

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.” (Matthew 23:25)

I. Inward Character Counts

- a. In religion, we too can play an acting role. Our religious observances can mask what we truly are.
- b. Woes #5 and #6 are against false exteriors.
- c. Woe #5 – You pretend to be clean, but you are not: The Pharisee spirit always goes for externals.
 1. They are concerned with external purity while inside they are unclean. (Read Mark 7:3-4)
 2. Ritual purity without moral cleanness is a sham. (Lev 11:33-34)
 3. Social appearances, earthly connections and namedropping do not impress Jesus.
- d. The word “outside” in the text could be mean the literal outside of the cup or symbolically, self-holiness. No matter how clean the cup is, the problem is with the cup’s contents.
 1. Greed and indulgence refer to a lustful pleasure and a lack of self-control.
- e. The Pharisees were living off others. What was on their plates did not justly belong to them.
- f. Clean up your business. Conquer your inner life, then what you do will be outwardly clean.
- g. The meal that is clean is honorably earned and eaten with a pure heart,
- h. Woe #6 – You are like white-washed graves: Prior to Passover, the graves were painted with bright white chalk. Jesus used these glistening graves as example of false religious leadership.
 1. Outwardly, the Pharisees looked impressive but inwardly they were dead men’s bones.
 2. The Jewish leadership acted as if they were for the people but acquiring status and maintaining the status quo was their true motivation.
- i. Woe #7 – False traditionalism: They glorified tradition, but did not live up to past truth.
 1. They failed to learn from lessons of the past, both failures and successes. Why?
 2. If we hold to tightly to past traditions, we will not be open to the prophetic spirit of today.
- j. Jewish scholars have recognized that its generations immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem was characterized by two things: love of money and hate.
 1. Often these two characteristics cannot be separated.
- k. *Prophets, wisemen and scribes* are those whom God has sent to teach/warn His people.
- l. *Zechariah*, killed in the temple (2 Chron 24:20-22), was the son of Jehoiada; Berechiah was the father of the prophet Zechariah, who lived some three hundred years later.

II. The Practical Application of God’s Word

- a. Woes #5, #6 and #7 are brutal. These descriptions refer to what is stinking beneath a beautiful exterior.
- b. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. There is no acceptance for us except through the blood of Jesus. It is through Him that we can offer God our humble service.
- c. We model our leadership (church, family, employment), either directly or indirectly.
- d. Every *Woe* spoken *then* is a warning to the church *now*.
- e. Leadership’s witness and influence are extremely important to Jesus because it is the difference between leading a people to victory or destruction.
- f. *Remember therefore from where you have fallen, repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.* (Rev 2:5)
- g. If Christ-like love is not in the heart of God’s people, destruction will soon follow.