a pastor who said he had a lady in his church that loved to tell all the girls and the women, to never wear lipstick. "Don't wear it, because that's not godly." And yet, the pastor said that consistently rolling off that lady's lips was some of the worst gossip he'd ever heard in his life. Folks, that's straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Put on the lipstick lady, and then keep your lips shut! That's the point. **WOE #5 and #6 go together, because Jesus uses a similar analogy for both.**

The Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees:

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They are **Self-indulgent and Deceptive**. These two are really self-explanatory.

Matthew 23:25-28

²⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Take a look at this picture overlooking Jerusalem that I took when I was there in 2007.



The tombs are still marked in white. You see, as a Jew, you couldn't touch a tomb and not become undefiled. Touching the place of a dead person, made you unclean for 7 days (Deut. 19:16). So, they would white-wash the tombs so that they would stand

out and you wouldn't become ceremonially unclean. Jesus used the common things of that day: washing and cleaning a "cup and plate" and not touching "white-washed tombs" to describe how these guys made everything look good (clean) on the outside, but all the while, on the inside they were full of rot and decay on the inside.

You see, the Pharisees were all about image. And that's how many people are today. It's all about making themselves look good on the outside. It's all about reputation! The great preacher, D.L. Moody said: "If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself." It seems today, that way too many people care more about the outside than the inside! That's Pharisee living! It's "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof!"

And all of this leads us back to what Jesus has been saying throughout...they're hypocrites...**#7**
They're **PRETENDERS**.

The Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees:

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-

Oh, this is so strong...so gut-wrenching...

Matthew 23:29-33

²⁹ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ saying, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' ³¹ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. ³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?"

"The measure of your fathers." Jesus said, "You're getting ready to do the same to me as your forefathers did to Elijah and Jeremiah and Zechariah." Jesus said, "You're snakes...that means He was identifying them with Satan...and you will not escape Hell."

"Oh-I" Can you feel the grief and pain of Jesus...knowing that's it come this...that they have refused Him and so, He has no choice but to pronounce judgment on them, while He warns the people that they are just Pretenders...and they're seeking to hide the door of salvation...Jesus! Oh-I!

Oh may we not be like the Pharisees...who...

The Seven Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees:

1. Hide the Door of Salvation
2. Pervert Others (by what we accept and tolerate)
3. Swear to What Is False
4. Reversed Values
5. Self-Indulgent
6. Deceptive

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No, may we be the opposite!

Oh, dear people, if you're here today and you're a Christian; then you're a **"kingdom door opener."** Did you know that?



We have the key to heaven and to eternal life...Jesus... He is the door...and so we must go and show others to the door! Oh...let us not do anything by how we're living to hide the door from anyone ...No, let us NOT live lives that are fake and pretentious, like the Pharisees, but instead may we live lives of honesty and kind character...may we go and be kingdom door openers!