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SERIES: Matthew (The King, His Kingdom And Me)

TITLE: Program 40 – Woe To You Hypocrites!

FRIDAY

OPEN

Hypocrite! I mean you look at them and you don't like what you see because what? What you see is not what they are. They put a mask on and behind that mask there's something different. I want you to know that God doesn't like hypocrites either. And we're going to talk about hypocrisy today, Beloved. You're going to see it in His precepts for life.

PART ONE

The time of Jesus' death was approaching and He was about to celebrate the last Passover. The multitudes were still following Him and He wanted them to understand exactly about the scribes and the Pharisees. And so He began a discourse to show what the scribes and the Pharisees were really like. Why? He was about to leave them. He was about to turn the commission of getting the gospel out, the gospel of the kingdom, to His disciples. There would be a strong contrast. The Pharisees and the scribes were going to put Him to

death, they were going to call for His death. He's ministered to them. They have seen Him in action for three and a half years. They've been following His ministry, and the animosity has grown and grown and grown. And the hypocrisy has become so evident that He needs to speak out. I want us to continue in Matthew chapter 23. In Matthew chapter 23 He says, verse 13, **"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees...."** (Matthew 23:13) As we mark the text, you want to mark the phrase, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees." It's a key repeated phrase. You're going to want to mark all the reference to "prayers" because you want to contrast "their prayers" with "to prayer," and we always want to mark "prayer." In verse 13 it says, **"...Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...."** (Matthew 23:13) that's the word you want to mark separately: "hypocrite." A hypocrite, remember is one that wears a mask. It's one that pretends to be one thing, when in reality, behind that mask, they're another thing. It's sometimes called a two-faced person. It says, **"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees... because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."** (Matthew 23:13) Now I just want to tell you one thing about the Pharisees. The Pharisees came from the "Hasidim." The "Hasidim" arose during the Maccabean period, the period between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament. They were rather a militant religious sect. And they were a military religious sect during that period of the Maccabees because they were militant and they were standing against Antiochus Epiphanes and he was a cruel, cruel man. And he brought a lot of Hellenization to the culture in Israel. In other words, he introduced Greek ways and Greek lifestyles. And many of the Jews followed them. And so the "Hasidim" rose up and they were strong adherence to the Law. They were good. Well, out of the "Hasidim" came the Pharisees. The Pharisees were basically from the middle class. The Pharisees were the people that were the largest group, the largest religious sect, and the most popular, and obviously, the most vocal,

and the most adamant in their desire to get rid of Jesus. And so now Jesus is exposing them. He is taking off their religiosity and He is showing what they are in truth. And you've got to know this, Beloved. We can put on this clothing, so to speak, this outward external appearance, and give the impression of being very religious and a keeper of the Law and yet what's underneath? God always sees underneath. **"...Man looks at the outward..., but [God] looks at the heart."** (1 Samuel 16:7) And so what He's doing is, He's letting the crowds and His disciples understand this religious sect, because when we understand it, then we can beware that it does not happen to us. So He says that these people are seeking to enter the kingdom of God themselves, and yet they do not allow others to enter in. He just says it. He says, ["they are not going to enter the kingdom of heaven."]
(PARAPHRASE, Matthew 23:13) And because they're not going to enter the kingdom of heaven, then those that are following them and following that lifestyle are not going to enter the kingdom of heaven. He says, **"Woe to you... because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people...."** (Matthew 23:13) And Jesus came to announce that **"...the kingdom of heaven [was] at hand."** (Matthew 4:17) He says, **"...For you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."** (Matthew 23:13) Then we come to the second "woe." Now the second woe is a woe that is not found in the earlier manuscripts. And it's a woe that it seems that maybe someone put in because what they're saying is actually true. But it says, **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive [the] greater condemnation."** (Matthew 23:14) So that "woe" is the one that they think has been added later. But let's just look at it for a minute. He says, "You go into widows' houses; you make long, long prayers for pretense." (PARAPHRASE, 23:14) In other words, you're praying, as He was saying, in Matthew chapter 6, ["You're praying, once again, to be seen of men, to be heard of men and, in a sense, to impress

men with your prayers.”] (PARAPHRASE 6:5) It’s a good reminder, Precious One, when we stand to pray in public, when we pray in church or when we pray for meals, or when we’re with a group. Why are we praying? Are we praying so that we’ll look religious or are we praying because we’re really seeking God, because we really need His help, because we’re really dependent on Him or because we really want to live for the praise of His glory? Why are we praying? And so it’s good, as we look at this, to examine ourselves and to see if any of this, even if there’s a shred of truth here, we want to get rid of it. And so He goes on to say in verse 15, **“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte...;”** to get another follower of you, **“...and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” (Matthew 23:15)** Do you realize what He is saying to them? He’s saying, “You’re not going to enter the kingdom of heaven.” And He’s saying, when you go out and you go to get a proselyte, a follower, you go to bring someone over to your side and your way, you are making him a son of hell twice as much. In other words, you are leading them to the same condemnation that you’re under. I mean these are scathing, scathing words and you have to remember who they’re coming from. They’re coming from Jesus. They’re coming from the Son of God. They’re coming from the One who is compassionate and who is long-suffering. But when you see Jesus talk this way and when you see Him condemn this kind of lifestyle I mean, Honey, it is like “Wake up, wake up! Pay attention, because I am telling you that this is something, that although I’m a God of love, I’m a God of compassion, I’m a God of forgiveness; I’m telling you this is something that is not tolerable. It is not tolerable.” And there are people in the church like this. And it’s those people, those hypocrites, that when they get disciples and get them to be critical with them and they hang around they’re making others twice the son of hell as they are. And He says, **“Woe to you...,”** and now we’re on the fourth or legitimately, the third “woe.” **“Woe to you,**

blind guides [blind guides]....” (Matthew 23:16) Now you want to mark the word, “blind” and I put eyeballs over it. I put black eyeballs over it. “...**You, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, that’s nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’**” (Matthew 23:16) Oh, he just swore by the temple. You don’t have to hold him to what he said. But if he swore by the gold of the temple, listen, you make him pay up according to his vow, according to what he swore to do. And He says, “**You fools** [you fools] ... **blind men! Which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold?**” (Matthew 23:17) “Which is more important, the gold that’s brought into the temple or the temple that sanctifies the gold?” He said, “**And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, that’s nothing....’**” (Matthew 23:18) They’re saying, “Oh, if you swear by the altar it’s nothing, but if you swear by the offering that is put on the altar, then you are obligated.” Now watch what He says. “**You blind men....**” (Matthew 23:19) You blind men, you’ve got it all twisted. You’ve got it all perverted. “...**Which is more important, the offering, or the altar that sanctifies the offering?**” He says, “**Therefore, whoever swears by the altar, swears both by the altar and ... everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it.**” (Matthew 23:19-21) He says, here you are making all these distinctions and you don’t even understand. You’re looking at the offering. You’re looking at the gold instead of looking at the temple of God. “**And whoever swears by heaven, swears [by both] the throne of God and ... Him who sits [on] it.**” (Matthew 23:22) Now I have to remind you that in the Sermon on the Mount He says, [“We’re not to swear by this or we’re not to swear by that. Our yes is to be yes and our no is to be no.”] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 5:34-37) But what He’s showing is the false teaching; the false reasoning of the Pharisees and how they’ve got it all messed up. And so many times, Beloved, that’s the way it is with the hypocrites in the church, the religious people who are not going to heaven

but who are going to hell. They have it all messed up. And that's the purpose of you and I studying the Word of God, so that you and I are not dismayed or taken off the path by the hypocrites, but we recognize who they are and we don't follow them. We follow Jesus. But it doesn't make us turn our back on Him either. We'll talk about it in just a minute.

PART TWO

Welcome back, Beloved. We come to the next "woe" in verse 23 and it says, **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin...." (Matthew 23:23)** Those are herbs. And you take the mint that you have and you take a tenth out and you give it to the Lord. You take the dill and you give a tenth to the Lord. I mean you are keeping the letter of the law. And He says, **"...[You] have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness...." (Matthew 23:23)** In other words, you're keeping the law like this, but when it comes to you being merciful to others, there's no mercy there at all. I mean it is the rigidity of the law and you think that you are the one who is so spiritual because you have carried out the letter of the law to the tenth degree. He says, **"...But these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others." (Matthew 23:23)** You should tithe, and that's fine. But you've got to have justice and you've got to have mercy and you've got to have faithfulness. Beloved, it's not to be by hypocritical thing. It's to be everything that you are for the Lord. He says, **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and... the dish, but inside [you] are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and ...the dish, so that the outside ... may become clean [too]." (Matthew 23:25-26)** What's He saying? He's saying: Go to your heart. Get that heart right. Cleanse your heart. Cleanse the inner man, so that when you cleanse the inner man, then the outer man is going to be fine, absolutely fine. He goes on to say in the

next “woe,” verse 27, **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs....” (Matthew 23:27)** I am among the tombs. He says, **“...Which on the outside appear beautiful...,” (Matthew 23:27)** and these tombs are beautiful where I am. This is a beautiful, beautiful cemetery where many righteous and important Jews are buried. Poets are buried here and statesmen and rabbis and that. I’m in a beautiful cemetery. But behind or underneath these tombs, these white-washed sepulchers or inside of them are nothing but dead men’s bones. And He says, “That’s what you are like.” He says, **“...You scribes and [you]...hypocrites...!”** He says, **“...You are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside ... are full of dead men’s bones and...,”** now watch, **“...all uncleanness.” (Matthew 23:27)** Clean the inside of the pot. In other words, you’re not clean internally. Remember true circumcision is of the heart. It’s not just an external thing. So He goes on to say, **“So... outwardly...,” “...you, too... appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy...,”** now listen to what He says, **“...and lawlessness.” (Matthew 23:28)** Remember the Sermon on the Mount? **“...You have heard...,” (Matthew 5:21) “...But I say to you....” (Matthew 5:22)** He wants internal righteousness. He doesn’t want lawlessness. And then He goes on the final “woe.” **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and [you] adorn the monuments of the righteous.” (Matthew 23:29)** As you go through Jerusalem, just on the other side of the old city, and you look down into the valley, there you have the tombs of the prophets. There you have the tomb of Jeremiah and others. And you look at those tombs and He says, **“...You build the tombs [to] the prophets....”** And yet He says this, **“...You adorn the monuments of the righteous.” (Matthew 23:29)** **“And say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those**

who murdered the prophets.” (Matthew 23:30-31) And you know what? They’re about to murder the greatest of all prophets, the Prophet of prophets, which is Jesus Christ. They’ve been calling and plotting how they can destroy Him, and they’re going to call for His death. He says, **“...You testify against yourselves, that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers.”** (Matthew 23:31-32) Go ahead. You’re hell-bent on destruction. You have a religion, but not a relationship. You are decorating the tombs of the prophets, and yet you are the sons of the prophets who murdered them in your heart. Go ahead. Go ahead. Fill up the cup. Fill up the cup of your iniquity. He says, **“Fill up ... the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?”** (Matthew 23:32-33) As I’ve been taping and sitting at different spots, in one of them I was sitting and a serpent came out and slithered on the rock. We saw another one with the serpent sticking his head up and then coming out. We threw a stone and it attacked that stone that we threw at it. It was, it was full of animosity. And He says, **“You [are] serpents....”** (Matthew 23:33) Now remember, He has said it before. John the Baptist said it. **“...You brood of vipers....”** (Matthew 3:7) You brood of serpents, He says, **“...How will you escape the sentence of hell?”** (Matthew 23:33) Don’t you realize, don’t you realize that you have this religion but you’re going to hell? He says, **“Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; [and] some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city.”** (Matthew 23:34) And one of those that they would crucify was standing right there listening to the message. It was Peter. Peter would be crucified upside-down because he refused to be crucified in the manner that the Lord was crucified in, because he considered himself not worthy. But he’s talking to these men. He’s talking to men that are religious, but are hypocrites and they have been down through the ages. You can tell

them. You can spot them. They externally are keeping everything right, but listen to them. Watch them with others. Watch how they treat others, how they talk to others, how they behave, and if they indulge themselves, and you will know that you're in the presence of a hypocrite. He says, **"...Some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that [on] you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel...."** (Matthew 23:34-35)

Remember he was killed by Cain because he offered a better sacrifice, **"...to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah....,"** (Matthew 23:35) and this is the Zechariah in the Old Testament, **"...whom you murdered between the temple and the altar."** He says, **"Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation."** (Matthew 23:35-36) O Beloved, what is God's message to you and to me today? It is to examine ourselves, to bring ourselves up alongside the Word of God and make sure that we have a relationship and not a religion. But it's also for you and me to understand, yes, there are going to be hypocrites in Christianity. But their hypocrisy is not to be an excuse for you turning away from Christianity, because if it is, you're just following them on the way to hell. Yes, there is a brood of vipers. Yes, there are hypocrites. Yes, there are blind men. But you do not have to be one of them and I don't have to be one of them, Beloved. We can be righteous as we will see. Jesus is about to make it all possible through His death, burial and resurrection.