

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Woe Unto You, Part 2

Last time...Jesus turned to the scribes and Pharisees and spoke harshly to them – Woes

We considered

- Woes 1-4 of the 8 Woes Jesus spoke in Matt 23
- the Beatitudes/Blessings correspond to the Woes/Curses...
God's words to the citizens of 2 very different kingdoms

Woes	Beatitudes/Blessings
1. v13 ...haughty, kingdom of heaven	Matt 5:3 ...poor, kingdom of heaven
2. v14 ...greater damnation	Matt 5:4 ...comfort
3. v15 ...Pharisee-likeness and inheritance	Matt 5:5 ...Christ-likeness and inheritance
4. v16 ...hunger for worldly things	Matt 5:6 ...hunger for righteousness

The Blessings/Beatitudes are for those who are pleasing to God – believe Him
The Curses/Woes are for those who are displeasing to God – do not believe Him

This time...The Woes of Jesus to the scribes and Pharisees in Matt 23 continue

v23-24 Woe...tithe...judgment, mercy, and faith:

Woe #5

Blessing #5: Matt 5:7

The Pharisees were known for, and proud of, their religious zealotry,
down to ultra-burdensome minutest things
e.g. tithing on the seeds of spices

They looked down their noses with condemnation at those who were not as
religiously zealous as they

But...they did not do (v3-4) the most important messages of God's Word –
the relational things

- judgment/justice/fairness
- mercy/compassion
- faith/trust

Jesus is calling them out, directly to their faces, that they

- were not just, as God is just
- had no mercy/compassion, as God who delights in mercy is merciful
- had no faith in the Lord but rather trusted in their works to make themselves pleasing to God (and seen of men)
- had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof...no substance

The scribes and Pharisees, the ultra-religious, could not see the forest for the trees
They were so focused on the minutest details, the tiniest particulars,
(of their interpretation of Scripture rather than in Scripture itself)
that they were blind to the essence of the Law – justice, mercy, faith

The Maker of heaven and earth is a relational God
He walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day
Man's (male and female) unbelief displeased the Lord and fractured the
relationship (Is 59:1-2)
Before banishing them, God promised a work of reconciliation...thru a Messiah

Subsequently, the Law was given to

- reveal the sin of man (Rom 3:20, 1 Cor 15:56)
- reveal the holiness and the heart of God
- govern relationships, between God and between others

In their works-based, self-righteous, religious zeal, the scribes and Pharisees
squashed relationships...
between themselves and God and between themselves and others

Their heart quenched God's heart, thereby misrepresenting God to the people.
Previously, at a meal at a Pharisees house during His ministry in Perea,
Jesus said,
“But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all
manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God:
these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

Justice/fairness, mercy/compassion, and faith (Matt 23:23) are
manifestations of the love of God (Luke 11:42)

Jesus has previously told the Pharisees to go learn mercy

Matt 9:9-13

“communal eating”

Hosea 6:6

Matt 12:1-7

Matt 5:7

What is pleasing to God is justice, mercy, and faith...trusting/believing Him...
not man's zealous religious observances

Gen 2:16-17

Gen 6:5, 8-9

Note: Matt 24:37

Heb 11:8

re: move, site unseen

Gen 15:6

re: heir/son and descendants

Gen 22:1-18

Hab 2:4

Heb 11:6

impossible to please without, must believe, rewarder

With all their show and hyper-religious zeal, the scribes and Pharisees

- did not have a right relationship with God, did not walk with God
- were not righteous/acceptable/pleasing

Jesus calls them blind (cannot see the Light) guides/teachers

He points to the absurdity of their misdirected zeal (religious vs relational
ala Is 9:6-7) with an absurdity:

They strained to filter out a gnat and to gulp down a camel

v25-26 Woe...make clean the outside...but within:

Woes #6

Blessing #6: Matt 5:8

Cup – a vessel for drinking

Platter – a vessel for eating

The hypocrites make sure the outside/external of the vessels are shiny clean...
but that have not seen to it that the inside/internal is clean

For a drinking and eating vessel, which is more important – a clean outside or a
clean inside or both?!

The external façade of the scribes and Pharisees was impressive, with all their
religious regalia

- wide phylacteries
- large tassels on their clothes
- long robes
- pretentious prayers

but beneath the “holy” exterior seen by men was a wretched interior filled with

- extortion/pillaging...devouring widow’s houses (preying on the weak)
- excess...self-indulgence (vs Matt 16:24), no self-restraint

The external façade is of the flesh...

- sold under sin (Rom 7:14)
- in which there is no good thing (Rom 7:18)

Religion (man’s works done to be pleasing) is of the flesh...perishes like the grass

The internal is the spirit, heart, and mind

- their spirit is dead
- their hearts and minds are corrupt and defiled

Relationship (with the relational God) is of the spirit, heart, and mind...eternal

In His words to the Pharisees in Luke 11, speaking of this same issue...
clean outside of the cup and platter but unclean inside...

Jesus said, “fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also?” (Luke 11:40)

So...why tend to the outside only (that man can see) and not both the outside and the inside (that God alone can see)?!

Therefore, the obvious rebuke/exhortation is:
See God’s priority: First Things First!

Make sure the internal is cleansed first!

Ps 103:8-12 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us

Rom 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

Matt 5:8

Then and only then might the external also be cleansed

Rom 13:10 Love is the fulfilling of the Law
(received within and then given without)

We are able to love each other only to the degree that we love the Lord

When Jesus is first, when our relationship with the Lord is first,
He makes right every other relationship

These vessels of ours (physical bodies) are temporary housing for our eternal spirits

There is “death in the pot” (2 Kings 4:38-41) until we are born-again of the Spirit of God and in a right relationship with God

2 Cor 4:6-7

2 Cor 4:16 – 5:1

2 Cor 5:17-21

v27-28 Woe...whited sepulchers...full of dead:

Woe #7

Blessing #7: Matt 5:9 the dead are not at peace with God

Every year Jewish families would “freshen up” the family tomb and graves with a new coat of white-wash, a mixture of water, salt, and lime

The white-wash did not, could not, “freshen up” or change what was inside the tomb, where no man could see,
but it certainly made beautiful the outside that man could see

Jesus, not mincing any words, likens the scribes and Pharisees to the tombs/graves of men

a. seen

Beautiful on the outside that men can see
but filled with putrid uncleanness/impurity...
hypocrisy/deceit and iniquity/sin/wickedness...
on the inside that God alone can see (1 Sam 16:7b, Jer 17:9-10)

b. unseen

They way He phrased it in the Pharisees’ house in Perea is,
“**Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over *them* are not aware of them.**” (Luke 11:44)

To men the scribes and Pharisees look holy...but nothing could be further from the truth in the eyes of God
Acts 23:3

Jesus tells us quite clearly: Things are not always as they appear!
That which is true: the internal and the external are the same
Hypocrisy: the internal and the external are not the same

In Scripture, both of these are white:

1. leprosy (impure/unclean)
2. the linen/righteousness of the saints (purity)

But the difference between those two is the difference between

- death (Rom 6:23a) and life (Jer 23:5-6, 1 Cor 1:30-31)
- inner vs outer

I set before you this day a blessing and a curse

A blessing if you obey...James 1:22, citizens of the Kingdom of God
(Matt 5:7-9 this week)

A curse if you will not obey...citizens of the kingdoms of the world
(including the religions of man)

The citizens of the Kingdom of God are pleasing to God

- believe what God has said
- love the Lord pre-eminently in a right relationship
- are given Christ-righteousness...and stand before God as such

The citizens of the kingdom of the world are not pleasing to God

- do not believe what God has said
- love themselves pre-eminently, not in relationship with the Lord
- have self-righteousness...and stand before God as such

It has always been that way

Gen 3:21

The Lord graphically demonstrated what, in the darkness of man's sin, was pleasing/acceptable to Him...righteous

An innocent life was given to cover the shame of man

In the context of Scripture, that innocent life was a lamb, foreshadowing John 1:29

Gen 4:1-12

Able brought the acceptable/pleasing/Christ-righteous offering to the Lord – an innocent life, just as God had demonstrated

Cain brought an unacceptable/displeasing/self-righteous offering to the Lord – the work of his hands, not at all what God had demonstrated

Able believed what God had said and done,
Cain did not believe

Able was acceptable/pleasing/Christ-righteous,
Cain was unacceptable/displeasing/self-righteous

Christ-righteous Able was blessed (even as the 1st resident of Paradise/Abraham's Bosom) in the presence of the Lord
Self-righteous Cain was cursed...and went out from the presence of the Lord (v16)

Eph 2:1-9

Self-righteousness is dead in sin, as Jesus' Woe to the scribes and Pharisees so clearly teaches us
Is 64:6

The Pharisees thought and said "The people who know not the Law are cursed." (John 7:49)
Jesus said, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is heaven is My brother, sister, and mother." (Matt 12:50)
which requires faith, submission, obedience –
that which is pleasing to the Father

Application

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

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)
5. is misdirected, short-sighted, and blind to the truth (v23-24)
6. is external vs internal (v25-26)
7. is death all dressed up (v27-28)

2. Christ-righteousness vs Self-righteousness...the difference is life and death

Luke 11:35-36 **Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore *be* full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.**

Will you give up your self-righteousness and come to the Light?