

13“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. 14[“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.]

15“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

16“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’ 17“You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? 18“And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering on it, he is obligated.’ 19“You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? 20“Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it. 21“And whoever swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. 22“And whoever swears by heaven, swears both 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 cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 24“You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

25“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 26“You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.

27“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. 28“So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of

hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31“So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32“Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 33““You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?”

Last week we introduced the topic of spiritual leadership, both bad and good.

Jesus uses the spiritual leadership of the nation of Israel, the people of God, as His launching point as an example of what NOT to do.

He levels the field first of all. Away with all of the honorific titles. Teacher and Rabbi and Father are titles of religious esteem. In the club of false religion, titles and places of honor is all there is.

You want to achieve the status, the glory of being called Dr. A grand master. But we are all equals. He says, simply, you are brothers. What more is there when in true religion it is God who achieved our salvation and we added nothing.

He tells us that our movement is led from above. We have one Father, God who is in heaven. We have one teacher, the Holy Spirit who indwells us. And we have one leader in the church, the owner, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I also said last week that being a shepherd in the church of the called out ones, the true believers who have been called out of Satan's world and placed into the body of Christ, is the highest office on earth.

Both John MacArthur and Martyn Lloyd Jones and probably some others who are particularly gifted in speaking have told stories about people who have come to them and said, you know, you could really be

somebody if you went into politics. You're gifted. People like to listen to you.

And both had a similar reply. Who would want to be a king in Satan's kingdom when you could be a shepherd in God's.

Unfortunately there's a flip side to that coin. Spiritual leaders have great responsibility because they are a sign post, a marker pointing people who are trying to breach that gap between us and God.

So then, if you're a false teacher, a false spiritual leader, the opposite is true. These folks are in a place of some spiritual authority and by their false religion and false teaching, they are taking masses of humanity to hell along with them.

And so, in this book, this story of Jesus, the people who are shepherding people into hell are singularly the focus of the severest language we will ever hear out of the mouth of the Saviour.

He's giving His life to make a way for people to regain the life they've lost in sin, and these false teachers, false shepherds, false leaders are blocking what He's doing and redirecting the people back into hell.

It's one thing to be single minded about rejecting God and His provision and living your autonomous life just as you please in every sin you desire and going to hell yourself. It's quite another to take a group of others along with you by teaching them lies and keeping them from believing the truth.

So false teachers and spiritual leaders of false systems are in greater judgement because they don't just go themselves, they take others with them. To hell.

Matthew 18:6 *But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7Woe to the world for the causes of sin. These stumbling blocks must come, but **woe to the man** through whom they come!*

There is greater judgement if you cause others to stumble. Woe! This is true right down to the parent who says no, their little one can't come to Sunday school or VBS. If somehow you block the path for someone else to know God, through false belief systems, Jesus says Woe!

So Jesus turns a corner here. He begins this section by speaking to His disciples and those listening about how true leadership in the church differs from false leaders. False teachers. These false teachers and leaders of Israel.

After that section which we looked at last week, he speaks directly to the scribes and pharisees. The leaders of Israel who are leading as many people to hell along with themselves as possible.

They have placed themselves as a direct road block to Jesus and will do anything, anything including murdering Him, to stop the people from believing in Him. Later when He is in heaven with His Father these same folks will murder the true saints who believe in Him and attempt to spread the good news of what He has done.

There are seven woes here. We will leave an eighth that isn't in the oldest and best manuscripts, for another day.

Verse 14 is an amalgamation of Mark 12:38 and Luke 20:46. It was likely put there by a well meaning scribe copying an older document. Often they might include these words in a margin and then an even later scribe would add them in.

Verse 14 are Jesus words, and they are reliable and true, but they don't fit in this section. These woes have the common denominator of being a blind guide leading people to hell.

Let's look at vs 14. Some versions may have it in brackets. If you have an ESV it's missing altogether. *14[“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.]*

Now listen to Mk. 12:38 *In His teaching Jesus also said, “Watch out for the scribes. They like to walk around in long robes, to receive greetings in the marketplaces, 39and to have the chief seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40They defraud widows of their houses, and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will receive greater condemnation.”...*

...and Lk. 20:46 “Beware of the scribes. They like to walk around in long robes, and they love the greetings in the marketplaces, the chief seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets. 47They defraud widows of their houses, and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will receive greater condemnation.”

It actually fits better with our section last week in vss. 1 - 12. But the best textual evidence from the best and oldest manuscripts extant is that Matthew for his own reasons left this out.

For that reason, and because without it there are 7 woes and 7 is God's number of completion, I'm going to leave it out also.

Look down at vs 32 real quick. 32 *“Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. Seven, the number of completion and Jesus says at the end of this section, “fill up” Make your guilt complete. You're a road block to righteousness and you will fill that up to completion by murdering your own Messiah.*

Sorry folks. There's just no way to make this section of scripture very light and happy. Making someone else stumble and causing them eternal harm is the most serious offense in all the Bible. So then, let's look at these seven woes, individually.

13 *“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*

This is the nature of the most severe warning and judgement in all of the Bible. Jesus couldn't lay out His premise any clearer!

you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

This is what false teachers in false religions ultimately DO. They are a roadblock for anyone seeking heaven.

Think about every single false system of religion or non-religion for that matter on earth. This is what they do. They tell you, we've got everything figured out. This is the way to heaven. Follow me. You don't need Jesus. He isn't God. There is no trinity. Those christians over there are hypocrites. That stuff is bunk. Listen to us. We know how to get there.

That's what the pharisees and scribes and religious masters of Israel were doing, and that's what every other false system on earth is also doing.

They shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for they do not enter in themselves, nor do they allow those who are entering to go in.

The first woe describes every false teacher in every false religion. It also describes every false teacher in the so-called Christian religion.

Satan isn't stupid. He's got everything from soup to nuts. He has the church of Satan which doesn't appeal to most. But he also has, mostly, religions with words like Church, and Jesus Christ, and All Saints, and ... you get the idea.

He'll poison you and kill you with the strong stuff if that's your wish, or he'll poison you little by little over many years if that's what it takes. As long as you end up dead, that's all he really wants.

False religion and false teachers are the single greatest source of the folks who are trudging along happily on the wide road to destruction. The sign at the wide gate says "This Way To Heaven!" Most of the people on their way to hell are; Religious Unbelievers.

Karl Marx said: *"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the*

heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people". He was right! He didn't know it, but he agrees with Jesus. Religion is the single greatest gateway to hell. These leaders of Israel were the most religious men in the nation.

vs. 15 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.*

It's the same idea; expanded. It isn't enough to just play defense in this game. You have to go on the offense. False systems go far and wide to make converts. If you're in this group, going to hell alone isn't what you're working for. You want to gather others in.

Ever get a knock on the door on a Saturday afternoon? Now who is that? I wasn't expecting anyone. And you open the door to 2 young men with sweet, kind faces, and they say, may we come in and show you how you can get to hell too.

But that isn't what they say is it; They say may we come in and have a discussion so that we can explain to you why Jesus isn't God in the flesh and He didn't die for anybody's sin, and He didn't rise up from the dead on the third day, but he was a very nice man, and if you will just live a life like He did, you can go to heaven.

Or you hear the knock on the door and you look out the window and there's a car parked about half way down the block and there are teams of ladies or sometimes ladies and young men going to every door on the block. Knock knock knock.

Why is it that they are so motivated to get people to hell, and we are, apparently, not very motivated to take the truth out and do the same thing?

I was on a workshop trip last year about this time over in the eastern Sierra's with the big wood cameras and there was a young man who really wanted to ask me some questions about the one thing I'm sort of an authority on. 1910's soft focus lenses. Antique portrait lenses that

have a unique signature.

And over the course of the day, shooting together, I got to talking with him as he was leaving all kinds of clues that he was a mormon. It turns out he spent several years as a young mormon elder in China. He learned the language, and was in fact using skills he learned doing that to make a living now. He made several trips to China each year and was able to buy things at prices there and sell them to folks here on a large enough scale to make a living. The mormon church is living out this verse on a large scale.

15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Satan has a huge budget for this sort of thing. No shortage of cash available to take a false gospel to other lands and cause masses of people to go to hell.

Listening to Conrad Mbewe speaking at the Strange Fire conference a few years ago. Conrad is from Africa, and he shares how the weak and struggling church in Africa has been infected and affected by the faith healer branch of so-called Christianity.

The title of his sermon was Are We Preachers or Witch Doctors. Because combining the faith healer brand of christianity with a weak church resulted in what they had to begin with. Witch doctors. With christianized names.

15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Third woe. Vss 16 - 22 “Woe to you, **blind guides**, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’ 17 “You fools and blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? 18 “And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by

the offering on it, he is obligated.’ 19“You blind men, which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? 20 “Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it. 21“And whoever swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. 22“And whoever swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

Notice who He addresses. Blind guides. False teachers are would be "guides".

You'll recall Jesus words to His disciples a few chapters earlier when this same group of false teachers confronted Jesus about eating grain gleaned on the Sabbath day;

*Mt. 15:12 - 14 Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” 13But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. 14“Let them alone; **they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.**”*

He isn't saying anything new here. False teachers are blind guides of the blind. But He gets up close and personal and exposes some of their false teaching as pure hypocrisy.

They had these sophisticated King's X games they were playing. And the bottom line was they were swearing **contractually** and then not living up to their promises because, like little kids, they had their hands behind their back and their fingers crossed, so it didn't count. They were breaking the contracts and promises by a "loop hole".

Our sophisticated system of lawyer speak and long written contracts upheld by courts was not yet viable to these folks. So in place of that they would swear, similar to what we do in a courtroom.

Do you swear to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God? I haven't been in a courtroom lately. Do they still bring out a

Bible for you to put your hand on top of and make you swear by God? I would think that would be meaningless to our secular society now. Good for a laugh. But that was how it was done in my lifetime.

So these hypocritical liars who are showing folks the way to heaven are breaking their oaths with a kings X game. Swear by the temple. Ha ha. Kings X. It's only binding if you swear on the gold in the temple. Gotcha.

Swear by the alter. Ha ha. You lose. It only counts if you swear by the offering ON the alter. Gotcha.

They had turned God's old testament provision for some security in doing what you promised to do, into a game of words. They were liars and cheats and they were using God's name and God's house to make their phony oaths. These are the religious elite of Israel doing this!

They might have fooled the hillbillies from Galilee, but they did not fool God. God is not mocked.

20“Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and by everything on it. 21“And whoever swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. 22“And whoever swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.

Fourth Woe. *23“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. 24“You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*

These religious phonies actually had long discussions about whether or not eating your soup if it had a gnat in it constituted doing work on the sabbath. That gnat was lifting a load. It's a load all right.

So they worried about the gnat while they took houses away from widows and made them homeless. They count out grain seeds. Nine for

me, one for God. Oh how righteous we are. Count grains and worry over the weight of a gnat while you ignore justice and mercy and faithfulness.

God is not mocked.

Fifth Woe. 25 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 26 “You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.*

Christianity is different from every false religion. All that false religions can do is make the exterior appearance look clean. False religion has no power to actually change a man from the inside out.

The example that comes to mind is the demon possessed man living in the tombs at Gerasa. One moment he is deranged and degraded to the lowest possible denominator. Living among the tombs. Terrorizing anyone who comes that way.

After a confrontation with Jesus we see him clothed and in his right mind, begging the Lord to allow him to come with them.

That wasn't a hypocrite who cleaned up the outside. That man was changed on the inside, and the outside followed suit.

Jesus comes into a life and He quickens the spirit from the dead. He makes the dead spirit, dead in sin, alive, cleansed, and joined together with His Holy Spirit, on the inside of that man.

Then that man spends the rest of his life in a sanctification process that continually renews his inner man to become more and more God like. His spirit is quickened from the dead. His soul is renewed day by day as he peers into this mirror called the Bible.

Those things happen inside a man. This is true religion and true change.

The opposite of this is true in false religion. There is no inner renewing. No real change. No quickened spirit, alive together with God. There is no real sanctification taking place. All there is, is a cleaned up exterior. Club rules say you need to minimally at least, look like this. So you look like that. But it's exterior only.

The murders and lies and deception a covetousness and lust seethe on the inside while the outside is spiffed up per club rules.

Jesus nails it. 25 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 26 “You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.*

Sixth woe is like the fifth. 27 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 “So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

The jews whitewashed the tombs both to beautify them and also because it caused ceremonial uncleanness if you touched a tomb. So they wanted them to stand out.

This inner man, outer man, true religion, false religion dichotomy is again illustrated by this mataphor. The guides to Israel, the leaders of the false religous system in Israel were as beautiful as these mausoleums on the outside and as full as death on the inside.

This is the perfect picture of false religion. Beautified on the exterior, but full of corruption and decay caused by death on the inside.

Seventh and final woe. 29 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31 “So you testify against*

yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

Jesus expands the tomb metaphor. They were building massive structures to glorify the dead prophets. And in so doing they were claiming to be different and better than their fathers who murdered them.

Jesus says, no, you are your fathers children. You follow in the footsteps of you fathers, who murdered the prophets.

There is an interesting discussion with them in John chapter 8. The whole father idea. They claimed their father was righteous Abraham. And Jesus tells them, in fact, their father is the devil and they will carry out the deeds of Satan.

Their fathers murdered the prophets because they were acting in accordance with their ultimate father, the devil. These men are in that same family and will do the same acts. Except this time it isn't the prophets, it is the very Son of God whom they will murder.

32“Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. 33“You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

The plot is formed. The plans are in place. These white washed tombs have one collective desire, born in them by their father, the devil, and that is to eliminate Jesus. To make Him dead.

They were a day away from carrying out that plan when this discussion took place. And they knew it. And Jesus knew it.

These things happened, what, 2050 years ago? Make no mistake. These men have been in torment in hell, for over 2000 years now. Unimaginable, frightening torment, for the rest of eternity. 2000 years is a drop in the ocean.

Such is the promise of God for all who are false teachers. Who lead people out of the way of righteousness and onto the broad road to destruction.

These are hard things to teach. No one's having fun studying this passage this morning. We need to heed these things because nothing in these warnings has changed in 2000 plus years. All of what Jesus said, is still in effect.

That is why we need to fly to the cross and beg for His mercy and His life and renewal within our hearts. True faith. True religion. True relationship. True change from the inside, out.