

## Matthew 23:27-28 Woe to Those Like Whited Sepulchres

Introduction: If you are trying to live good and do right in order to make it to heaven and yet you fear that you won't make it, then this text should be of some help to you.

This is the seventh woe Jesus has pronounced. Some consider number seven and number six as one. Number six speaks of the outside of the cup and platter being clean and the inside unclean. This one speaks of the outside of the sepulchre being clean and the inside unclean. But Jesus gave them as two separate woes and so they are.

### I. The whited sepulcher.

- A. The word, sepulchre, means grave or tomb.
- B. The Jews originally used caves to bury their dead.
  - 1. One cave could hold a number of bodies.
  - 2. But eventually even a cave would run out of space.
  - 3. Therefore they began to dig artificial caves in the side of a rock cliff.
- C. These gravesites or caves would then be enclosed with a rock or brick wall, with steps leading to the entrance and with a paved area outside the cave.  
(Such rock or brick structures blended in with other rock or brick structures in their area).
- D. This posed a problem for the Jews.
  - 1. Moses' Law prescribed that one who touched a dead body or even a grave would be ceremonially unclean for several days.
  - 2. They looked so much like other structures in the area that one might touch a grave without knowing until it was too late.
  - 3. This was especially true during the religious festivals when thousands gathered at Jerusalem.
- E. To prevent such accidental touching, every year just before Pentecost the rocks or every grave were painted white.
- F. This made the outside of the graves beautiful, but it did not change the inside.  
(Full of dead men's bones and decayed flesh).

### II. The scribes and Pharisees like the whited sepulchres.

- A. They were beautiful on the outside. (White – Purity)
  - 1. They lived a strict disciplined life, morally clean.
  - 2. They lived a strict religious life. (Dedication and zeal)
  - 3. They looked good to all who observed.
- B. Their problem was that God looks on the heart and within they were in trouble with God.
  - 1. They were unclean, full of uncleanness; just as unclean as dead men's bones or rotten stinking flesh.
  - 2. Jesus had already made this point with the cup and platter.
  - 3. Now He emphasizes it anew.
- C. But He also makes a new point.
  - 1. Within there is death.
  - 2. A man who is unsaved is spiritually dead. (Spiritually separated from God. He has a spirit, but it is a spiritually depraved spirit, a wicked sinful spirit.)
- D. Thus the scribes and Pharisees were physically alive (looking good like the whited sepulchre) but inwardly they were spiritually dead.
  - 1. They were full of dead men's bones.
  - 2. They were incapable of meeting God's approval without repentance.  
(Except they repent they would perish.)

III. Men, women, boys, and girls today like the whited sepulchres.

- A. The scribes and Pharisees are not the only ones like whited sepulchres.
- B. Everyone who tries to get to heaven by living good and doing right is like a whited sepulchre.
  - 1. He cleans up the outward conduct of his life.
  - 2. But inwardly he is still very corrupt; he is spiritually dead.
  - 3. I Timothy 5:6 – “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.”  
(So is anyone else unsaved.)
  - 4. The unsaved person is a walking tomb.
- C. But the good news is that he can be born again – saved.
  - 1. We who are saved were made spiritually alive when we trusted Jesus, Ephesians 2:5.
  - 2. So can anyone else.
- D. But you will never get saved trying to whitewash your life.  
(The way to get saved is by repenting of your sin and trusting Jesus as your Savior.)

Conclusion: You who are unsaved can be saved today.

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