

Introduction:

- Matthew 23:13-36
- Mt 23 begins with Jesus speaking to the crowds about the religious leaders of the day. "Do what they say but not do what they do."
 - This chapter becomes severe in that it begins to predict the consequences of a failed Jewish leadership regarding the nation and people. (23:36-38).
- Religious leaders were all about (1) Attention, (2) Recognition, and (3) Position. vs. 5-7
- Now Jesus public speaking to the people switches from an objective look at the religious leaders to a full on frontal attack! His tone now is radically sharpened!
- No other place in scripture do we find Jesus so direct, sharp, and authoritatively rebuking.

I. Get The Point?

- A. Seven "Woes!" or Seven "What sorrow awaits you. vss. 13,15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29.
 1. The seven woes are especially familiar with Is. 5:8-23
 2. The number seven also implies completeness in Jewish thought.
 3. The breakdown of Woes. "The first six woes may be seen as three pairs with matching themes:"
 - a) the first pair (vv. 13-15) speak of keeping people out of the kingdom of heaven;
 - b) the second pair (vv. 16-24) focus on the distorted perspective which puts concern with details before the basic principles of religion and ethics;
 - c) the third pair (vv. 25-28) contrast outward and inward purity.
 - d) The seventh woe then brings the denunciation to its climax with the charge of complicity in the murder of God's messengers. NICNT France. The seventh is a summary and final 'blow' to the religious leaders.
- B. Seven "Hypocrites"
 1. The nature of the "hypocrisy" exposed in this section Matthew varies with the different items, but its essential nature is not deliberate deception but rather self-deceit.
 2. They are accused of having missed the heart of God, especially by focusing on petty details and externals instead of on the essentials of the sort of life God really desires.
 3. Because of this they have become enemies of God.
- C. "further insulting epithets ("child of hell," "blind guides" twice, "blind fools," "blind men," "blind Pharisee," "snakes, brood of vipers"), and the accusations made about them are phrased in ways which would be especially offensive to scribes and Pharisees ("violence and greed," "bones of the dead and all uncleanness," "hypocrisy and lawlessness," "murdering the prophets and the righteous"). NICNT France.

II. Woe, Woe, Woe

- A. First Pair - speaks of keeping people out of the kingdom of heaven
 1. Woe number 1!

- a) Problem is not insincerity or double standard. The problem is that they treat others like themselves...they refuse to enter the Kingdom of God and therefore forbid others to enter.
 - b) Much of Matthew has to do with enter the Kingdom of God. To "enter the kingdom of heaven" has been used in 5:20; 7:21; 8:11; 18:3; 19:23-24; 21:31 as a term for ultimate salvation (cf. "enter [eternal] life" in 7:13-14; 18:8-9; 19:17). This is what the true people of God do. They enter the Kingdom.
 - c) The Pharisees refuse to enter and they shut the door of the Kingdom in the faces of others. Mt 25:10 will come back to haunt them... "And the door was shut."
2. Woe number 2!
- a) Problem is not a lack of zeal. Jesus points out how zealous they are about to get a convert.
 - b) The problem is that they are making them twice the child of hell. Child of hell speaks of one who is destined for 'Gehenna' fiery hell.
 - c) The verse basically reads, "What sorrow awaits you Pharisee, as you go to hell!"
- B. Second Pair of Woes - focus on the distorted perspective which puts concern with details before the basic principles
1. Woe number 3!
- a) You are so blind! Three times Jesus says this. This directly points out their lack of spiritual perception. They think they are so knowledgeable and so wise but their stupidity is revealed in the very oaths they swear by. I.e. OT Prophets spoke of ignorant it is to build something with your hands and then bow to the very thing you made.
 - b) The sanctity of the items presented in worship get their sanctity from the place where they are presented. The place where they are presented is Gods! The presence gives the gold and the gift its sacredness. They Pharisee are so blind that they cannot see this simple truth.
2. Woe number 4!
- a) Focuses on the meticulous concern for detail while neglecting the greater things of the heart.
 - b) *"I can't object to your tithing herbs, but what matters is that you focus on justice, mercy and faithfulness."* Do not neglect the the things of the law but it is more import to focus on the heart to the matter, the more weightier items, that which is more important such as justice, mercy and faith.
 - c) *""Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets."* (Matthew 7:12, NLT)
 - d) Mt 22:37-40 Love God and love others.
 - e) *"No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."* (Micah 6:8, NLT)

- f) The gnat was considered unclean Lev 11:20 and so were camels Lev 11:4. Jesus chides them in that they work to screen out a gnat a small unclean insect verses swallowing an entire unclean camel. Again, it is the bigger thing that is neglected.
- C. Third Pair of Woes - contrast outward and inward purity
1. The fifth woe! The subject of gnats and camels introduce the topic of purity. To which Jesus now enters with the Pharisees.
 - a) See 15:11; 17-20. It is not what goes into a man that makes him unclean but the words that come of his mouth that defiles him.
 - b) The concern with the outside verses the inside takes us back to the start of 23 where Jesus tells the people that Pharisees are more concerned with appearances.
 - c) Ritual purity without moral cleanses is a sham! It is hypocrisy!
 2. Sixth Woe!
 - a) The outward impression is righteousness but inside they are filled with death and decay.
 - b) In all their law keeping...they do not live the law.
- D. The Last Woe - the subject of killing the prophets and messengers of God.
1. vs 34 I am sending; vs 34 you will kill and flog; vs 35 you will be held responsible; 36 judgment will fall on this generation.
 2. vs 32 Finish what your ancestors started...kill me...you sons of hell.
 3. because of these murders of God's sent one *judgement will fall on this generation!* 24:34 also repeats that judgment will fall on this generation as well.
 4. Jesus begins to fade out the attack on the Pharisees and now begins to move more openly upon the city of Jerusalem.
 5. vs 38 "your house" refers to the temple which he calls abandoned...note the next thing he is doing is leaving the Temple Mount. It also reflects Ezk picture of God leaving the Temple. "*Then the glory of the Lord moved out from the entrance of the Temple and hovered above the cherubim.*" (Ezekiel 10:18, NLT)
 6. "This act of judgment can only be averted if the people of Jerusalem are prepared to follow the lead given by the Galilean pilgrims." NICNT France They will not see him again until they welcome Him!!!

Conclusion:

- Application: Jesus said to beware of the yeast of the Pharisees! Mt 16:6. We all have a little bit of Pharisee in us.
 - speaks of keeping people out of the kingdom of heaven
 - concern with details of law before the basic principles of religion and ethics
 - more concern with outward verses inward purity.
- Jesus address the crowds at first to get their attention and then directs it to the Pharisees which should tell us what not to do. We would do well to listen.: