

Matthew 23:15 Woe to the Proselyters

Introduction: Twice already Jesus has pronounced woe on the scribes and Pharisees. The first woe was because they were not entering the Kingdom of heaven and were hindering others from doing so. The second woe was because they were devouring widows houses while making long prayer in pretense of devotion to God.

I. The third woe on the scribes and Pharisees.

- A. This woe was because they were making proselytes, or converts. (A proselyte is one converted to a religion, usually one converted from one religion to another.)
- B. The scribes and Pharisees were going to great lengths to make proselytes.
 - 1. They sought to convert Gentiles to the Jewish faith.
 - 2. They sought to convert the Gentiles who settled in their land.
 - 3. They sought to convert the Gentiles who traded in their land.
 - 4. They sought to convert the Roman soldiers who occupied their land.
 - 5. They sought to convert the Gentiles as they traveled on business in other lands.
 - 6. They sought to convert the Gentile neighbors who lived about them in other lands.
 - 7. Some Jews went on missionary journeys for the sole purpose of converting Gentiles.
(Compassed sea and land...)
- C. Ordinarily one would expect such zeal to be commended.
 - 1. Especially since they converted the Gentiles away from the worship of many false gods to the one true God.
 - 2. And especially since they converted the Gentiles away from gross immorality to a high moral standard.
 - 3. But instead of commending them Jesus condemned them.
- D. They made proselytes but they failed to help them spiritually.
 - 1. They converted the Gentiles to the true God, but failed to teach them the true way of worship.
 - 2. They converted the Gentiles to a higher moral standard but they failed to convert them to an inward change.
 - 3. Their converts were lost before they were converted and lost after they were converted.
- E. In fact their converts were worse off spiritually.
 - 1. While they were in their Gentile religion they realized that they needed something they didn't have, but after joining the Jewish religion they thought they were okay.
 - 2. It was now virtually impossible to reach them with the gospel.
 - 3. They were twofold more bent for hell than the scribes and Pharisees themselves.

II. Woe on the false religionist of today.

- A. If Jesus pronounced woe on the scribes and Pharisees back then, how much more He would pronounce woe on the false religionist of our day.
 - 1. There is a whole big world full of them.
 - 2. They are all zealous to make proselytes.
- B. For example: The Moonies (The Unification Church).
 - 1. Once they start working with a prospect they never leave him alone even for one moment but stay with him week after week until he is brainwashed.
 - 2. When he has been converted it is virtually impossible to win him away from the Moonies and to the true gospel.
- C. A similar thing could be said of the Mormons.
 - 1. They compass sea and land to make converts.

2. But what are they converted to?
 3. They deny that Jesus Christ is eternal God. (They teach that at one time He was not God. They teach that you can become just as much God as Jesus. They deny the true gospel of Jesus Christ.)
 4. Their converts are now harder than ever to reach with the gospel.
- D. A similar thing could also be said about the Jehovah Witnesses.
1. They teach that Jesus is not Deity God but the son of the archangel Michael.
 2. They teach that the death of Jesus only atones from the Adamic sins and does not at all cleanse the sinner from all his sins.
 3. They make many converts, but their converts are not converted to a genuine salvation.
- E. A similar thing could be said for a long list of false religions.
- F. It is sad to say but the same thing can be said for some so-called Christian religions.
1. Many so-called Christian religions – when you get right down to it – do not teach salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
 2. They preach in the name of Jesus but they make salvation dependent on the righteous works of the convert.
 3. They make converts but many of their converts are trusting in their own works to get them to heaven.
 4. They are harder than ever to win to the true gospel.

III. Some lessons for us.

- A. It is possible that even one of our own converts may still be unsaved even though we preach the true gospel.
1. But it certainly is not because we have preached to him some other gospel.
 2. It is because he has not trusted in Jesus as his Savior.
- B. It is not enough for us to merely point out the error of the false religionists.
1. It is our task to reach out to those who are unsaved and present the gospel of Jesus Christ to them.
 2. However wrong somebody else would be, it would also be wrong for us to neglect to present the gospel to the unsaved.
- C. Let us preach the true gospel not only in the pulpit and in our classrooms. (Let us reach into the community, into the homes, into the businesses, into the hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and into the highways and hedges.)
1. All who will trust in Jesus will be saved.
 2. All who will not trust Jesus will go to hell, but at least it will not be our fault.

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