



CAPITOL COMMISSION

The Seven Curses of Christ upon Unrepentant Leaders

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Matthew 23:13-33 *“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, (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. (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?”

“THEIR WHOLE IDEA OF RELIGION CONSISTED IN OUTWARD OBSERVANCES, THE WEARING OF ELABORATE PHYLACTERIES AND TASSELS, THE METICULOUS OBSERVANCE OF THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE LAW. BUT IN THEIR HEARTS THERE WAS BITTERNESS, ENVY, PRIDE AND ARROGANCE.” WILLIAM BARCLAY

How were these leaders shutting the door to the kingdom of heaven? Why did Jesus consider their proselytes to be twice a “son of hell”? What did these leaders do to avoid telling the truth? How did they “strain out a gnat and swallow a camel”? Were these leaders concerned about their hearts or only their reputations? How did they consider themselves better than the previous leaders? What is meant by a “brood of vipers”? How does Jesus portray the love of God?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- JUNE 16-18: MATTHEW 23:34-36 PERSECUTING THE PROPHETS: THE LEGACY OF BLOOD
- JUNE 23-25: MATTHEW 23:1-12 THE KING'S LAST WORDS TO HIS NATION

These are the most scathing words that fall from Jesus’ lips! These leaders have had only one goal since Christ resurrected Lazarus nearby. They plan to kill Him as soon as possible (John 11:53)! Here Christ reveals publically exactly why they can’t wait to murder Him.

BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 7:30AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – DENNYS ON RT. 1

THURSDAY @ 7:30AM –BIBLE STUDY – RT. 10, IRONBRIDGE SPORTS PK, NOON – WYTESTONE PLAZA AT 8TH & MAIN – 2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – LOCATION TO BE DETERMINED

Virginia

The Seven Curses of Christ upon Unrepentant Leaders

“THESE SEVEN WOES ARE LIKE THUNDER IN THEIR UNANSWERABLE SEVERITY, AND LIKE LIGHTNING IN THEIR UNSPARING EXPOSURE. THEY GO DIRECT TO THE MARK, AND THEY ILLUMINATE WHILE THEY STRIKE.” ALFRED PLUMMER

I. CLOSING THE KINGDOM MT. 23:13-15

The word “*woe*” in the original sounds like a cry of pain (ouai!). Jesus said that they were hypocrites because they “*shut off the kingdom of heaven from people.*” This verb not only means to “*shut,*” but also to “*lock.*” The picture here is someone standing beside the door to the kingdom, and as soon as a person seeks to enter, they shut and lock the door, right in their face! The greatest evil of all external religion is that it locks the door to God’s kingdom. In their arrogant pride they considered themselves to be the doorkeepers of the kingdom and here Christ shows that their door is always closed. Jesus explained, “*you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much the son of hell as yourselves.*” Their teaching of external religious deeds and good works to get to heaven absolutely shut them and their followers out from the true Gospel of the grace of God (Eph. 2:8-9).

“EVERY NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS A WORKS-RIGHTEOUS RELIGION, AND WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS INHERENTLY AT MORTAL ENMITY WITH THE GOSPEL OF GOD’S GRACE. BY THEIR VERY NATURE SUCH BELIEF SYSTEMS EXCLUDE PEOPLE FROM GOD’S KINGDOM.” JOHN MACARTHUR

II. LISCENSE FOR LAWLESSNESS MT. 23:16-28

In this third “*woe,*” Jesus calls His leaders “*blind guides*” because they promoted a sophisticated double standard for lying. They taught that if someone chose to swear by “*the Temple,*” “*the altar*” or even “*heaven*” then their

agreement or oath was not binding. But if they chose to swear by “*the gold of the Temple,*” “*the offering*” on the altar or “*the throne of God,*” then they were “*obligated*” by it. They could sidestep the truth with fancy language they devised to verbally “*cross their fingers.*” Besides using loopholes for lying, they also employed minutiae in order to ignore or draw the attention away from what was most important. They would tithe their herbs to seem ultra spiritual while ignoring the importance of “*justice, mercy and faithfulness.*” They are confronted by Christ, “*You blind guides who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*” They were meticulously tithing the smallest seeds while committing adultery through divorce and remarriage (Mt. 19:3-9). The fifth and sixth woes portray an outward disguise for inward filthiness. The picture of the cup and dish was like using fine china to serve hog slop to your guests and the beautifully whitewashed tombs served to beautify the reality of a rotting corpse within. Their external “*righteousness*” was only used to conceal the lawless hypocrisy and the uncleanness of their wicked hearts.

“WHATEVER WE ARE IN OUR RELIGION, LET US RESOLVE NEVER TO WEAR A CLOAK: LET US BY ALL MEANS BE HONEST AND REAL. IT IS BAD ENOUGH TO BE BLIND OURSELVES: IT IS A THOUSAND TIMES WORSE TO BE A BLIND GUIDE . . . HE RESEMBLES AN UNSKILFUL PILOT: HE DOES NOT PERISH ALONE.” J. C. RYLE

III. SUPERIORITY WHILE SERPENTS MT. 23:29-33

In the final “*woe*” Jesus spotlights their murderous intentions. They mask their hatred for God’s absolute truth by enhancing the memory of the men who formerly proclaimed it and they claim superiority to exactly the same bloodshed in the past. “*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.*” How will this “*brood of vipers*” possibly escape “*hell?*”

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Does your heart and life show that you believe God and His Word?
- 2) Are you trusting external righteousness to make you good enough to go to heaven?
- 3) Is your heart hypocritical & arrogant in thinking you are superior to others when your reputation does not match reality?