

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Woe Unto You, Part 1

Last time...Jesus had a warning for everyone in the Temple listening to Him

- the common people
- His disciples/followers

Beware the scribes and Pharisees

- Do what they say but do not do what they do
- All their works they do to be seen of men i.e. to impress man vs God
- Their holiness is false, offensive to the holy God
- They are hazardous to your spiritual health

This time...Jesus turns to speak directly to the scribes and Pharisees, who are also in the Temple and undoubtedly overheard what Jesus just said about them to the people and His disciples

His words to them are words of “Woe”

Jesus pronounces 8 “Woes” upon the scribes and Pharisees

This morning we will establish the context of Jesus’ words and consider Woes 1-4

We will be in Matt 23...starting in Gen 12

Context

This is the Final Week of Jesus’ ministry; the Cross is a few days away

Jesus Christ has entered into Jerusalem as God’s King

He cleansed the Temple, His Father’s house, of profane covetousness by the religious leaders

He has been in the Temple, teaching

Jesus has had His authority to cleanse the Temple and to teach challenged

The Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees have attempted to expose Him as a fraud and trap Him in His words, only to be exposed as frauds by Him and be trapped in their own words

Now, Jesus is facing His enemies who are plotting His murder

They are not citizens of the Kingdom of God,
even though they think they are the leading citizens of the Kingdom of God

Hosea 7:2 they consider not in their hearts *that* I remember all their wickedness

The Kingdom of God is spiritual, of Life and Light
The kingdoms of men (including the religions of men) are worldly, of death and darkness

The difference between the kingdoms is summed up in words Jesus spoke to one of their own years earlier

John 3:3-6 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

And by the testimony of John the Baptist to them

John 3:35-36 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him

God's King, Jesus has words for the citizens of both the kingdom of God and kingdoms of men

Kingdom of God: SoM
8 Beatitudes...8 Blessings
Kingdoms of men (religions): Woes of Matt 23
8 Woes...8 Curses

The setting is the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem
The persons being spoken to are Jewish religious leaders
The Good Shepherd, the Holy One of Israel, is testifying against the false shepherds
The hearers are Jewish
The context is...Jewish

Gen 12:3 linked with God's Messiah are bless (believe) and curse (do not believe)

Deut 11:26-29

Deut 27:11-14 ff

v15-26...curses

Deut 28:1-2 ff

v3-6 ff...blessings

v15-19 ff...curses (thru the end of Ch 28)

Joshua 8:30-35

as commanded by the Lord thru His servant Moses

“I set before you this day a blessing and a curse.”

I set before you a choice:

- a. To obey (believe) and be blessed
- or
- b. To disobey (not believe) and be cursed

These words and this choice were set before the Jews, so it only makes sense we find

The Voice of God speaking both the blessings and the curses in the Gospel written to the Jews – Matthew

[Matt 5:1-12] SoM, 8 Beatitudes

Corresponding to the Blessings are the Woes

[Matt 23:13-36] 8 Woes

Serious charges against the unloving, self-serving, self-righteous “shepherds” who believe not (John 5:37-38)
(should cause them to go read Ezekiel 34 and Jer 23)

- 8 “woe”
- 7 “hypocrites”...actors, pretenders, counterfeits
- 2 “blind guides”
- 2 “fools and blind”
- 1 “blind”
- 1 “serpents”
- 1 “generation of vipers”...seed of the serpent (Gen 3)

Note: Some of these things Jesus has said before (Luke 11:37-52), but in a different setting (Pharisees’ house for a meal) and in a different time/place (Perea)

The SoM ends with a stern warning to those who think they are citizens of the Kingdom of God but are not

Matt 7:21-27

The Woes in Matt 23 end with a heart-breaking expression of deep compassion and longing for a right relationship with His people (John 1:11) that they would enter His Kingdom

Matt 23:37-39

This morning we will look at Woes 1-4, corresponding to Beatitudes 1-4

<u>Woes</u>	<u>Beatitudes/Blessings</u>
1. haughty and the kingdom of heaven	poor and the kingdom of heaven
2. greater damnation	comfort
3. Pharisee-likeness and inheritance	Christ-likeness and inheritance
4. hunger for worldly things	hunger for righteousness

Matt 23:13-22

v13 woe...hypocrites...shut up the kingdom of heaven:

Woe #1 – the Kingdom of heaven (Beatitude #1 in Matt 5:3)

The priesthood (of Aaron) has been corrupted by the Pharisees, the Sadducees,
and Rome

Echoes of Mal 2:1-9 can be heard in the Temple this day

Rather than helping the people find The Way (John 14:6), the scribes and
Pharisees have

- stumbled the people
- barred the Door to the Kingdom of God

Jesus has told them John 9:39 – 10:9

But they reject, have opposed, and are plotting to kill God's Messiah/Christ...
God's Door into His Kingdom

They stand resolutely with their back to the Door to the Kingdom of God...
having turned their back to the King of God's Kingdom
and are preventing others from coming to the Door and entering into the
Kingdom of God

They reject God's salvation and are opposing the salvation of others

- Gentiles
- sinners

Gentiles

God created a people (Is 43:1) from one man who believed Him and it was
accounted unto him as righteousness (Gen 15:6)

God revealed Himself to them and gave them (Rom 9:4-5)

- the adoption
- the glory
- the covenants
- the Law
- the service of God
- the promises of the Messiah/Christ, who He promised to ALL
mankind (Gen 3)

He called them to be holy/separate from the nations/Gentiles...as His
ambassadors/witnesses to them that all the nations would know
that the God of Israel is the Maker of heaven and earth, the God of
all the world

He sent them His servants the prophets to call them to be faithful to their calling to

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| Is 9:1-2 | people that walked in darkness (Gentiles) have seen a great light (Messiah) |
| Is 11:10 | a root of Jesse (Son of David) which will stand for an ensign to the people (will be the Cross) that the Gentiles will seek |
| Is 42:1-8 | God's Servant will bring justice to the Gentiles, will be a light to the Gentiles |
| Is 49:1-9, 22 | Messiah will restore the preserved of Israel and be a light to the Gentiles |
| Is 62:1-2 | the Gentiles shall see the Messiah's righteousness |
| Jer 16:19-21 | the Gentiles shall come to the LORD, they will know that God's name is The LORD |

But the Jews did not have God's heart...had Jonah's heart

- despised the Gentiles, did not love the Gentiles
- thought of themselves as holier-than-thou (the Gentiles) and looked for the destruction of the Gentiles

Sinners

- Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14)
- John 9:22 the people feared the Jews for the Jews had agreed that if anyone confessed that Jesus was the Christ they would be put out of the synagogue (society)
- Luke 11:52 **Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered**
John 5:39...The Key to knowledge
Jer 9:24...the greatest knowledge is to know the LORD
- John 11:57 had given commandment that if any man knew where Jesus was, he should tell them so they could take (by force) Him

Rather than teaching the Word of God, they v4

- impossible to keep their microscopic interpretations of the Law
- traditions that made of none effect the Word of God
- guilt and condemnation (John 3:16-17)

Rather than preaching the Good News of God's Messiah being as wide as all mankind (as God proclaimed Him in Gen 3 and "the desire of all nations" in Hag 2:7), they made the Messiah as narrow as Israel and a mere political conqueror

Rather than proclaiming the righteousness of the Messiah/Christ, they boasted of their self-righteousness

Therefore...

Ex 20:7

Jer 23:1 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep
of my pasture! saith the LORD

The scribes and Pharisees were not going to enter the Kingdom of heaven

Parable of the Two Sons (Matt 21:28-32)...[v31b-32](#)

Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt 21:33-41)...[v40-41](#)

[Matt 21:42-45](#)

Parable of the Marriage of the King's Son (Matt 22:1-10)...[v7-10](#)

And hindering others from entering in

Woe!

v14 Woe...hypocrites...devour...pretence:

Woe #2 – Damnation vs comfort (Beatitude #2 in Matt 5:4)

As spoken to the common people and His disciples,
recorded in Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47,
and discussed last week

In Matthew's account, Jesus also says it directly to the scribes and Pharisees

v15 Woe...hypocrites...proselyte...two-fold more child of hell:

Woe #3 – Pharisee-likeness vs Christ-likeness (Beatitude #3 in Matt 5:5)

First of all, per Jesus Christ, what are the scribes and Pharisees?

Children of hell

Dead in trespasses and sin

[John 8:21-24](#)

Children of wrath

In their spiritual pride and self-righteousness, the scribes and Pharisees

- scoffed at and held in contempt common people (sinners) and all Gentiles
- recruited only the best and the brightest and the most zealous of religious students to join their sect of Judaism

By the time they were done training them, the best and the brightest and the most zealous were...the most corrupt spiritually

Anyone come to mind?

Saul of Tarsus

[Gal 1:10-17](#)

“painful” re-orientation from John 12:43 to v10

Note: Jesus is able to save a two-fold child of hell!!!

Note: I wonder how many seminaries could weather this harsh rebuke by Jesus today?

John 7:15 vs John 7:16

v16-22 Woe...blind guides...swear by:

Woe #4 – unrighteousness vs righteousness (Beatitude #4 in Matt 5:6)

Spiritual and moral blindness that leads to pure foolishness

To make an oath/vow (that your word is good) by:

the Temple (“Big deal” according to the blind guides)

or

the gold (the flesh lusts after) of the Temple...as did the foolish scribes and Pharisees and their traditions

the altar (of sacrifice) of God (“Means nothing” to the blind guides)

or

the gift (brought by sinful man) to the altar...as did the foolish scribes and Pharisees and their traditions

The orientation of the scribes and the Pharisees is worldly and man-centered...
unrighteous (Is 64:6)

Jesus’ orientation is heavenly and God-centered...righteous

The Temple is His Father’s house

(why He cleansed it of commercialism twice)

The altar is a shadow...of His sacrifice on God’s Altar (Cross)

The things of God are holy and make holy the things within/on them...
so the things of God are obviously greater,
unless one is blind and foolish

Make your word good before God and man

Matt 5:33-37

Application

1. Jesus was harsh, not gentle, with the unloving, self-serving, self-righteous religious leaders.
The Good Shepherd was very harsh with the wicked shepherds that lorded over and oppressed the people, His sheep

But Jesus was very gentle with

- the 5-times-married-now-living-with-a-man Samaritan woman at the well (John 4)
- the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)
- Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

Jesus is always gentle with the sinner that confesses his/her sin and repents...
citizens of the Kingdom of God

But Jesus is harsh, not gentle, with sinners who profess to be without sin and do not repent...
citizens of the kingdoms of men (including the religions of men)

1 John 1:8-10

Eph 2:1-9

2. The Lord has an intolerance for hypocrisy/hypocrites and religion

Beware hypocrisy

Luke 12:1b the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy

Ps 50:16 But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?

1 Tim 4:1-7

2 Tim 3:1-9

[promotional mailer of modern Christianity]

Beware the religions of men:

1. bar the way to Jesus and, therefore, God the Father in heaven (v13)
2. lust for the things of this world (v14)
3. are cruel bondage (v15)
4. are illogical, leading to foolishness and blindness (v16-22)

3. "I set before you this day a blessing and a curse."
What say ye?
What is your choice?