

Get Real

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[0 : 00] Look, I want to warn you this morning, I want to warn you today, this is going to be a woeful! And I'll explain that shortly. My message is get real. Get real. There's a lot of fakes out there, isn't there? There's a lot of real! Christians, but there's a lot of fake. And the message here is get real. Get real with your Christianity. Our Lord talks strong here in this passage in Matthew 23. He talks very strong to some fakes of his day. They were make-believers, false teachers, false professors. And in a world of fake news, there's a lot of fake religion, isn't there? There's a lot of fake religion.

We must seek after what is real. What is the real? And our Lord delivered here in Matthew 23 eight woes. Eight woes. Eight woes that he gave to the Pharisees. I'll just write that there.

Just to kind of follow along with me here today. And you'll see I've got an eight-part sermon today. So it's not a three-part, it's eight parts. So you'll be able to keep track and think, oh, glad he's at number eight and he's nearly finished.

But no, we're talking about eight woes. Eight woes. Our Lord delivered to these Pharisees. He was saying they were wrong, wrong, wrong, eight times wrong. Eight times wrong. Deadly wrong. Woefully wrong. He said, woe unto them. Which is kind of a sense of this is woeful. This is terrible. This is horrible. This is something that you should not be. And we can learn from what our Lord says to these ones here in Matthew 23. Now just some time earlier in Matthew 5, he gave eight beatitudes.

[1 : 57] In other words, eight blessings. And some have correlated that the eight beatitudes correlate with the eight woes. Now there's some common threads there. But that's another issue. But our Lord here, he gives us eight woes. The eight blessings of Matthew 5 on the Sermon on the Mount, now we come to the eight woes. So, you know, I'd like to bring an uplifting, edifying, encouraging word, but there is a sense where this is a woe, woe, woe. This is doom and gloom and terror and terrible things. But we can learn from what our Lord rebuked these ones about. Amen?

So you could call it here as our Lord gives a sermon of eight woes. He does not hold back. These are strong words. Words of judgment as God's judgment is against the false and the fake. Fake and false religion. It's good for us to see what does our Lord rebuke about these men? And what can we learn from their bad example? Now we're all examples. Some are bad examples. Some are good. And we can all learn to avoid and strive for what to avoid here, what the Pharisees were. And our Lord talks here of how they say and they do not in Matthew 23.

It talks about, if you read the whole chapter, it talks about those who are just doing things to be seen of men, to get men's praise, to get some kind of applause and making much about themselves.

[3 : 26] But they were missing the whole point, the reality. And our Lord was strong with these ones because they were making some serious mistakes. And we need to avoid making them ourselves.

We could learn from that. So our Lord's rebukes to these Pharisees, these religious types of their day, the kind of established church of its day, we could learn from our Lord's rebuke to these ones because it's still applicable today. So these religious leaders, they believed in their own righteousness.

Righteousness. But really, that is no righteousness at all. We think we've got our righteousness. It's really no righteousness at all. It's like as we were on the doorstep yesterday and I knocked on the door and there was a man, you know, hiding behind the fly screen like people do and started talking to him.

He says, oh, I've got my own religion. And we asked him, oh, what is that? He said, I'm from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Oh, okay. And so I asked him, how is your religion going to get you to heaven?

And he said, I'm relying on my deeds and actions. That was what he was trusting in. Oh, how sad is that? He was trusting in his deeds and his actions.

[4 : 44] He was trusting in what he does and his works. And I tried to explain to him, Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9, not by works of, oh, that's Titus 3, but not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.

And Ephesians 2, it's not of works lest any man should boast. It's not of works. Not. Nothing to do with works. But he could not see that his works cannot save.

Friends, it's a dreadful mistake, isn't it? A dreadful mistake, probably a very decent, honest kind of upstanding fellow. Trusting in his deeds and actions.

Friends, you can't trust in any of that. None of it. Not one of it. Not any of it. And vain self-righteousness is an offence in the sight of God. It's a stench in his nostrils. Christ is our righteousness.

Christ alone is our righteousness. Only him. So let's see what it is. What did the Pharisees get wrong? So wrong. And what can we learn and get it right?

[5 : 48] Important, isn't it? Matthew 23, reading from verse 13. Let's take a walk through some of these themes of the woes, this woeful sermon, these eight woes.

Number one is in Matthew 23, verse 13, where our Lord says, What did they get so wrong? They got wrong here about the gospel. What they got wrong here is the gospel. Their gospel was no gospel at all.

Their salvation was no salvation at all. This is the most fundamental truth. How do we get to heaven? Our Lord is saying to these Pharisees, You shut up heaven.

You don't go in yourselves and you don't let others get in. You're preaching lies. Now this is the most fundamental truth of the word of God, the gospel. We've got to get that right, don't we?

[6 : 57] How do we get to heaven? These ones, they were shutting up the doors of heaven against men. They were blocking the way for others and not going in themselves. These teachers were teaching about God, but they did not love God.

They did not enter the kingdom of heaven themselves. They were not saved themselves, nor did they enter, let others enter. They missed it.

Wow. You know, it makes me think of when I was at school. This is probably a bit of a poor example, but as I was playing cricket, and I think I was one of those they called butterfingers.

Oh, it just got so close. I caught it, but oh. Butterfingers dropped it. I missed it. I missed it. These ones were missing it. Oh, so close. No.

So close. They knew Bible. They knew Bible, but they didn't know salvation. They didn't know the salvation by grace. They didn't know this vital truth. They did not have it.

[8 : 05] They were teaching the law. They were teaching the, you know, they had great Bible knowledge. These were commended for that. Yet they were creating this impossible standard for entering the kingdom that none could seem to enter.

They were putting burdens on people that were not required of them. And our Lord's message is the same today. Get real. Get real. Get right. You could call this sermon get real as well.

In the sense we've got to get the real, don't we? The real, the true. What is the real? Christianity.

And so we see the first woe is they miss the gospel. They miss salvation.

We have to get right about salvation. Salvation is God's undeserved gift. Not by trusting in ourselves like the Pharisees did. Not my deeds and actions will get me to heaven.

I'm better than this crowd that will go to hell. My deeds and actions are better than theirs. No, they're just as lacking, just as inadequate, just as faulty and failing. Your deeds of righteousness are as filthy rags.

[9 : 09] They're dirty in the sight of God. Get real. Get right with God. We have to get right about salvation. It's God's undeserved gift. Don't miss heaven by trusting in yourself.

It's salvation is by grace, through faith. They did not have that. They missed the gospel.

Secondly, we see in verse 14, the next woe, woe. Verse 14, woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you devour widows' houses for a pretense.

Make long prayer. Therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. I put to you they were wrong about spirituality, if you like. They could call it different things, but they were spiritual, weren't they?

Long prayers. You know, fancy, showy prayers. They put on a big spiritual show. Look at me, look at me. They had the show, but not the substance.

[10:12] They were acting also spiritual, making their long, fancy prayers to impress others, but they were busy stealing from the vulnerable. These were long, showy, false spiritual prayers, but they missed the point.

Spirituality. What is spirituality? You know, there's a lot of people that say, oh, I've got spirituality. There's a lot of spiritual people. You know, they're down at the Buddhist shrine, down at the mosque.

They're spiritual people. They're spiritual people who believe in the new age, in Krishna, in climate change. You know, they've got their belief, they've got this, oh, this is spiritual, save the world, save the whales, save the bumblebees.

Or, you know, they've got this spirituality, this vague spirituality, but they don't have the spirit of God. They have a spirituality, this false spirituality.

And some have got a lot of make-believe signs and wonders and the showiness, but their spirituality is just skin deep. It's superficial. And our spirituality must be at the practical level, at the heart, and be genuine.

[11:18] And so we must get right what the Pharisees got wrong. Amen? Get that right. To know God for real. To get real. To know God for real, where the rubber hits the road.

Not some showy prayers, but missing out on where the practical situations of life are. Not to have some faith, some airy, fairy, vain show of faith, but faith which is real.

It's at the everyday level. And so they missed the thoughtfulness for others, of the widows. They could have shown care and love to, but they just wanted to make their showy prayers.

And it was not a faith lived out. There's people like that, very religious, you know. It's like they're so spiritual. But when it comes down to where the rubber hits the road, how they get on with other people, how they show their Christianity by their actions, it's not there.

It's missing. And then we see the third one here in verse 15. We see that the Pharisees were wrong in their zeal. These were zealous people.

[12:28] These are the kind of people you want in your church. These are people who do stuff. These are people who got a bit of enthusiasm. People who get up and go in them. But it was misdirected zeal. We see in verse 15, Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte.

And when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. The Pharisees were wrong in their zeal. It was misguided zeal, misdirected zeal. You know, sure enough, they were devoted to their false religion.

There's people who go to the ends of the earth taking their gospel. You know, when I was a young man, I was privileged to go on a holiday to Germany.

And I knew a little bit of German having learnt it at school. And I was kind of helping my, I guess I was the unofficial interpreter for my family at the time on this German holiday.

And it was a lovely place to go and visit. And we went to this marketplace and I saw there was a Bible there. And it said Satanische Bible. It was a satanic Bible in German.

[13:36] Yeah. And then I saw some smart looking fellows and they had the Mormon Bible in German as well. And I thought, oh, how sad that is.

And these people have come from other countries. They were busily converting people to their own religion. But it was a dead religion. It was vain religion. They were making people twofold more a child of hell than themselves.

Now, this is like these dear people, the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. They're teaching a religion that cannot save. They preached God, but they were converting people to dead religion. These were making converts twice as much a child of hell as themselves. And they were leading their converts down this wrong path. Friends, we've got to get right. They were turning people into false disciples, even worse Pharisees than they were themselves.

Friends, there's a lot of misguided zeal today in the world, isn't there? There's misguided zeal. In religious movements with much noise and marketing, but little substance.

[14:35] There's all the hype and gloss and the hoo-ha and the razzmatazz. But when you boil it down, there's little substance there. There's little truth there. And there's no salvation there.

Sadly, for some, I'm not saying people can't get saved in some of these kind of rock and roll churches. But there's no... The focus is wrong.

The zeal is wrong. It's a zeal for the wrong, not the right. We must get real about our zeal. Get the real, not the false. We must get right about how we use our zeal.

The Bible talks about zeal and knowledge. We've got to come together. We've got to have a zeal. Not a zeal for a religion that will follow you. Rather, we know a zeal that's founded on Bible.

That's what we're zealous about. We've got a zeal about Bible truth. A zeal that comes from our love for our Lord. A zeal that comes from our wanting to point people unto him.

[15:34] To know him as saviour, as Lord. So we've got to get the right zeal. We've got to get the zeal for the things of God. A zeal that is Bible.

A zeal that is about the worthy, almighty God we love and honour and lift up. A zeal for the soul-saving gospel of our God.

Next up comes another woe. It's found in verse 16. Verse 16. Now, this is a little harder to follow, what the point is here.

So bear with me. Now, in verse 16, our Lord says this. He says, It sounds somewhat complicated, doesn't it?

Really, the Pharisees were false again here. I put to you, what I see here is that they were wrong about the authority. Their authority. Quite that word.

[17:13] The authority was wrong here. I'll try to explain how I mean. The Pharisees here, they were setting themselves up as their own authority. So they made rules and regulations and made rulings and directions and set commandments and imposed this authority that was of their own construction.

Talking about what's greater, the temple or the gold or the altar or the gift and such. There's this sense where they manufactured all their rules and regulations, their traditions and customs. And they imposed these, these made-up rules, these man-made rules of religion. The problem was it wasn't biblical. That's the problem. None of this is biblical. What the Lord is rebuking the Pharisees for is they were making these rules.

Their authority was not of God's making. It was of man-made. It wasn't biblical. And likewise today, we have false teachers that are putting out all kinds of false ideas and doctrines that they've made up themselves.

And they're false in their conduct. In some churches, it's the routine for people to fall on the floor and gyrate and look like they're writhing on the floor like some demon-possessed person.

[18:36] And they're calling that the work of the Holy Spirit. You know, these false ideas and doctrines that come in. You think, where did that come from? It's not Bible. It's not in here. You can go cover to cover and it's not in here.

It's not in the book. And these false teachers were making up these ideas and doctrines and practices that they were conducting. They were themselves false. And also they were trifling with holy things.

We dare not trifle with holy things. It's saying here that you can swear oaths. In your conversation is what the Pharisees routinely did. And of course, we know elsewhere, our Lord says, don't swear at all.

Don't make an oath by anything. Just let your yea be yea, your nay be nay. Let you speak, speak, speak. Be it. Have such integrity that what you speak is the truth. What you say is true.

You don't have to put any, you know, cross my heart and hope to die or that rubbish. My word is my bond. My word is true. I speak the truth. I don't lie. Why? And the Pharisees were wrong here about integrity and truth.

[19:36] They were talking about these rules about whether something is more to be bound by as to whether it was sworn on the altar or on the gift or such things.

And the point here really is that the teachers were making these manufactured rules and standards that were not viable.

They were trying to find ways to kind of get around things too by saying, oh, you can say something but you're not bound by it if it's not this or that, you know.

Tell the truth. We need to be truth tellers. We are captivated by the truth as God's people. The truth matters. When we speak, we should be truth tellers that our word is true.

And more than our word, we honour God's word because it's about authority. The question is about authority. Is it about rules set by men? Is it by regulations and religious directions that are not actually in the Bible?

[20 : 43] Or is the Bible our rule of faith and conduct? Is the Bible the only source of authority that we can squarely stand upon? We've got to get real.

Get the authority right. Get the authority right. That's one of the big problems with, for example, the charismatic movement. They're getting the authority wrong. It's all about extra biblical.

In other words, outside of the Bible revelations. It's about, oh, I had a dream last night and I went to heaven and I heard the angels say this and say that. None of that.

That's rubbish. It's got to be Bible. It's got to be the authority. It has to be, is it in the book? Does it line up with the word? Is it Bible? That's what counts. These flaky TV preachers that yarn on about all their wacko experiences, it can get right off track.

Our authority is not experience. It's the word. We must get that sole authority right. So get real. Get the authority right. Is it biblical? That must be the measure of everything that we test and accept or reject.

[21 : 50] Next we see, verse 23, another woe. It's really, you could say, the fundamentals here. They were wrong even on the very fundamentals. You could say these Pharisees.

They were wrong about the very basics of the faith. We see there in verse 23. Our Lord says, Pharisees were wrong here.

They were wrong on the fundamentals. And others are missing the very basics of the faith. And we've got to get the basics right. And these Pharisees, this kind of, they're nit pickers.

You know, oh, here's a nit. I'm going to pick it. Nit pickers. They're a nat, nat pickers. And they're busy straining the gnats. Oh, you know, oh, thanks for the drink, Shirley, but there's a nat in that. I've got to get my sock out and strain it and get that nat out. You know, they're busy straining the gnats. You know, the little tiny insects. It's a tiny weenie insect. It's just something like a millimetre big.

[23 : 09] But, oh, that's tainted. I don't drink that now. Sorry, Shirley. But, no, just trying to make a point. They're straining the gnats, these tiny little insects.

And then they're gulp, gulp, gulp, swallowing this huge great big camel. You know, choking on this huge camel. So he's kind of making this kind of tongue-in-cheek kind of word picture here of these ones.

They're straining the everything, the fine detail of, oh, you've got to weigh the grains of your herbs and make sure that you've just got just so much.

Oh, not any more than that. It's almost like getting a bag of peanuts and what's the... You're counting the peanuts or something. So you get the right... It's sort of like fastidiousness about the fiddly details of religious observance.

But then at the same time, they're ignoring God's mercy. They're ignoring justice or judgment. They're ignoring faith, the fundamentals. They're missing that. And in other words, and we can make that mistake or get so caught up in the finer detail of something or other and miss the whole, the larger points, the more weightier matters.

[24 : 25] And our Lord called them blind. They were missing the basics. Here they were straining out this tiny insect but swallowing the huge camel. And our Lord shows us that we can get caught up in the minor things and miss the really important things.

You know, some people, they just get some particular something and they kind of... It's all about that in the Bible. And miss the bigger picture.

It's not saying we shouldn't study and dig deep and get our understanding right on every trivial doctrine.

You know, not that any doctrine is entirely trivial but we want to get everything right but not focusing on the minute detail and missing the major doctrines, the major teachings, the fundamentals of the faith.

So our Lord was saying here, look, you're doing all this kind of, this minute detail of weighing these herbs to separate and divide these herbs but you're missing the, how do you get on with other people?

[25 : 34] Are you treating others justly? Are you walking with God? Are you walking in mercy? Are you walking in faith? And so we can miss it. When we get the fundamentals wrong, that's fundamentally wrong.

We see the next one here, I'll call it woe number six, is you could say holiness. Holiness. And this is found in verse 25, 26.

Our Lord says, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you may clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, the plate, but within they are full of extortion and excesses.

Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. So here were these ones and they were, you know, if you could imagine this was a cup that you couldn't see inside it, it looks nice and clean.

But when you actually look inside it, it's dirty, you know. It's like you have some people and they offer you a cup of tea and you actually say, oh, they've never cleaned that cup, it's got filthy inside.

[26 : 40] You know, oh, lipstick all over it. Yeah, you get this situation where it kind of might look clean, but it's actually a dirty cup, a dirty vessel. And our Lord is trying to illustrate this picture here, that they were wrong about holiness.

They looked all fine and dandy, but their heart was not right with God. Here there were these Pharisees, they're getting everything just sorted out in terms of external things, but they were missing the point.

So they were obsessed with ritual versus reality, with formality versus faith, with liturgy and form versus true worship. Now sometimes, I know we've got an order of service, but sometimes we don't stick to it.

You know, there's a sense we're not confined by a certain pattern that we have to rigidly hold to or, you know, there's a freedom in our worship.

There's a liberty, isn't there? And where some, we can get all caught up in the outside things without really looking deep down within.

[27 : 50] And for these ones, there's really an inward pollution. You know, they had the pretense, they had the pretense of religion, but the real spiritual life was lacking. There's something missing on the inside.

And I put to you, like holiness, it speaks of purity. Are we set apart for God? And our Lord puts in verse 26, he talks about cleansing.

Cleansing. You know, we've heard about forgiveness, that cleansing within, that we can confess our sins. He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Don't you want to be clean? I think sometimes you're working in the garden and you just need a good wash, you know, and you think, oh, it's such, it's good to get clean, isn't it? Even in the physical.

What about the spiritual? You know, this world soils us. We're soiled by what we see and hear and what's around us, what people are on about. But we are set apart.

[28 : 51] We're a set apart people. There should be a purity within and without. And our Lord looks at the heart of man. Now, that's not to say we need to get the externals right too.

We should get the externals right too. We should have a standard that is good and righteous and we set a high standard for ourselves. But our Lord looks at the heart.

That's what we've got to get that right. We've got to get real, get real about the holiness. We've got to get that right. Is our heart right with God? Is it clean? These Pharisees, they look clean to people looking at them, but they weren't clean on the inside.

We've got to get that right. And, you know, friends, we can all make that mistake. You know, we can kid people, but we can't kid God. You know, people might think, oh, yeah, he's a Christian.

He says he's a Christian. But are you right with God? That's what matters. Are you right with him, you know? It's not about what impression you make on other people and saying all the right things.

[29 : 53] It's about your relationship with God. And that's where it boils really deep down to. And our Lord looks at the heart of man. And is our heart right with God? You see it goes on, verse 27.

You see the seventh woe, nearly there. Oh, you're getting early minutes today if I keep this up.

Verse, woe number seven is righteousness. Righteousness.

Write that one down. Righteousness. You could say these are kind of alike, but I'll talk a little on that.

So the Pharisees were wrong in that they looked holy. They were ugly on the outside, but our Lord knew the heart. They looked like they were clean, but they were dirty on the inside. You know, they were full of hidden sin, worldly lusts and evil, things they hadn't got right with God about.

They showed off as righteous as law keepers, but they were actually not righteous. And their mask of righteousness, it hid this secret inner world of ungodly thoughts and ways.

[30 : 56] Now, we can all, if we're honest, know this stuff we've got to deal with. Always. But these ones were kind of painting themselves as, oh, I'm all right, Jack.

I've arrived. You know, these are these whitewashed tombs. All beautiful on the outside. You know, like in the old days of this time, they had these tombs, you know, like you see mausoleums. It looked so beautiful. You know, beautiful mausoleum. We've just got to reserve one, get one built for me. No. It's not this mausoleum. Who cares about what your body's in when you're dead? I mean, but these ones were making these mausoleums, these whitewashed tombs that look so beautiful and white, and your dead body's going to go in that beautiful structure that is this tomb that is brilliant white.

It's whitewashed. But inside, really, when you boil it down, it's dead man's bones. And the Lord is saying, using this analogy about, you look so great, but really, on the inside, you're dead.

[31 : 59] Dead. Godless. Wicked. So we have to get real friends. I'll put to you today about our righteousness. Righteousness. It's important to get that right. To get right about righteousness.

And like my friend, the Mormon, who says he's going to get to heaven by his deeds and actions. No. You don't get to heaven by your deeds and actions. Not at all.

But as a saved man, a saved woman, righteousness is something you want to have. And righteousness is whether or not we are right with God. That's what it is, in a way.

It's nothing we can do, really, to get right with God. We must receive his righteousness. You know, we see, just as an aside, Romans 10, Paul says, My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.

He says, For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

They're a bit like having the wrong zeal here. Zealous, but they missed the point. Missed the boat.

They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

[33 : 04] For they are ignorant of God's righteousness. They're going about to establish their own righteousness, having not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. I think we touched on that Wednesday night.

They're ignorant of God's righteousness. They're going about to establish their own righteousness. But they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.

So what it's saying there is, for some they're ignorant of God's righteousness, which he wants to give you. They're going about saying, I'm righteous already. I don't need God to make me righteous.

I'm a right. I'm good enough. I'm not a bad person. Wrong. You are. We all are. So we must have God's righteousness.

That's what we need. We can't be good enough ourselves. We fall short of his glory. Our righteousness does not come from our righteous acts. Like this mistaken man of yesterday, it does not come from our righteous acts, but our righteousness is imputed.

[34 : 11] It's given to us. It's gifted to you. Our righteousness comes from your righteous Lord. He gives it to you. He counts you as righteous. As of Genesis 15, 6, Abraham, he believed in the Lord, and God counted it to him for righteousness.

Wow. Is that easy? Believe. And he will count that as your righteousness. Wow. That's a relief, isn't it? Phew. That he counts my faith as righteousness.

If I trust in Jesus, that's his righteousness for me. And so I put to you, we've got to get real about getting right with God. Now, of course, we get right with God, and then we live right.

It follows on that our righteousness impacts our walk. But we'll go to the next one. The last one now is, I'll put to you the verse 29, and this might sound a bit stretched here, but I'll put to you what I think it is.

And in a sense, we've got to get right about the church. And I'll try to explain how I get that from here. Verse 29, Really, the way I see this one is that they were wrong about the church.

[35 : 39] They were wrong about the right church because they were actually against it. You know, they were saying, oh, if it had been our day, we wouldn't have been against these people. We wouldn't have persecuted them. We would have been all one, you know, one happy family.

And when I say church, I mean an assembly. So church means assembly. We're a church here in the sense that those that are in this room are a church.

An assembly, a gathering. And of these people in Matthew 23, our Lord says to them, really, you would be against the right church.

You would be against the right prophets. And you are partakers with those who are the enemies of the church, the enemies of the assembly of God's people. So I'm hoping, I'm trying to explain how I'm seeing this here.

So in other words, these men, if they had been back in that day when they say, oh, we wouldn't have killed these prophets, they would have been killing the prophets. They would have been in alliance with them.

[36 : 46] They would be in affiliation with the Christ killers. They were in their assembly. They would have been part of that crowd, not the crowd that is the godly, where the godly are receiving and imparting and partaking, where God's true prophets, where God's true word is, where the true gospel is, where God's true people are.

They wouldn't have been in that assembly. They would have been in the assembly of the Christ killers. So there's that sense where, what church are we going to be in? In other words, what assembly are we going to be in?

So these ones, our Lord rebuked, they were against the true people of God. They were against the true proclamation of the gospel. Even though they claimed to honour the prophets of old.

They said, oh, we would never have murdered and persecuted these, the prophets, but they were just as bad, just as bad. And our Lord says here that you've been partakers in shedding righteous blood.

They were joining party with these ones. And we know our Lord really foretold, as would happen just days later, that they would actually crucify the very Lord himself.

[38 : 01] So we see what assembly, what church they belong to. The synagogue of Satan. Really, they were siding with the enemies of God, the enemies of the gospel.

And they were following in the footsteps of those who had rejected God's word, God's messengers.

So, to try to make it clear what I'm trying to get across here, we've got to get the church right.

What kind of church are we going to line up with? We won't affiliate with the Pharisees of today.

Now, let me explain how I see who are the Pharisees of today. When people ask me, why are you not part of the local ecumenical minister's fraternal?

Why don't we just all join together with all the other churches for the big name evangelist meeting that's coming to town? Why don't we just all team up with some interdenominational worship event? It's because it's the wrong church. It's the wrong assembly. These are folk who teach the wrong gospel. Now, that's not to say there's not saved amongst them, but they're effectively enemies of the gospel.

[39 : 08] We see, you know, for example, as we know, in ministers fraternals, you know, these little kind of clubs of preachers that get together from different churches, you've got Seventh-day Adventists there.

you've got a very, well, can be, can go to, really, in some places they even have Mormons.

I mean, some they kind of narrow it down a little, but they have Catholic, clergy, and, well, it goes to interfaith, it goes to all manner of religions too, but, you know, these kind of ministers fraternals, these ecumenical kind of bodies, it's like, it's a mishmash of all kinds of doctrines and they don't even have salvation right, they don't have the gospel right.

We've got, for example, the Seventh-day Adventists, we know, when you really look at what they teach, it's a works-based religion. They teach that you're saved by your works, by your baptism.

They don't have a salvation by faith through God's grace, they don't have a salvation that is secured in Christ that is forever.

It's a flaky work-based salvation and faulty salvation and we won't affiliate with the Pharisees of today, we're in a different church. And that's not to say, I don't want to communicate here this morning that we are the church and everybody else is wrong.

[40 : 32] But we are the church in the sense that we are one local representation of like-minded churches of like faith in different places.

As we know, there's churches a few kilometers here and there that are like-minded with us. And so we're not against fellowshiping with like-minded churches.

But we won't fellowship, we won't assemble with the wrong church. So in other words, we won't assemble, we won't join party, we won't join the team of those who are effectively enemies of the

gospel.

Yet it seems nowadays some churches and preachers just go along with just about anything, just about anything goes. They jump on the bandwagons with the enemies of the gospel effectively. So we see that in some churches where it's kind of like what does that have to do with Bible? You know, we've got to be, what's it called, stewards of the environment, you know, climate change. [41 : 31] The preacher should be talking about climate change. We should be talking about social justice, gender equity, save the whales.

defund the police. What next? Honestly, some well-meaning Christians are being swept along by this and really they're leftist causes that are really anti-Christ.

You know, there could be right causes too. There's that sense where if it's not Bible, then why are we talking about it? Why are we getting off track with that? How we need discernment in these days when these emerging movements are coming around that when you boil it down, they're anti-God. And that's not to say there's some worthwhile causes that we might individually choose to join in. But we've got to be careful. What's their mandate? What's their mission?

What's their foundation? What is it they actually on about? What's their ultimate purpose? And for many, it's very much against God. You actually look at what they stand for. Their ultimate objective in some of these causes is to shut down churches.

[42 : 39] Oh, churches that actually say in the beginning God made man and woman. Oh, that's terrible. How dare you say it's just one or the other. You know, honestly, the Bible, if the Bible says it, that's it.

No question. No debate. And we need to be careful what it is that we follow, what we represent. So our Lord's rebuke here was really, it was a rebuke.

And yet there was love in his heart, I put to you, that in Matthew 23, 37, he talks about how as a hen would gather her chickens under her wings.

That's what he wants. But you would not. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. His heart was yearning that they would get these things right.

He wasn't there to condemn as in to condemn that there's no hope. His hope, I believe, his intent was to say, look, you've got to get these things right.

[43 : 37] Get this right. Our Lord was concerned about the inner man, but the Pharisees about the external. Our Lord was concerned about godly principles, not man-made rules.

Our Lord was concerned about character, about the deep down inside of us. And the Pharisees were all caught up in about works, kind of working their way to heaven. Our Lord was filled with humility and the Pharisees were full of pride.

Our Lord called for service, for love, and the Pharisees just used up people. Our Lord called for a holy life, but the Pharisees were just religious, a fake life.

And friends, we see here like this truth of righteousness and of holiness that holiness is about your character, about that cleansing.

Righteousness is about that receiving his bestowed righteousness and it affects your behaviour. We've got to get these things right.

[44 : 43] Just to recap real quick, the gospel, got to get that right, don't we? salvation through grace by faith. Fundamental, absolute. They're not teaching the gospel of salvation then steer clear.

Spirituality, not some vague kind of, you know, some make-believe kind of spirituality but of some of flowery, impressive, put on, showy, showing off but the real.

A zeal, a zeal that's Bible. We're going to get, we should get zeal. But zeal with knowledge, zeal with truth, zeal with God's truth, zeal for the things of God. Get the authority right.

It's not about what man and religion says. What does God say? Is it, it is written or is it just what man's making up or some, some wacko new bandwagon, some new fad, some, this fad driven kind of church that is all around us.

We've got to get the authority right. Is it Bible? We've got to get the fundamentals right. Is it mercy and truth and faith? Is it the fundamentals of how do we be a godly people?

[45 : 53] Is it holiness such that we clean on the inside? It's not about putting on for others to see. It's about how's our heart? Is it righteousness? Is it trusting in his righteousness?

Not a man-made works-based righteousness. And have we got the right assembly? Are we in the church? As in, we're not joining forces with the enemies of the gospel. We're the ones who are going to get persecuted.

We're the prophets who are going to get killed because we stand for that is true. That that is true. We stand, we're going to be in the right church in the sense that we are going to be in a sense the remnant.

We're going to be, and I'm not meaning this to big note us to say there's anything special about us but that we care about assembling scripturally and about that which we're on about is founded on the Bible.

We're not going to join forces with the enemies of the gospel who water it down or weaken the message. We want to stand strongly with the prophets of old who were killed, with the men and women of God of history who did give their lives for the gospel that we'll have such a love for our God that we'll stand fast, we'll stand firm and we won't deviate.

[47 : 15] We'll be full on and we'll get real. Amen? So I pray that I've been able to communicate that as well as I can today. Let's pray.

Lord, we do thank you that you gave a stern rebuke and yet your heart was still of love. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, your heart was yearning, Lord, for people to turn to the right, to the truth, to faith.

Lord, we pray, help us to not make the mistakes of the Pharisees. Lord, help us to have a love for your word and the truth of it and to live it truthfully in our lives.

Help us to put these principles into action and stir us, Lord, to greater faith. Lord, that you would be glorified in your church. Amen. Bless God.

Let's go to close. Amen.