



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Cursing the False leaders- 2!

Matthew 23:16-33

Matthew 23:16-33, *“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’¹⁷ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?¹⁸ And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.’¹⁹ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?²⁰ Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it.²¹ He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.²² And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.*

²³*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.²⁴ Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*

²⁵*“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.²⁶ Blind Pharisee, first cleanse*

the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

²⁷“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

²⁹“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’

³¹“Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. ³³Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

In the Word of God, no one is so honoured, respected, dignified as the true and faithful man of God.

The genuine spiritual leader who rightly represents God is the single-most celebrated individual in Scripture, apart from God Himself.

God lifts faithful, true servants of His name, and throughout the pages of Scripture. We read of the wonderful testimony of these individuals. God calls us to give them honour and give them respect.

The apostle Paul went so far as to say that people treated him as though he was an angel or even as Christ Himself.

Galatians 4:14, *And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.*

Paul's beloved companion in service, **Epaphroditus**, he called upon the Philippians in chapter 2 to give him great respect, to hold him in great reputation because for the sake of the service of Jesus Christ, the man was near unto death.

Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says those who are over you in the Lord are to be esteemed very highly and loved for their work's sake.

1 Timothy 5:17, *Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and doctrine.*

Hebrews 13:17, *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

Scripture exalts the blessedness of those who are faithful. It speaks of the reward of those who are true spiritual leaders.

On the other hand, no one is so severely condemned and damned as false spiritual leaders.

The most furious, vengeful words of judgment, condemnation, and wrath are reserved for those who parade themselves as if they are true spiritual leaders, who represent God but in fact are liars, deceivers, and hypocrites.

Scripture repeatedly warns about teachers who are void of the knowledge of God.

- They say they offer strangers salvation.
- They claim to proclaim that they are offering bread to those who are starving supposedly the true bread.
- They proclaim that they are warning men of a hell that they themselves will populate.
- Many tailors go in rags that make costly clothes for others.
- Many a cook scarcely licks his fingers when he offers others the costliest dishes

Such false leaders who were supposedly clothing others with righteousness and feeding others the sustenance of God. But in fact, themselves were naked, starving, no clothes to offer, no food to feed are the scribes and the Pharisees of our Lord's time.

Matthew chapter 23, Jesus rebukes them as perishing in the midst of plenty, starving with the bread of life in their grasp and leading others to the same damning destiny.

This chapter stands as a peak above all other peaks in Scripture insofar as its condemning terms. It's unmitigated condemnation.

It is not easy to preach the passage because of its relentlessness in condemning these false leaders. But we must because it's here and because it stands as a warning.

But the scribes and the Pharisees, while they stand alone and should be condemned alone and suffer alone for their misappropriation of truth and misleading heresy.

Nonetheless stand as models of all other false spiritual leaders that existed before them and since them. Consequently, we find ourselves instructed for our own day by learning what it was about them that was condemned.

Jesus condemned in them, may we somehow transport that message to the contemporary setting and make some application to the false spiritual leaders of our own time.

Out of the Word of God you can make judgments on your own about the false spiritual leaders of our time.

But you need to be discerning.

- You need to give respect and honour to those who are true spiritual leaders as Scripture leads you to do.
- You need to condemn and avoid those who are false as Scripture enjoins you to do as well.

It is **Monday of Passion Week**, two days from the crucifixion. The mounting hostility to Jesus Christ has reached a fever pitch. Jesus' rode into Jerusalem and was hailed as the Messiah, and the religious leaders panicked instantly.

They despised Him.

They hated Him, because He taught so contrary to their own doctrine.

- Because He lived a life they couldn't live.
- Because He had a popularity they couldn't attain.
- Because He could do things they couldn't do.
- Because He could say things they couldn't say.

He intimidated them every way possible.

They wanted to eliminate Him.

When the whole city seemed to be swept up in the fact that He might be the Messiah, their anger was even raised beyond what it had been before.

When Christ came in on Saturday and cleansed the temple, it became a rage.

When He came back on Monday, this day where we find Him in **Matthew 23**, and pronounced three judgment parables against the religious leaders. He told them they would be shut out of the Kingdom and somebody put in their place.

Jesus shut their mouths with divine answers to stupid human questions. We can understand why it's only two days before they have Him hanging on a cross.

Matthew 23 is the final public sermon our Lord ever preached. The subject is false spiritual leaders.

This message is a warning to the people to stay away from them.

Matthew 23:1-12, spoke to the disciples to stay away from the false leaders.

From verse 13 onwards it is a condemnation of themselves.

Ends with a lament over the consequence of the unbelief of Jerusalem, which unbelief was the product of false spiritual leadership.

This is a blistering rebuke.

In the first 12 verses, He warned the people to stay away from them.

He showed them that they lacked **authority, integrity, sympathy, spirituality, and humility.**

Having warned the people, then, He turns to the leaders and His disciples in the temple court at Passover season, and face to face, He pronounces doom upon them.

Eight times He uses the word *woe* - *ouai* - which is a very guttural cry in the Greek that's almost impossible to translate. It's nothing more than an onomatopoeic sound uttered from deep within in a moment of pain and grief.

Jesus pronounces this kind of curse on them.

It is not a wish but judgment.

Jesus pronounces the final judgment on the religious leaders of Israel who have rejected Him and led the people in an equal rejection.

First, false spiritual leaders are cursed for **exclusion**, for keeping people out of the Kingdom, **V 13.**

Second, false leaders are cursed for **cheating widows V14.**

Third, false spiritual leaders are cursed **perversion.** They usher them into hell. **V15.**

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ are so powerful and so precise and dramatic that anything.

4. Cursed for undermining the truth.

V 16, *“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’*

They have developed reasoning that undermines truth. It is a mark of one who is in any sense possessing the life of God that truth is important. God is a God of truth.

The God who cannot lie.

God is a God who speaks truth. Any false system is a lying system.

In **John 8**, our Lord talks about the fact that the devil is a liar and the father of it. False systems are filled with lies, untruths, broken promises, and that’s exactly what the Pharisees and scribes had developed, a system to evade the truth.

A system to undermine integrity, to subvert truth.

Jesus calls them blind guides because they lived under the illusion that they were the guides of the blind.

Romans 2 says, “You Jews think you are,

- Guides of the blind.
- Light to those in darkness.

- Instructors of babes.
- Giving wisdom to those that are foolish.
- But you don't know the truth. You are nothing but blind guides.

Same thing our Lord is saying here.

Matthew 15:14, *Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."*

Here were the people blind and they were with their blind leaders. The blind leaders trying to guide the blind people.

A very blistering statement because they pride themselves on their spiritual sight and ability to guide people.

V 16, *it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'*

What is this?

They were liars to start with and all false spiritual leaders are liars, because only one who possesses the life of God can be utterly true.

Only God can break down the lying tendencies of fallenness and replace it with truth. This is redemptive work, sanctifying work, and a work of regeneration.

So ungodly people and false spiritual leaders are liars.

They lie. But in order to cover their tracks and to appear pious, they had developed a system by which they could lie with license.

They would promise this and promise that they would vow this to God, vow a covenant to some person. Then in order to affirm that because people didn't trust anybody then any better than they trust people now, they want a contract.

Maybe they want to seal it in blood. Every culture has its own way of sort of thing trying you in to your word. In that day, you swore by something.

It had come to the point where people lied constantly and there was no way that you could protect yourself unless you designed some means of making a person verbally bound to keep their word.

In **Matthew chapter 5** where our Lord says to them you have been told by those of old that you can perform your vows, keep your word, but you have developed a system whereby you swear by this, you swear by that, you swear by the other.

Matthew 5:33-37, *“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne;³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.³⁶ Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*

If you say yes, then it is yes.

If you say, “No,” that’s exactly what it is.

You don’t have to say I swear on a stack of Bibles, cross my fingers, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye - whatever.

We have had our little deals, too.

A system whereby you could lie, whereby your word meant nothing, and they would make vows to God. Then they would decide that the money they wanted to give to God originally in a moment of religiously.

For example, they would stand up in front of a group of people and say, “I want to give all my money to God. I am so pious.”

Later, they would find they wanted something else, and they would say, “I only swore by such-and-such and by such-and-such doesn’t count.” That is how they worked the system.

V 16, *if you swear by the temple, it’s nothing.*

They would say, “I am going to do this. I vow to do this before God and all of you people. I will keep my word. I will pray eight hours a day, I swear by the temple”

Then didn’t do it and said, “swearing by the temple is nothing. If you swear by the gold in the temple, that is something.”

Ridiculous. Just a way of lying.

They know what the Old Testament said.
The Old Testament said pay your vows.

What does that mean?

Keep your promise.

Keep your word.

God hates lying.

So many Old Testament texts in the Psalms particularly.

Psalm 50:14, *Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High.*

Don't make promises you can't keep.
Promise to God and keep your promise.

Psalm 56:12, *Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises to You,*

Psalm 61:8, *So I will sing praise to Your name forever, That I may daily perform my vows.*

Psalm 66:13, *I will go into Your house with burnt offerings; I will pay You my vows,*

Psalm 76:11, *Make vows to the Lord your God, and pay them; Let all who are around Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared.*

- Keep your word to God.
- Keep your word to men.

This is illustrated in Ananias and Sapphira.

We are going to give all we receive from the sale of this property to God. It sounded so religious, so pious, so dedicated, so spiritual.

They got a lot of money, they looked at it and said, "We made a mistake. Look at all this. The church budget doesn't even need it. They won't know what to do with it. I am not sure we can trust them down there. We can't give all this to and we will keep part of it."

God killed them in front of the whole congregation. They dropped dead. Imagine it had a rather great effect on next week's offering.

They had developed a system where they could lie.

V 17, *Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?*

Jesus doesn't even deal with the immorality of it here. He deals with the stupidity of it.

It's obvious to everybody that God advocates truth and not lying. He just deals with the stupidity of it.

"You morons and blind."

What is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

The only reason the gold could be thought of sacred is because it's in the temple, which is sacred because it's where God dwells. What a ridiculous method of cheating and violating your word.

V 18, *And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.'*

If you promise by the altar, it's nothing, but whatever the gift is on the altar, whoever swears by the gift that's on it, he is bound.

"You morons and blind."

Which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

What's the gift if it isn't on the altar?

It's ridiculous.

It's illogical.

It doesn't make sense.

A gift standing alone is nothing. It's only when it's on an altar offered to God that it becomes something. The gold standing alone is nothing. It's only when it's in the temple where God dwells that it's anything.

If you think by doing that, you are touching something that's not connected to God, you are wrong.

You are wrong. It was just a silly way to avoid having to keep your word.

False spiritual leaders need that because they lie all the time. So, they have to cover themselves and appear pious and develop some kind of system where they can make their pious promises of what they are going to do and still change their mind conveniently.

V 20-22, *Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. ²¹He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. ²²And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.* Everything you touch eventually is going back to God.

You swear by anything that represents God, a gift, an altar, the gold of the temple, the temple, the heaven of heavens, the throne of God, and you are going to touch the God who fills it all.

Have you forgotten that God is everywhere, as creator of all and Lord of all?

You better tell the truth.

They subverted the truth.

They developed reasoning that undermined truth.

False spiritual leaders don't tell the truth, but they parade religiosity.

Try to cover up for their lying pretense. We need to be careful of that. They subvert whole houses. They, by their great covetousness, use feigned words to make merchandise out of you. They lie.

They say they need money when they don't need money.

They say God told them something when He never told them anything.

They say Jesus led them into something when He never led them into anything.

They lie.

Beware of those liars who are false spiritual leaders.

5. Cursed for undermining truth.

They are cursed for reversing values and reversing divine priorities.

V 23, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*

Cumin was a little tiny herb used in the kitchen. All three of these are kitchen items, mint, anise, and cumin.

Mint, anise, and Cumin are all in your kitchen and all used for flavoring food.

In the Old Testament law, God instructed His people to give one-tenth of all their crops and all their products to the treasury in Israel.

In other words, the government was supported by taxation, and one of the forms of taxation was ten percent tax on all the products of the land.

So, every year when you got your crop, ten percent of it went to the government. That's how the priests were supported because the government was a theocracy run by priests.

So, their sustenance came from the part that you put into the government.

There also was **another tenth** paid for ceremonies and national festivals.

There also was a **third tenth paid every third year** for welfare, for strangers, and so forth.

So, you were about **23 percent** a year that you put in.

They were used to that.

Leviticus 27:30, *And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord.*

Deuteronomy 14:22, *"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year.*

Both these two passages include all the increase of thy seed. You plant your seed and whatever you get of the increase, you tithe that.

But these literalists had taken that to the absolute ridiculous extreme. In the little kitchen pots, they would grow mint, and they would grow dill, and they would have these cumin, and that was just a kitchen deal.

When it came time to sort that out, they would go here is ten little, tiny herbs, one for God, nine for me, it was ridiculous. Absurd.

God wasn't saying that when He said the increase of your seed, He meant you tithe the grain and the wine and oil product.

But they were down to this minuscule.

Why were they doing that?

Because it made them feel so pious and righteous.

They were good at that, good at counting out seeds.

What were they bad at?

have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

You are good at counting mint leaves, great fooling around with dill, but bad when it came to justice, mercy, and faith.

False religious leaders get wrapped up in inconsequential minor detail and have no capacity to deal with the weightier matters.

The weightier, that word is a rabbinical word.

Jesus borrows it from the tradition of the rabbis who believed there were light elements to the law and weighty elements.

Here He says the weighty elements are justice, mercy, and faith.

This is a direct parallel from **Micah**. Our Lord here is not just grabbing three things out of the air, justice, mercy, and faith.

The Jews had been taught in **Micah 6:8**, *He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*

To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly.

The Pharisees and the scribes didn't do justly, they were inequitable. They were unfair, unjust. They were unmerciful, brutal, unforgiving, unkind, ungenerous.

They abused the people.

Matthew 23:4, *For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

- They had no faith.
- They walked by sight.
- They walked by works.
- They walked by law.
- They walked by their own efforts.

Jesus says to them that you are great at counting out kitchen seeds used to flavor food, but you have missed the whole point of what is important - justice, mercy, and faith.

Spiritual matters you have lost.

False religious leaders can get all wrapped up in the minor detail of their system. It's just the real spiritual stuff they don't have.

V 23, *These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*

In other words, these ought you to have done, justice, mercy, and faith, and I am not saying that you should leave the other commands undone.

Jesus did not mean you should keep counting your seeds, He means you should take care to attend to the matter of the

tithe as well. It isn't that I want everything to be concentrated on justice, mercy, and faith so that you fail to obey those other commands.

I don't think Jesus was saying necessarily you have to count out all the seeds and the herbs.

You should have kept these weightier matters and given attention to the matters of the proper matters of tithe.

Tithe does have its proper place still in Judaism in the gospel time. The Jewish people are still a duly constituted people.

They were still under the ceremonial instruction of God's law. They were still under the obligation to obey the commandments relating to their national identity and to the funding of priesthood. That had not been set aside yet until the church was born.

Jesus says you should do that.

The tithe is mentioned **six times in the New Testament, three times in the gospels**, and each time it is mentioned in the text **condemning the abuse of it by the scribes and the Pharisees.**

Three times in the book of Hebrews when it simply reaches back and describes its historical reality in the history of Israel.

At no time is it ever mentioned in the New Testament as binding on the church.

It had to do with taxation of the national government of Israel.

Jesus says do that, just make sure you do this as well.

How false religious systems have so much minutia and so little reality.

False spiritual leaders deal with minor details.

Jesus goes on to describes them in a very graphic way.

V 24, *Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*

The word strain means to filter, diulizō, filter.

In the Old Testament, the smallest unclean animal was a gnat.

Leviticus 11:42, *Whatever crawls on its belly, whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth—these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination.*

It was considered unclean. It's an insect, not an animal. But the smallest unclean creature was a gnat. The largest unclean creature that was forbidden to a Jew was a camel.

Leviticus 11:4, *Nevertheless these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or those that have cloven hooves: the*

camel, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you;

The Jew didn't want to get involved with an unclean gnat or an unclean camel.

Jesus says to them that do you know what are you doing?
You are straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel.

Do you know what they did?

They make wine by crushing the grapes, a little gnat's flying around, he lands in the grapes, he gets gobbled up in the grapes, winds up in the wine. Or maybe he just flies in the wine and lands there.

These fastidious Pharisee drank his wine like this. Then he picked the gnats off his teeth.

Didn't even enjoy the stuff. Sucking out the gnats so they wouldn't be defiled and then swallowing a camel, the biggest unclean animal of all. Ceremonially fastidious, sucking through your clenched teeth to filter out a gnat and then swallow a camel.

In other words, you are all confused. Your whole priority system is inverted. You are just fooling around with stuff that doesn't matter and blind to the enormous evil that you are consuming. You are afraid to eat the tenth mint leaf, and then

you are allowing into your life hypocrisy, dishonesty, cruelty, greed, self-worship. Incredible.

It is amazing how fastidious religious people can be and so far from the reality of what God seeks.

So many false spiritual leaders reverse divine priorities, substitute insignificant forms and outward acts of religion for essential realities of the heart.

6. Cursed for Extortion/ Blackmail.

V 25, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.*

Platter is an interesting Greek word. It has to do with a plate used to serve delicacies. You clean the outside of the cup and the platter, and within them are full of extortion and excess.

You are big at extortion.

You have a ministry that looks pious, but the whole thing is based on taking advantage of other people.

You use people.

You make merchandise out of people.

A person who is going to offer you a lovely meal. He has got a plate, on it are all the lovely delicacies. He has got a cup and in it is the fruit of the vine and he offers it to you.

The plate and the cup have been cleaned and prepared ceremonially.

All the ritual is done. The only problem is the food on the plate and the wine in the cup were stolen.

We have ceremoniously prepared the platter.

We have ceremoniously prepared the cup.

It all is so religious, and everything in it and on it was gained by extortion.

How many false religious leaders are there from one end of this world who are offering people their religious plate and in that plate is nothing but the stuff they have stolen from those very people?

Milked them for every dime they could get out of them. Extortionists.

Extortion is the word *harpagē* means to plunder or rape. They are rapists.

I get so angry with false spiritual leaders, because I see them raping people. You see them just plundering people.

Just making merchandise out of people for their own gain.
They are full of extortion and notice this word excess. That means unrestrained desire for gain, akrasia.

An unrestrained desire for gain, a lack of self-control.

- The Lord is saying they appear so scrupulous.
- They appear so religiously meticulous.
- They appear so pious in their system.

Everything they serve you gained with their filthy desires.
Gained by the abusive people.

They are greedy rapists and robbers who steal and plunder the souls. The money, the hearts and the minds and the goods of everybody they can touch.

V 26, *Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

You better have more than your form.

You better be sure that what's on your plate is as clean as your plate.

No dish is clean which holds unclean food gained dishonestly.

The false spiritual leaders become rich, they become fat, they become wealthy with their paraded religiosity, and they have the heart of a thief.

7. Cursed for deception.

This is unbelievable.

Deception.

V 27, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.*

Jesus says you are guilty of deception.

You contaminate people.

You aren’t what you claim.

Matha Amrithanada, who is supposed to be the Messiah to lead everyone to God and people flocking around her, and you see her with her arms open and all these people.

Everybody that touches her is contaminated.

She offers herself as one who will purify the impure and she contaminates everyone she touches. That is the way it is with false spiritual leaders.

On the **15th Adar**, which is the month of March in Israel in the time of our Lord, there was a very unusual custom. It was right after the spring rains, and the rain that came washed away many things.

One of the things they washed away was whitewash.

Where was whitewash used?

It was on walls, was on houses sometimes, but most specifically, the Jews used to whitewash the tombs.

They would whitewash those limestone caves and limestone tombs where the more prominent people were buried that way.

The reason they did that was because in preparation of Passover, along the roads and the hillsides where people would be traversing. They feared that people might inadvertently touch a tomb and thus be defiled. Because of the ceremonial cleansing process necessary. They could avoid certain activities in the Passover season.

So, to accommodate the Passover visitors who might not know where the tombs were and also just to keep the rest of the

people clear of them, they went around the city of Jerusalem with whitewash.

In some cases, they whitewashed the entire tomb.

In other cases, they just painted whitewashed bones on the outside so that people wouldn't touch them lest they would have ceremonially defiled.

Numbers 19:16, *Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.*

As you came into Jerusalem, you would see these beautiful, white tombs everywhere, dazzling in the sun.

But they weren't what they appeared to be.

They were so beautiful, pure, and white, but they were tombs. Anybody who touched them would be contaminated.

For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

You are white tombs, the word is **Taphos**, means graves, which indeed appear beautiful outward.

Within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

V 28, *Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

You also outwardly appear righteous unto men.
Within you are full of hypocrisy and anomia, lawlessness,
disregard for the law of God.

Anybody who touches you, who looks so white and so pure is
contaminated, is defiled. So, you pollute, so you contaminate
everybody who touches you.

8. Cursed for pretension.

For pretending to be so much better than everybody else.

V 29, *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because
you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments
of the righteous,*

You are into memorializing the saints.
You are big on lifting the heroes of the past.

We honour Saint!

We remember this man of God, this great prophet, this great
worker of miracles of the past.
God’s great man of this era and that era.

You exalt them with your memorials and your monuments.

V 30, and say, *'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'*

Why we would never have killed the prophets as our fathers have done?

- We wouldn't have thought of it.
- We are so much better than they are.
- We are so much holier than they.
- We are so far beyond them.

This is the ugly pretense of spiritual pride.

Great at building monuments.

Great at honouring men of the past and claiming to be better than their fathers.

Jesus had told them in the parable **Matthew 21** about how the people of Israel had killed all the prophets.

The messengers from God and the parable of the vineyard and the landowner and the servants and the son.

But they claim we would never have done that.

Jesus' answer in verse 31 is a direct hit.

V 31, *“Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.*

They say we would never do that.

We raised memorials to the prophets.

We would never do what our fathers have done.

We are so much more holy than they.

Jesus says that you are a witness to the fact that you indeed are a son of those who killed the prophets.

Why?

What were they plotting to do?

What kill Him?

They were so consumed with their own lying deceit that they didn't even see the reality of the fact that they were killing One greater than the prophets, the son of God.

V 32, *Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt.*

What did Jesus say?

Do it.

Go ahead.

You are scheming to kill the greatest Prophet of all. That will fill up the full measure of the murderous attitude of your people against God's messengers.

Do it!

Jesus resigning Himself overtly to the fact that they were going to take His life.

Do it. Fill it up.

No, they weren't any better.

They were worse, if anything.

Then He pronounces a curse.

V 33, *Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?*

What's the answer to that?

No way.

He damns them to hell.

Snakes and vipers.

Conclusion:

These false spiritual leaders were guilty of these things.

Let's turn the table.

They kept people out of heaven.

What does a true spiritual leader do?

Bring them into heaven. They did all they could to send people to hell. To make them as evil as possible, double sons of hell.

What does a true spiritual leader do?

He is used by God to make men not hellish but Righteous.

They subverted the truth.

What does a true spiritual leader do?

Leads people into truth.

They appeared pious but only used people for their own gain.

What does a true spiritual leader do?

He serves people, meets their needs.

They contaminate everybody they touch.

What does a true spiritual leader do?

He makes holy to anyone he touches.

They proudly thought themselves to be better than everybody else.

What does a true spiritual leader say?

I am the least of all, the chief of sinners. God, help us to be true spiritual leaders and to avoid these false leaders.

People beware, would you?

Beware.

Be thankful God's given you true leaders.