

Gospel of Matthew 23 “Woefully Religious”
Matthew 23:13-39
March 24, 2024

Matthew 23:13-36

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. 15 Woe 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.

Shutting doors and crossing seas.

Mark 9:42

42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

To “close doors” is to divert people away from Jesus, teach without the gospel and in a way that does not foster love.

Matthew 23:16-24

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.’ 17 You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? 18 And 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.’ 19 You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. 21 And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. 22 And 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. 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

Majoring on minors.

Don’t be a champion for biblical sub-point...

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.

Outsiders.

The Christians life can become a managing of the outer life rather than a transformation of the inner life.

Matthew 23:29-36

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? 34 Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, 35 so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah,[f] whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. 36 Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Better than or “not us.”

Until you count yourself as part of the group that crucified Jesus then you can’t count yourself as one the cross saves.

Matthew 23:37-39

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! 38 See, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

There is more power at work to save than there is in your sin to ruin.

Grow Group Discussion Questions

- What did God say to you through His Word during our Sunday gathering?
- How can our lives be an obstacle towards others’ beliefs in Christ?
- What are the things we do or say that obscure or promote Jesus?
- What’s the danger at studying God’s Word while neglecting the gospel? In what ways can we major on the minors? How can we make sure we are making important the weightier things?
- Why are we inclined to work on the “outside” rather than the “inside” of our lives? Why might cleaning the inside of the cup ultimately affect and clean the outside?

- What are things that our parents or grandparents did or thought that seem outdated and wrong? What is the danger in believing that we've progressed past our parents and grandparents?
- How can your group encourage you in applying this passage to your life this week?