

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church  
**Matthew 23:13-15 | False Teachers, Churches, and Converts**  
Sunday October 12, 2025

**WELCOME:**

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

**REVIEW:**

We continue in our verse-by-verse exposition of Matthew's Gospel this morning.

As a review, we have spent the last three months examining the last week of Jesus' life.

It began in Matthew 21 with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

During that event, the pastors, priests, and ministers of the day, known as the scribes and Pharisees, opposed Jesus.

As the crowds welcomed and worshiped the Lord Jesus as their Savior, these men said...

**Luke 19:39**— "Teacher, rebuke your disciples."

**Luke 19:40**— <sup>Jesus</sup> He answered, "I tell you, if they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out."

In other words, if people don't worship the Lord Jesus, creation would.

Looking back over the past three years of Jesus' life, I hope you can see that the religious leaders were hostile toward Jesus in nearly every conversation that they had with him.

There are exceptions—Nicodemus was a Pharisee.

*Teacher of Teachers  
respected him*

But for the most part, these two groups—the scribes and Pharisees—stood in the way of the Lord Jesus and His Gospel message.

Last Sunday, we studied the prologue to the sermon that gets Jesus killed.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Matthew chapter 23 is the last public sermon preached by Jesus.

For the past three years, Jesus has been teaching and preaching on the Kingdom of Heaven.

But this sermon is not about His kingdom, it's not about the Gospel, and it's not even about repentance.

It's about the kingdom of darkness.

Make no doubt about it, there is a real wickedness that we cannot see.

There is a real devil. Demons are also real.

They are not dressed up in Halloween costumes either.

And there is no better avenue for the prince of darkness to work than within religion.

We see Satan and his minions working nearly every time the scribes and Pharisees show up in the Gospels.

We also see the volume of demonic presence in this world as Jesus ministers.

The resurrection didn't change that—the time of judgement is still yet to come for them, as it is for the world.

So please know that there is a real and invisible battle raging between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness today—the kingdom of this world.

*nothing to fear as Jesus has conquered the world - Jn 16:33*

Last Sunday, we watched Jesus judge these religious men by their own actions.

Jesus calls them false teachers because:

- *False teachers lack God-given authority. - inserted themselves / Not ordained*
- *False teachers are unsympathetic. - tie heavy loads on people's shoulders*
- *False teachers live by sight and not by faith. -*
- *False teachers lack humility. - proud men think they can earn their salvation*

And because they were without godly characteristics, they are also without God's approval or blessing.

So, Jesus rightfully and judiciously judges them as guilty.

## HOUSEKEEPING:

I mentioned that we would look at Jesus' sermon (Matt 23) in three of my own—that I was going to break His sermon into three parts.

I usually have three sermons going on at the same time.

And as I go back and forth between these three, the Holy Spirit teaches me and moves me on the organization and structure for each one.

Last week, I thought I would exposit 23 verses today, but the Lord has a much better and slower plan.

So, all that to say, we're only looking at three verses today.

Because two out of the three are passages from which the rest of Jesus's sermon flows.

Today, we're going to talk about the heart of the issue—false teachers, false churches, and false converts/disciples—because the heart is always the issue.

Many Christians today are deeply concerned about politics, humanism, secularism, and various forms of social injustice.

(Atheist, Socialist, Marxist)  
↳ All the "isms"

Jesus teaches that these things are of the kingdom of this world.

Yet, those things, as important and evil as they are—are not nearly as important—even if you were to combine them—and put them on a scale—they are not as important as the threat of false teachers, false churches, and false converts.

Think about it—usually the last words a person says are going to be his most important.

This is Jesus's last public sermon to the nation of Israel.

Jude wanted to write about salvation in his epistle, but he ultimately wrote about false teachers.

Many of you may wonder why I don't discuss politics or current events more often—this is why.

Jesus made His priority Teaching on The Kingdom of God.

I care much more about people's souls than their views on political or social issues.

Scripture Teaches That

The greatest threat to truth has always been false teachers, false churches, and false disciples.

Today, we don't typically see this type of confrontation with false teachers.

People who do confront false teachers are often seen as unkind, ungracious, and judgmental.

But Jesus doesn't do anything that the OT prophets didn't do.

In fact, Jesus' words to the scribes and Pharisees are perfectly consistent with the rest of Scripture, both the Old Testament and the New.

Last Sunday, I asked:

- How many false teachers are in the Verde Valley?
- How many false churches are in the Verde Valley?
- How do you know I'm not a false teacher and this is not a false church?
- How can you spot a false teacher?

We addressed those questions, and I pray it was helpful and fruitful.

Today, we'll examine these passages on false churches—we'll see more red flags from last week.

But I also want us to consider how to identify a Christ-centered, Biblically-based, and Holy Spirit-filled church.

Lastly, I want to provide green flags on how to keep a true church healthy.

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**

### SCRIPTURE:

**Matthew 23:13**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you don't go in, and you don't allow those entering to go in.

**Matthew 23:15**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to make one convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a child of hell as you are!

*These are the holy words from the authoritative, inerrant, inspired, infallible, sufficient, and efficacious Word of Almighty God.*

**PRAY:**

*Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction*  
(Psalm 119:18).

**EXEGESIS:**

The first thing to notice is the Lord's tone. How did he say this? Sadness, righteous anger, a mixture of both?

**Matthew 23:13**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you don't go in, and you don't allow those entering to go in."

There's a lot of emotion from Jesus in this sermon—and when we examine the end, we'll see His sadness.

**Matthew 23:13**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pronounced blessings.

Here, in his last sermon, Jesus pronounces curses.

A woe is a warning and a rebuke.

It both condemns evil and laments it.

We see the OT prophets do the same thing...

**Isaiah 5:20**—Woe to those who call evil good  
and good evil,  
who substitute darkness for light  
and light for darkness,  
who substitute bitter for sweet  
and sweet for bitter.

**Isaiah 5:21**—Woe to those who consider themselves wise and judge themselves clever.

**Isaiah 5:22**—Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, who are champions at pouring beer,

**Isaiah 5:23**—who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of justice.

**Habakkuk 2:9**—Woe to him who dishonestly makes wealth for his house to place his nest on high, to escape the grasp of disaster!

**Habakkuk 2:12**—Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with injustice!

**Jeremiah 23:1**— "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" This is the Lord's declaration. *→ False Teachers*

**Jeremiah 23:2**— "Therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says about the shepherds who tend my people: You have scattered my flock, banished them, and have not attended to them. I am about to attend to you because of your evil acts"—this is the Lord's declaration.

Just as Isaiah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah rebuked false teachers in the OT, Jesus does the same thing in the Gospels.

Just as Jesus does in the Gospels, the apostles do in the epistles.

**2 Peter 2:1**—There were indeed false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and will bring swift destruction on themselves.

90T

N.T./Church

**2 Peter 2:2**—Many will follow their depraved ways, and the way of truth will be maligned because of them.

It's because of this temptation for people to twist the truth or to bring attention to themselves that the apostle James says...

**James 3:1**—Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment.

It's A Terrifying thing to handle the Hldy.

**Matthew 23:13**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

The phrase "woe to you" comes first from an ancient song from the book of Numbers.

Do you remember the bronze snake episode with Moses?

During the Exodus, the people started to complain against God and Moses.

They started to get impatient because things were not going their way—they were moving along fast enough.

They were complaining about food and water—they called the manna that God gave them—wretched! —so ungrateful!

→ Doordad


So, God sent snakes—lots of snakes—and those snakes bit the complainers and they died.

The rest of the people started freaking out, and the Lord told Moses to make an image of a snake and mount it on a pole, then lift up the pole.

Guess what the mounted snake looked like? A cross!


So those people who got bit, looked at the snake, and recovered.,

Well, shortly after this incident, the Israelites defeated the Moabites.

 **Numbers 21:29**—Woe to you, Moab! You have been destroyed, people of Chemosh. (Key Mosh)

Woe is the Hebrew term 'ôy— Woe! Alas! Oh!

'ôy expresses sorrow as well as a warning of punishment.

 **Matthew 23:13**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

The Greek version is *οὐαί*. (Ew-eh!)

So we go from 'ôy to *οὐαί*.

It doesn't even sound like a word.

Think of it more as a painful cry that comes from your gut.

It's a sound that mixes grief, despair, sorrow, dissatisfaction, pain, and the threat of losing your life.

It's so hard to put it into actual words.

It's used in the New Testament for sorrow and judgment.

It has elements of punishment and pity, as well as cursing and compassion.

You could almost translate it with the word *alas*.

Woe (Ew-Ah)

*Obai* is the same word we see throughout the book of Revelation because inevitable judgment is coming. *-SAL? terrifying*

**Revelation 8:13**—I looked and heard an eagle flying high overhead, crying out in a loud voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe to those who live on the earth, because of the remaining trumpet blasts that the three angels are about to sound!"

**Revelation 12:12**—Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you who dwell in them!

Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows his time is short.

**Revelation 18:10**—they will stand far off in fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the mighty city! For in a single hour your judgment has come.

Unlike the future judgment promised in Revelation, Jesus tells the crowds that there is still time to avoid judgment, but it's too late for the religious leaders.

**Matthew 23:13**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

Notice what Jesus is doing—it's not a warning, but instead a declaration of divine judgment.

Jesus doesn't want to damn them—Jesus doesn't want anyone to perish.

**2 Peter 3:9**—The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

There is a deadline on God's patience.

The scribes and Pharisees have once again walked away from Jesus in anger and unbelief.

And because our beliefs and actions have consequences, Jesus sets divine judgment in motion upon these faithless men.

**Matthew 23:13**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

Scribe is a man who is an expert in the Hebrew Bible.

The most famous scribe in the OT is Ezra (also a priest) (Ezra 7:11).

But if you do a word study on "Pharisees", you won't find any.

And that's because during the 400 years when God stopped speaking to Israel—from the prophet Malachi to the prophet John the Baptizer—the Pharisees inserted themselves as God's spokesmen.

They started with good, godly intentions, but, like most things, they got sideways fast.

The Pharisees were one of the three most powerful religious groups in the first century, but it's only an illusion of power.

**Matthew 23:13**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

Hypocrite is from the Greek noun *hupokritēs* (book-ree-tace).

The original meaning was that of *answering* or *replying*.

It later came to refer to actors, who answered one another back and forth in dialogue.

"Hypocrite"

Eventually, it became synonymous with deceit—the putting on of a false front.

Someone who pretended to be something he wasn't—who says one thing but does another.

Think of a Greek play where everyone wore masks to play their part.

Now, when Jesus calls these men *hypocrites*, it seems to have an added sense to it.

While scribes and Pharisees are guilty of deliberate deceit, they are also fooling themselves by their false teaching.

They are *sincere* hypocrites.

Today we hear this—"Doesn't matter what you believe about God as long as your sincere about it."

They are guilty of religious fraud, but they are also so brainwashed that they refuse to believe the truth when they hear it.

Ultimately, they deceived themselves—they were absolutely convinced that they were right and it was Jesus who was wrong.

BTW

Have you been there? Convinced that you were right and everyone else is wrong?

Only to find out that you were wrong in a big way.

**Matthew 23:13**—You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces.

In the Sermon on the Mount,

**Matthew 5:3**—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."

But Jesus tells the scribes and Pharisees that it's not theirs.

The scribes and Pharisees should have been telling the crowds, "Jesus is the Messiah! Listen and repent!"

The Pharisees should have been ushering, escorting, and leading people into the kingdom of God. *Through Jesus*

They should have followed John the Baptizer's example and proclaimed Jesus as the Savior—but they didn't do that.

Instead, they placed themselves as roadblocks and barriers to people who wanted to enter God's kingdom.

The poor in spirit enter the kingdom, but the proud in spirit keep themselves out and even keep others out.

**Matthew 23:13**—You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces.

How did they shut the door of Heaven?

By teaching man-made traditions instead of expositing God's truth.

And anyone who dared to challenge them was put to death.

**Matthew 3:1**—In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea *→ Baptizer, Immerser.*  
*→ Cornville.*

**Matthew 3:2**—and saying, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!"

**Matthew 3:5**—Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were going out to him, *→ city/phr → All AZ*

*↳ River*  
*↳ Even The pagans from CA were crossing The CO River*  
*→ come to Cornville*

**Matthew 3:6**—and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

**Matthew 3:7**—When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

Tragically, the scribes and Pharisees succeeded in shutting Heaven's door in people's faces.

They would soon do the same thing after the Resurrection to the Apostles..

**Acts 4:16**—What should we do with these men? For an obvious sign has been done through them, clear to everyone living in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

**Acts 4:17**—But so that this does not spread any further among the people, let's threaten them against speaking to anyone in this name again."

**Acts 4:18**—So they called for them and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Those are examples of how the scribes and Pharisees shut the door of God's Kingdom by focusing on the minutiae of religious acts and deeds.

They created a system instead of focusing on a relationship.

Every false religion (cult) has a system to earn your way to Heaven.

It's not based on grace—what God has done for you— but instead by your so-called "good" works. (Isa 64:6)

**Matthew 23:13**—For you don't go in,

They had made up their minds that Jesus was not the Savior, and no evidence and no facts would convince them otherwise.

**Matthew 23:13**— and you don't allow those entering to go in.

Not only did they refuse to believe—they didn't allow anyone else to believe either.

It's one thing to keep yourself out of the kingdom, but how much worse when you stand and block Heaven for others.

### **KEY QUESTION:**

*Are you making your relationship with God more difficult than it really needs to be? Are you making it more difficult for others?*

**Matthew 23:14 LSB**—["Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.]

The NASB, NKJV, and LSB all include this verse. Others have it as a footnote.

*\*technical\**

Verse 14 is considered a textual variant, meaning that it's not found in the earliest manuscripts.

Please note that we do not have the original copy of this Gospel.

It was lost many centuries ago.

However, those in the early church went through a painstaking process of making copies. for the church

For hundreds of years, copies were meticulously preserved by scribes and monks, who devoted themselves to the painstaking task of copying each letter of the ancient texts—the *Doctrine of Preservation*.

However, even the most careful scribes occasionally missed a letter or a verse, resulting in a small number of discrepancies among the various copies that still exist.

→ Thousands of copies.

There is a science called *textual criticism*, by which scholars examine the thousands of copies of ancient texts ~~that still exist~~, and they weigh and measure them in terms of their accuracy.

By God's grace and divine providence, scholars have achieved a 99 percent accuracy rate in preserving the original text..

However, there are instances where the evidence is not entirely conclusive, and scholars must make informed decisions.

So, if there is a consensus, it is that this verse was not in the original—so, all that to say, I will refrain from expositing it—but I wanted to give you the background as to why.

**Matthew 23:15**—"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to make one convert,

Jesus now moves from false teachers and false churches to false evangelism.

It makes sense that false teachers make false converts/disciples.

Some of your translations use 'proselyte' instead of 'convert'.

These converts/proselytes were God-fearing Gentiles who were being urged to convert to Judaism and follow the traditions of the Pharisees.

Although the nation of Israel was supposed to be a light for other nations, they didn't bother with evangelism.

The Pharisees, however, went out of their way to evangelize.

The problem is that they weren't converting people to Judaism but to Phariseeism.

And by doing so, they weren't saving souls; the Pharisees were condemning souls!

**Matthew 23:15**—and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a child of hell as you are!

Often, a new convert is more zealous than his teacher or mentor, making him more of a legalist.

We see this in the church—many times, someone who gets saved later in life is much more zealous than someone who grew up in the church.

The problem with a false teacher evangelizing a <sup>new</sup> convert is that the convert hears a partial truth—which ultimately is a perversion of the truth.

**Matthew 23:15**—you make him twice as much a child of hell as you are!

And this “double devotion” to false doctrine produces double condemnation—this person is doubly damned.

**Matthew 23:15**—you make him twice as much a child of hell ~~as you are!~~

How tragic that people can think they are going to heaven when actually they are going to hell!

The phrase “child of hell” is the extreme reversal of a child of the kingdom—it's equivalent of “child of the devil.”

It's a person who has rejected God's way of salvation.

They choose their own works over God's works.

**Matthew 23:15**—you make him twice as much a child of hell as you are!

**John 8:44**—You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires

Time and time again, Jesus has warned the scribes and Pharisees.

He has also told the crowds to repent repeatedly.

It's during this sermon that he tells everyone, time is up.

And because Jesus preaches a sermon that no one wants to hear—it gets him killed.

**KEY QUESTION:**

*Are we drawing people to the true message of the Gospel or converting them to something else?*

**APPLICATION:**

Two days from now the scribes & pharisees will see the Romans

to murder their savior - the son of God

**John 8:44**—You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires

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**KEY QUESTION:**

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**APPLICATION:**

How do we apply this passage on first-century false teachers, false churches, and false converts to our 21st-century lives today?

I have <sup>3</sup> ~~three~~ thoughts as I close.

The first is up close and personal—

Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites.”

- *I wonder what Jesus would call me?*
- *Have you ever wondered what Jesus would call you?*

The reason that Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites is that they taught half-truths at best— and false doctrines at the worst.

Churches still do this today—without repentance— time changes nothing.

Think of churches that teach half-truths as “distracted churches.”

They prioritize good things in the kingdom of this world instead of the best things within the Kingdom of God.

*The world loves this*

Distracted churches prioritize:

1. Social events—feeding the homeless is a priority in the VV.
2. Political issues—teaching on all the different “ism’s.”

A distracted church is a church that takes the easy route—mixing in the world's ways into the church's priorities.

A true church first feeds people spiritually AND then secondly, physically.

*A true church first seeks the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. (Matt. 6:33)*

A true church...

**Ephesians 4:12**—equips the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ,

Meaning that a true church teaches God's Word to the congregation and if God has laid it on your heart to feed the homeless, praise God.

You come to get filled up with Jesus and you go out to show the world Jesus.

But just because that's your mission doesn't make the mission of the church.

*The Mission of the church has already been set by the Lord Himself*

So that's an example of a distracted church.

Secondly, let's talk about false churches.

False Churches prioritize false doctrines.

1. Must be baptized to be saved.
2. Must speak in tongues to be saved or to have a “second blessing.”
3. Must listen to prophets because God is still speaking outside of God's Word.

Those are false doctrines, and over time, those false teachings will lead you further and further away from the Jesus of the Bible.

**KEYPOINT:**

*Christians have always needed to be discerning.*

We need to pray for discernment and wisdom.

**Matthew 24:24**—For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

How do false teachers dupe God's children?

Answer: Very slowly over a long period of time.

There's a difference between *heretics* and *false teachers*.

I'm going to do something that I normally don't do—is list people by name. Why?

1. Because Jesus did.
2. Because Paul did.
3. Because I love you

There's a difference between a heretic and a false teacher.

A heretic is someone who is divisive and refuses to conform to the revealed truths listed in Scripture.

A heretic would be:

- Bennie Hinn
- Joel Osteen
- Kenneth Copeland
- Joyce Meyer

- Paula White

A false teacher is tricky to catch.

A false teacher is someone who intentionally misleads people.

At first, he sounds solid, but the more you listen, the more something doesn't sound right or feel right.

You may not know exactly what it is—but you've got a gut feeling that something is wrong.

More than likely that gut feeling is not from you—it's the Holy Spirit telling you to stop listening to this person.

Examples of false teachers would be:

Mark Driscoll

Beth Moore

\* Please do not listen to these people — many more — to many to count  
Third, let's flip the script. — These are red flags.

What are some green flags for healthy churches?



1. A healthy church teaches the Bible in a way that the congregation is not going to learn from anywhere else.

If you're going to be taught the same basic principles week after week, what's the point?

If you're going to be taught something that you can learn from Tony Robbins or by watching a motivational speech on TED Talk, what's the point?

A healthy church teaches the Bible by reading the passage, explaining the passage, and by applying the passage.

A true church doesn't skip over hard topics and doctrines—sin, hell, judgment, and repentance.

Why? — Because Jesus said!

A true church the whole Bible from cover to cover—over and over.

Teachers

→ About Jesus  
not us.

2. A healthy church offers a community of broken people—redeemed sinners—to worship a holy God.

And when you find a healthy church, <sup>True</sup> pray for it, join it and serve it all for the glory of God.

### PRAYER

### DOXOLOGY

### BENEDICTION

*“May the Lord bless you and protect you;*

*May the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;*

*May the Lord look with favor on you  
and give you peace.” ’ (Num. 6:24)*

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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

<https://www.gty.org/sermons/2362/the-condemnation-of-false-spiritual-leaders-part-1>