

BUSY HYPOCRITES

Isaiah 33:10-24; Matthew 23:13-28 / Isaiah 56:1-12

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I. Hypocritical Religion Is Disastrous

A. Active hypocrites miss the purpose of God's kingdom in their own lives and as a consequence prevent other people from entering the kingdom. "But *woe* unto you, scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites!* for *ye shut up the kingdom of heaven* against men: for *ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.* Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for *ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.*" (MATTHEW 23:13-14)

B. Hypocrites practice a form of self-deception more dangerous than obvious moral lepers. "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and *ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him:* and ye, when ye had seen *it,* repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." (MATTHEW 21:32)

C. Something is fundamentally wrong with religious practices which directly repudiate the Bible; a religious practitioner can get killed for crossing God's personal representatives. "*Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.* If thou afflict them *in any wise,* and they cry at all unto me, *I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.*" (EXODUS 22:22-24)

D. Hypocrisy is the opposite of genuine Christianity. "*Pure religion* and undefiled before God and the Father *is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,* and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (JAMES 1:27)

II. Aggressive Hypocrisy Compounds Judgment

A. Hypocrites make converts to themselves without bringing them to the gospel of grace. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for *ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte,* and when he is made, *ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*" (MATTHEW 23:15)

B. Christianity without the gospel kills souls; lies can't save. "*Ye are of your father the devil,* and the lusts of your father ye will do. *He was a murderer from the beginning,* and abode not in the truth, because *there is no truth in him.* When he speaketh a lie, *he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar,* and the father of it." (JOHN 8:44)

C. God saved His people out of sin into holiness, not to enable sin. "And *you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;* Wherein *in time past ye walked according* to the course of this world, according to *the prince of the power of the air,* the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath,* even as others." (EPHESIANS 2:1-3)

D. To satisfy themselves, hypocrites blind themselves and their followers to the obvious. "Woe unto you, ye *blind guides,* which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools [i.e. MORONS] and blind: for *whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?*" (MATTHEW 23:16-17)

E. When hypocrites get under way they commit to a self-sustaining disaster, going from one distortion to another. "And, *Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.* Ye fools and blind: for *whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?* Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon."

(MATTHEW 23:18-20) [In early English, the term GUILT was used for OBLIGATION. Hypocrites find ways to void obligations.]

III. Watch for Signs of Hypocrisy and Avoid Them

A. Hypocrisy distorts proportion, transforming faithfulness into unfaithfulness. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law**, judgment, mercy, and faith: **these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.**” (MATTHEW 23:23)

B. Hypocrites choke on small sins and gulp big sins. “Ye blind guides, which **strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.**” (MATTHEW 23:24)

C. Remember how the religious officials who paid for Jesus’ betrayal would not take the same coins back because they had become tainted; it had been blood money from the time it was offered to Judas. “And the **chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.** And **they took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers** in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.” (MATTHEW 27:6-8)

D. Hypocrites will observe cultural courtesies while not drawing the line at murder and theft. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for **ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.**” (MATTHEW 23:25)

E. Life isn’t right with God till the inside and the outside both demonstrate His cleansing grace. “Thou **blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within** the cup and platter, **that the outside of them may be clean also.** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto **whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones,** and of all uncleanness.” (MATTHEW 23:26-27)