

Matthew 23:16-22 Woe to the Blind Guides

Introduction: This is the fourth woe that Jesus has pronounced upon the scribes and Pharisees. The first was because they were not entering the Kingdom of heaven and were hindering others from doing so. The second was because they were devouring widows' houses while at the same time they pretended great devotion to God. The third was that they were zealous to make proselytes, but did not help the proselytes spiritually. In fact they made them worse off spiritually. This fourth woe is pronounced because they are blind guides.

I. The accusation made by Jesus, verse 16.

- A. He called them blind guides.
 - 1. He was talking about spiritual guides, spiritual leaders.
 - 2. He was talking about spiritual blindness. (Spiritual leaders who were spiritually blind.)
- B. They were indeed spiritual leaders in the land.
 - 1. They were considered the most knowledgeable men in the nation in matters pertaining to the Mosaic Law.
 - 2. Whatever they said was considered as right by most.
- C. Jesus said they were spiritually blind.
 - 1. They were willfully blind, deliberately twisting the Word of God to suit themselves.
 - 2. He had already warned the disciples about them in Matthew 15.
 - 3. He said, "If the blind lead the blind they will both fall in the ditch."
- D. Now in no uncertain terms Jesus denounces them, verses 16, 17, 19.

II. One primary example of their spiritual blindness.

- A. Jesus cited one primary example of their spiritual blindness; their perversion of the Mosaic law concerning swearing.
- B. The Mosaic Law forbids swearing in the sense of profanity. (It forbids the everyday practice of swearing to attest to the truthfulness of a statement.)
- C. The Law permitted swearing in two situations.
 - 1. In a court of law.
 - 2. In promising a gift of money or service to the Lord.
- D. This last situation posed a problem for Jews who, in a religious fervor, would swear to do things or give things which they would regret when their fervor cooled off.
- E. The scribes and Pharisees figured out some loopholes so that people could renege on their pledge if they wanted to.
 - 1. They said that if one would swear by the temple, or by the altar, or even by heaven he would not be bound to his oath.
 - 2. But they cautioned that if one should swear by the gold of the temple, by the gift on the altar, or by the throne he is bound by his oath.
- F. Jesus pointed out the inconsistency of their reasoning, verses 16-22.

III. The matter of swearing as Jesus viewed it.

- A. Jesus did not, in this text, clarify His views on swearing but He did on a previous occasion.
- B. With the possible exception of the legal court where a Christian may be required by law to swear, the Christian is not to swear at all, Matthew 5. (He is to tell the truth all the time. By his consistency in the truth he is to make it unnecessary to swear in order to impress people of his truthfulness.)

IV. The main point that Jesus was making.

- A. His point was not that they were wrong about swearing, but that they were not qualified to be

spiritual leaders. (They were blind leaders.)

B. This points out a problem in our day; how can one know if a spiritual leader is qualified?
(It is not always easy to tell.)

C. But there are some questions that can be helpful:

1. Is he saved? (If he does not profess to be saved or if he does not show evidence in his life that he is saved then he is not to be trusted in other matters.)
2. Does he believe in the eternal triune Godhead? (If he doubts the eternal Deity of the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, he is not to be trusted in other spiritual matters.)
3. Does he believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures?
(If not, he is not to be trusted in other spiritual matters.)
4. Does he believe that every man is inherently sinful as a result of Adam's fall?
(If he is blind to the sinfulness of man, he is too blind to be trusted as a spiritual leader.)
5. Does he believe that salvation is wholly by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ?
(If he is blind to the gospel, he is certainly not to be followed.)
6. Does he twist the Scripture to make it fit his preconceived ideas?

D. A man need not be right on every piece of information in the Bible, but he should at least be right on the basics.

E. Anyone who wants the truth should regularly sit under the teaching and preaching of a good Bible believing Bible preaching preacher. (God still has many such men around.)

Conclusion:

1. Are you saved? If not, you surely do not need to follow some spiritually blind leader.
2. Are you saved? Do not seek a church on the basis of the social program that it offers.
3. Seek out a church on the basis of the teaching and training in the Word of God that it offers.

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