

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #261

Tuesday of Passion Week... Day of Testing and Teaching

Jesus' First Four (of Seven) Woes Upon the Pharisees & Scribes

MT 23.13-24

13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You continually shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves are not entering, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

[Note: the content of MT 23.14 is not found in the most reliable, earlier manuscripts of Matthew. We do not include it in this publication]

15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You keep on traveling over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you turn them into twice as much a child of hell as you are.

16 "Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.' 17 You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred?

18 "You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.'

19 "You foolish, blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift holy? 20 Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar is swearing by it and by everything on it. 21 And anyone who swears by the temple is swearing by it and by the one who is dwelling in it. 22 And anyone who swears by heaven is swearing by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.

23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You continually give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	The Temple Courts in Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	C. Tuesday: Day of Testing and Teaching
Title	I I. Jesus' First Four (of Seven) "Woes" Upon the Pharisees and Scribes

COMMENT:

Roughly six months earlier, in a private dinner setting at a Pharisee's house somewhere in Judea, Jesus had spoken six woes against the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law (DJN #184; LK 11.42-54). Now, around mid-day on Tuesday, Day Three of Passion Week, Jesus took off his gloves and publicly rebuked these two groups in the

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most confrontational, heated words of his ministry. No one who witnessed this scene ever forgot it, and it has lived on in history through Matthew's record. We would also do well to never forget these words.

The content of this rebuke, and the earlier one were similar. This time Jesus included everything he had warned them about before, and added even more grievous sins and attitudes to boot. They had not taken his first warning to heart.

Jesus described these people who persisted in hypocrisy as **"blind guides, fools, serpents, brood of vipers,"** and **"murderers."** He had warned his own disciples against calling another person a **"fool"** (MT 5.22), yet he did so himself. Was Jesus being a hypocrite when he did this--did he engage in mere name-calling? No. Most emphatically NO!

This is an example of our Lord's righteous anger. He had confronted the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law many times in the past with the truth in love, including the earlier "woes" we mentioned above. He had performed numerous miracles before their eyes, and raised Lazarus from the dead after four days in the grave--a miracle that the Pharisees themselves recognized as a true sign: *"This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, all men believe in him..."* (JN 11.47-48). Jesus had given them every chance to face the truth and repent, and they had adamantly refused.

Jesus was angry because they had done all of this under the guise of loving and obeying God. It was their hypocrisy that doomed them to eternal judgement--the "woe" that Jesus was warning them about.

It all went back to the first parable Jesus had spoken against them that morning. God had given them a command to repent and believe in his Son. They said they were obeying him, yet continued to refuse to do so, and they used all of their influence to encourage others to do the same.

All sin is an expression of unbelief. Hypocrisy is the worst possible expression of unbelief, for it masquerades as obedience while stubbornly persisting in rebellion. The only antidote for the poisonous denial and self-deception of hypocrisy is pure, holy truth. These "woes" were a loving, disinfecting injection of truth into some very sin-sick souls.

APPLICATION:

Jesus did not speak to merely release his pent-up emotions of anger and frustration. Rather, he spoke the truth in a final attempt to break through the lies and self-deception that was going to drag his beloved enemies down into the pit of hell with the devil--the father of all lies, and the true enemy of their souls. Every word of woe that Jesus spoke was in the best interests of his enemies. It was love. Their situation was desperate. It required strong, clear words.

We are just as prone to hypocrisy as anyone else. It is part of the sinful nature we all share. The worst thing we can do is point our fingers at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and rejoice that we are not sinful like them. In making that assumption we actually join the Pharisees in our hypocrisy.

The truth is that we must all be constantly vigilant against our hypocritical nature. This is the point of this text.

Which of these "woes" have you been guilty of?

Which are your weak points?

How do you depend upon Jesus to deliver you from them?