

# Judgment on False Spiritual Leaders

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word.

Take your Bibles if you would and open them with me to Matthew chapter 23. Jesus, the very Son of God, has come to the earth and He is bringing truth and grace so that people can be saved.

And there are religious leaders that are doing everything in their power to keep people from knowing that they need Jesus. Keeping people from knowing that they need what He did on the cross of Calvary.

So the message today is a quite negative message because it's a judgment on false preachers. He says, whoa, over and over, which is like, oh, I can't believe this type thing as He talks about it.

God wants you to hold men of God, true men of God, in great respect. In Philippians chapter 2 and verse 29, Paul writes to the church at Philippi and says, you need to hold such in reputation.

[ 1 : 09 ] He wrote to the church at Thessalonica, 1 Thessalonians 5, 12. And he said, esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. He told Timothy, he said, teach them that the elders that rule well are worthy of double honor.

So God's not mad about preachers. He's mad about false preachers. Sad to say, a lot of them are. God's quite angry with those who pretend to be the servants of God, but are really the servants of Satan.

He uses the word, whoa. It's like a groan. It's like an outcry of anger, pain, judgment, grief, dissatisfaction. Like you're afraid you're going to die.

He uses the word hypocrite over and over because they're putting on a false front. They're pretending. They're deceitful. And they're actors. So go with me through these groups of people that he's talking to, these preachers.

All the same guys, actually. But look at what he says to them. Look at verse 13. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.

[ 2 : 13 ] You neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. They were judged for keeping people from getting to God in heaven. You would kind of expect that a man of God's job is to show people how to get to heaven and how to get to God.

But these are false teachers. They're the biggest threat that keep people from getting the gospel. All over the world, there are tons of preachers. There are tons of people sharing the gospel.

There's a lot of religion. But it's like a shell game. It's sleight of hand. You're too busy looking at one thing and you miss the important thing. They use their position and their teaching and their religion and they keep others from getting to heaven.

They probably don't intend for anyone to go to hell. That's not really their goal. I doubt they would think, I think I'm going to see if I can't get people to go to hell. But it works out to be that because they change the focus from man's sin and God's glory and Jesus down on the cross for men.

They change it so you don't see that. So you might understand, you know, these people, they get so caught up in doing good things. They build morality. They make people comfortable.

[ 3 : 27 ] They help people feel good. They numb the pain and they don't help them see their sin and their need of a savior. They focus on this world so much, they cause people to be destroyed in the next world.

There are these preachers that are standing up. Are they saying good things? They're saying good things. Are they good? Are they good? Yeah, they're good. Does it look good? Are they helping people? A lot of them may be, but they're only helping them from here.

On this earth, when John the Baptist came, the scribes, the Pharisees, the religious leaders did all they could to stop them. Instead of guiding people to Jesus, who was God come on earth, they spent their time getting rid of John, trying to get rid of Jesus.

They should be sharing truth and showing people how to get to God. Instead, they do not know the truth. And they stop others from getting there. So we want to be careful. Now listen to me.

As you walk your way through this, you want to learn how to recognize if a guy is a true man of God. And a true man of God is going to say what God says. That means he's going to have a Bible open in front of him. He's going to read a lot of Bible.

[ 4 : 33 ] And he's going to constantly point you to two major things. You are a sinner. Or were a sinner. You sinned against the holy God.

You deserve to go to hell when you died. And Jesus died on the cross so you could be saved. That's the message. It's never feel good. There was a guy who built the crystal cathedral and had great crowds following him and told everybody to think positive.

And he said sin was thinking negatively about yourself or about others. That's ridiculous. That's a shell game. That is, don't think about sin. Don't realize you need a Savior.

I'll make you feel good. I'll make you enjoy this world. But you're going to go to hell when you die. You say, do you think he really thought that? I doubt it. I doubt he ever sat in the back room saying, I'm going to see if I can't make people go to hell. I don't think he ever thought that.

I think he was a blind guide of the blind. He had no idea. You need to know as you study the Bible, I'm going to go find the guy who's going to open the Bible and just preach what the Bible said.

[ 5 : 31 ] This is good enough. This is good enough. You don't need another book. You don't need another thing. You need to know what God said. You really don't need to know what Austin thinks because Austin ain't that smart. But God is.

So let's find out what he said. Secondly, he judged them because they were taking advantage of people financially. Look at verse 14. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites.

You devour widows' houses. And you fake for pretense. You make long prayers so that you shall receive the greater condemnation. I said, I'm about fed up with this, guys.

Number one, you're playing this shell game with them and you're keeping them from seeing the gospel. You're keeping them from seeing their need. You know, I lived in Peru. And sometimes I would be called because they were no longer Catholic.

I was kind of like last rites. They would want me to come and speak to the person who was about to die. And when I would get there, they would say, now, you need to tell him everything's okay. You need to tell him he's going home.

[ 6 : 30 ] You need to tell him that everything's fine and the doctors have found a solution. I said, you called the wrong guy. I said, I'm going to go in there and tell him he's about to die. He better make things right now.

He ain't got much time. They didn't appreciate that. But that's the whole point. They didn't want him to be stressed. They said, you'll make his heart rate go up. You'll make him die quicker. They were playing a shell game.

The second thing they were doing was they're trying to make money by their fake show they're putting on. They were making money by their fake show. They take widow's money. They take advantage of people financially.

Titus chapter 1 and verse 11. The Bible says to Titus, Paul said, Titus, they need their mouths stopped. They subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not for money, for filthy lucre's sake.

They do it just so they can make money. I hate to say this, but when people make fun of religion and even Christianity, they're usually right. It might not be about what you're doing and what you believe, but let's be honest.

[ 7 : 34 ] A great deal of Christianity in the world is about money. It's about how to make a preacher rich. It's about how to get money for yourself.

It's about all of that, and that's what's going on. We don't want that. They fake it all to get money. You remember they make a pretense of long prayers? In 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 3 he said, And through covetousness, that means they want money, they desire stuff, they with feigned words or faked words make merchandise of you.

They make merchandise. They figure out a way to make money off you. They make Walmart out of you. They see if they can't figure out a way to get your money. That's what he says going on. Whose judgment now of a long time lingers not their damnation slumbers.

God didn't like preachers. They're out trying to get rich off of preaching. God's men are not to do ministry for money. 1 Peter 5 says, Feed the flock of God which is among you.

Take in the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly. Not for money. Because you want to. Of a ready mind. They made long prayers.

[ 8 : 42 ] They appeared to be religious. They wanted to be seen and heard for their praying and their giving. You remember that's how he starts in Matthew? He said, Man, they stand on the street corner and they want everybody to look at them praying.

They pretend to be spiritual. They want to just be seen and respected. They're not doing it for God. They pretend to be talking to God. But it's only to get money. This is a prosperity gospel already at work.

They will be judged of God on how they hurt others instead of helping people. He said they're going to get the greater judgment or damnation. Do you see what he said there?

He said, You stinking preachers. You try to take advantage of people by faking it. I'm going to judge you and judge you harshly. God will not allow those fakes to go unpunished.

I don't know how many preachers are in it for money. Everybody wants money. I'm not saying that. But that ought to never be the motivation. We ought to be serving God.

[ 9 : 44 ] You ought not be serving God so God will make you rich either. Amen. You ought to be serving God because you love Jesus. You're going to serve him. The third thing he said, found if you would in verse 15, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites, because you'll cross land and sea.

You'll do whatever it takes to get somebody to believe your false doctrine and you'll make him twice as much a child of hell. Woe unto you, you blind guides. You make these stupid rules, ridiculous rules.

You say, If you swear by the temple, that's one thing. But if you swear by the altar, if you swear by what's on the altar, and they just made up all these rules. He said, Man, this is ridiculous. It's ridiculous. See, religion is a thing about rules.

It's about how to make you conform to whatever they want you to conform to. Starting in verse 15, The false teachers are judged for working hard at spreading the lie.

Did you know that every place I've ever been, there was a Mormon temple going up that was far-fantier than anything I could ever build? On every street corner? Did you know the lie gets there before the truth gets there?

[ 10 : 53 ] Did you know, did you know that they are hard at work to spread falsehood? They're hard at work.

And he said, I don't like that. I don't want you doing it. And what's amazing is how those people who don't believe God are so busy doing it. They've not accepted the gospel, and they keep other people from getting the gospel, but they want to spread their own brand of religion rather than what Jesus taught.

They play games by swearing or trying to decide which oath was of more value. So it would be kind of like if you swore by this, I'd say, Well, I can swear one better than that.

In Peru, it was common for them to swear on the soul of their mama, and they would cross themselves all up here and down here and down here and down here, and then they'd put their finger like this. They'd tell you, I swear it to you.

Like, there's a certain way to swear. If you put a cross on your mouth and you swear it, that might really be real. And Jesus was like, Where did you guys get this? Where did that junk come from?

[ 11 : 55 ] How in the world did you come up with such a thing? He said, Because I told you in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 37, I don't want you to be going around swearing. I want you to say no and mean no.

I want you to say yes and mean yes. If you have to swear, it's because you're so used to lying. If you have to swear, it's because I know you lie so much. If you have to say, I swear I'm telling you the truth, that must mean I know you don't most of the time.

And which swear do you need to say, so I believe you're telling the truth this time? And who did all that? You think that was the wicked, lost crowd? It was the religious wicked, lost crowd. It was the people that were going to church.

It was the people who were in the name of Israel and later on even in the name of the church. But our God is a God of truth. I hope you look this verse up and mark it so you'll never forget it.

Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 18 says, It is impossible for God to lie. You know, you need to know that because you hold in your hands the Word of God. And you might wonder to yourself, Will those promises come true?

[ 12 : 57 ] And I'm telling you that God said this, I tell the truth, I've got 4,000 years of history telling the truth, I can show you how I tell the truth, I can show you, but let me go ahead and I'll have them put it down in my book, I Don't Lie.

It's impossible. Somebody might say to you, What can't God do? Is there anything God can't do? Yep, He can't lie. He tells the truth. Amen? That's why when He told Abraham, You're going to get the land of Israel.

And He told Isaac, He told Jacob, Then He told Moses, He told everybody, It's because He's a God who tells the truth. And He tells you you're a sinner, He's not lying. When He tells you you need Jesus, He's not lying.

He tells the truth. It's Satan who is the father of lies. In John chapter 8 and verse 44, There's no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of it.

Satan is the liar. Satan is the liar. The real truth was that religious people were just playing games to cover up their lying. They saw no real value in things that were of eternal value.

[ 13 : 57 ] They were blind guides leading blind people to hell. Now, I'll get you to listen to this in just a second. Please understand, how are you going to know what's true? How are you going to know what's true?

And the way you're going to know what's true is you're going to really honestly study and read this book. You come to church here, and I hope you've learned the value of this book, because we think every word of it is valuable.

We've been through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, that we're getting two-thirds of the way through with Deuteronomy. We've been through like 20 books of the Bible. We're in the book of Matthew now. We're in chapter 23. You've been going verse by verse because it's all true, and it's all good.

It was all written for a purpose. Read the book. This is truth. You see, when you want to know if something is right, you've got to get the tape measure out.

You want to know what truth is, God gave you truth. In the word of God. You all never follow any preacher without your Bible open in your lap, looking up the verses, studying what the things say, making notes, going home, checking it out, because you can't trust me.

[ 15 : 00 ] You can only trust this book. You can't trust any human. You can only trust the book. So trust the book and get into it. The fourth thing he said, total of me to verse 23. False leaders are judged for getting hung up on the picky things, and they miss the really big stuff.

They get hung up on picky, nitpicking stuff, and they miss the really big stuff. Verse 23. Whoa, what do you scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites? You pay tithes the mint and anise and cumin, but you omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.

I want you to notice that they major on minors and minor on the majors. Look at verse 24. You, blind guides, would strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

Supposedly, I have no idea of this being true, they said that when the Jews would drink their wine, they'd drink their wine through clenched teeth so they'd catch any bug that might have got in there and make sure it didn't get in their throat.

Boy, y'all are real good about making sure you don't swallow a gnat, but you'll swallow a camel. Majoring on minors, minoring on majors. You make big over stuff.

[ 16 : 13 ] It's not that important. Let me just go ahead and confess. I did that for years. I'm sure I'll probably still do some of it now. But for years, I majored on some of the stupidest things and I made some of the stupidest statements because I was following my culture and everything.

Be careful because religion likes to make ridiculous rules and religion likes to pick on little things. You see what they were doing in the verse? They were tithing on the little stuff.

It's the way the nation and the men of God were going to be supported. But here's what they said. What's funny is, this is like the spices that you grow, you know, to put in your food.

It's these little bitty leaves and they would get out and they would meticulously count ten leaves and pull a leaf out to give to God. But they wouldn't do the big stuff. It's like, hey, I got twenty leaves off of my, off of my little spice garden today.

I'm going to give God two leaves. Ain't that something? It's like they were nitpicking and oh, forgetting all the big stuff. They're careful to count out the leaves, but they wouldn't worry about it.

[ 17 : 14 ] They forgot the word of God, the law. They forgot judgment, righteousness. What was the right thing? Micah 6, the Bible said, he showed thee, oh man, what is good and what does the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

You know what? God wasn't near as interested in him counting tea leaves and dividing some up as he was with it being a real thing that affected their life. Can I just stop and say that the people I've lived with, the churches I've been associated, we have often been tea leaf counters, nitpickers, and we find the littlest things to fight about and we're not even so big on the big thing.

You know what the big thing is? Everybody's sinned and everybody's going to hell and Jesus died so people could be saved. Let's get the gospel to them. Jesus is God. He died on the cross and he rose again. Let's get the gospel to them.

Time to stop picking and choosing what we like in the word of God and just believe it and act on it. Go with me if you would to verse 25. False teachers are judged for not being who they portrayed themselves to be.

False teachers are judged for not being who they portrayed themselves to be. They made themselves look one way but they were really another way. And what I'm about to read to you, I need to caution you, this is where your television would flash up a thing and say be careful as we read this next part because it's going to be a little tough.

[ 18 : 38 ] Rich what he says. Look what he says. He says, Woe unto you, 25, scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites, you clean the outside of the cup, you clean the little plate that goes under it but inside you put extortion and excess.

In other words, you make the cup look good but you put poison in the cup. You're really worried about what you put on the plate or the plate you put the food on but you don't put good food on the plate.

You blind Pharisee. Clean first, that which was inside the cup and platter, that the outside there may be clean also. Wouldn't it be a lot better to have meat that wasn't full of worms on a dirty plate than wouldn't have a clean plate with meat full of worms?

I mean, honestly, he's saying, don't be ridiculous but that's what they did. They looked it but they didn't live it. They looked the part but they didn't live the part. But here's where it really gets rough.

Look at verse 27. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites because you paint all the graveyards nice and pretty and you make them appear beautiful on the outside but we all know what's in a graveyard.

[ 19 : 47 ] You ever notice that? I lived in a desert in South America but when you got to, they built this new graveyard. I was so excited. If I was going to die there, I preferred that graveyard. It was a nicer graveyard.

The grass was green. It had a carpet of grass, dirt on this side, dirt on that side, dirt on that side, a road on this side, dirt everywhere around it. But this was like the nicest place you've ever seen. It looked like an American graveyard.

But you know what's in an American graveyard, don't you? Dead bodies. They're rotting. They may put you, they may put enough juice in you to keep your body from rotting for 50 years.

They put you in a cement vault so your body will be around for 50 years. But let's just take a hint. I don't want to dig anybody up after 30 years and look at them. Do you? And he said, hey, y'all can make it look as pretty as you want to make it look like but it's still full of filthy junk and he said, that's what you guys are.

You have really learned how to look good. You're worried about appearances. You're worried about keeping the dish clean but what's in the dish is what's contaminated. You're worried about how things look, not how they really are.

[ 20 : 52 ] They're not clean at all. Graveyards are not, they are made to look pretty but they are just homes of rotting bodies. Doesn't matter how you make yourself look to men, God knows what's going on in your heart.

A religious leader, you know, they put on robes and hang chains around your neck and put pendants, whatever you call pendants on or whatever they're called, big old badges on. You may have a fancy hat.

You may look really spiritual. You may look really religious. You may not cut your beard and let locks grow on the sides. You may do any of these things you want to do to look religious. He said, but I'm not really looking at the outside.

You false teachers. I am much more concerned about who you are on the inside. Are you really a man of God on the inside? Are you at home who you are in the pulpit?

Are you the real deal? That was the question. He said, you're not judgment. Oh, whoa on you. Verse 29. They're fake.

[ 21 : 58 ] These guys are fake. And so they act like they love Jesus and the truth by saying they love the prophets. Look at verse 29. Whoa unto you, scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites.

You build the tombs of the prophets and you garnish the sepulchers of the righteous. And you say, now if we'd have been alive in the days of Jeremiah, we would have loved old Jeremiah.

Jeremiah. We'd have been a good guy with old Isaiah. We'd have been there taking it. He said, you liars. You don't, you didn't like John. You knew him. You didn't like me. You knew me. You are a child of your own parents.

You act just like your parents. How do you expect to get out of the damnation of hell? You liar. They love to make speeches from Jeremiah's grave. They love to talk like he was something.

They claim to love the prophets and if they'd have lived there, they pretend to stand on the truth preached by the prophets. But Jesus said, no, you're like your parents. Your parents killed the prophets and that's what you're about to do to me.

[ 22 : 55 ] That's where we are, isn't it? That's what he's looking at and saying, you guys look like you love the truth but John the Baptist came teaching you the truth. Y'all got him killed. You hated him.

Hey, I'm here. You hate me. You're about to go to hell, he says, because you are deceivers. You're serpents. You're vipers. You're as wicked as the devil.

They hid who they really were and they waited for the right moment to attack. That's what a snake does. Hiding in a bush pile, a brush pile, hiding in a brush pile.

You reach in your hand to get a stick of wood like old Paul did, he's going to bite you. They may have looked religious but they really hated the truth. They hated God. They hated the prophets.

They hated Jesus. How could they escape hell knowing how they were? They had not made a clean break with what they knew was a lie. They were not standing for the truth today.

[ 23 : 54 ] Before I kind of sum it up for you and end the story, here's the deal. All around us, all across America and all across the world, there are tons of religious leaders. They may write books and they may be on television or radio and they may have great followings and people might buy them big fancy airplanes and everything else for them but he said, hey, just because a guy says he's preaching for me doesn't mean I'm for him.

You can't go by that. I want to know what's inside of him. I want to know if he's preaching truth and as a Christian at Vision Baptist Church and someday you may move to another town, you need to find a Bible preaching church.

just because they got the nice building, just because they got the guy standing behind a pulpit with a Bible, you need to make sure is he preaching the Bible? Does he need a Bible or is it just a part of his skit?

Does he need a Bible or is it just a jumping off point to get to something else? Is he teaching me what God said? Oh, if it's a church where you don't need to bring a Bible and lay it open on your lap and look stuff up, maybe it's not the right church.

We know that God will judge false teachers. By the way, we should hate the same things God hates. That means it may look religious but I ought to know it's wrong. Doing anything that might hinder the spread of the gospel to all the world and all the people of the world would be what those scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites would have done.

[ 25 : 22 ] They'd have spread a lie but they wouldn't have told the truth. They'd have spread tithing on mint and cumin and little tea leaves but they wouldn't have told them about Jesus dying on the cross for them.

They'd have said they loved the prophets but it wouldn't have been real. The prosperity gospel is manipulating people to give. I could take you around South America and I could show you in other countries of the world too I could show you movie theaters that are literally painted with gold and gold is all over them and inside is the movement and there's a leader in there and he's whole ministries on how you can quit suffering and his whole ministries on how you can be healed and his whole ministries on all of that and he's not preaching the gospel.

When you hear people talk about how China has got a great religious movement going on it's not a true religious movement it's not about Jesus it's about a charismatic confusion. He said be careful because they're doing what they can to keep the gospel from getting out.

We should recognize that much that is done in the name of Christ is not done because they studied the scripture to find out what God said and to spread that. This is really going to sound corny to you but you don't need a big fancy guy you need somebody who just opens this and reads it to you and helps you understand it that's what you need that's what you're looking for that's what our missionaries ought to be they don't have to be anything special because this is special not about how good they are it's about how good this is and this is really good and you read this to them and teach this to them it'll change their life amen we should recognize that much that is done in the name of Christ is not from the scriptures we should be careful about making up religious rules or ridiculous rules that aren't clearly taught in scripture we got to be careful about that as a church we should major on what Jesus majored on and not get hooked up or hung up on picky stuff which I have been known to do we should be the same person in public and private no faking love for him in the past like the prophets and not living it out in the present you know if you come to church and everybody here thinks you really love Jesus but all week long you don't live like there's something wrong there and if a preacher does that there's something wrong there



God judges teachers false teachers that pull people away from what was done on the cross of Calvary the central message that has to be preached and constantly brought before people is this Jesus died for people he died because you sinned you failed we sinned we failed and we needed a savior nobody wants to hear about sin nobody wants to hear their desperate need of the gospel that's a negative message all have sinned and come short of the glory of God rich people don't want to hear that nobody wants to hear that a young guy in Adikipa said one time after he got saved he said I didn't like coming to this church but I kept coming because every week when I did come he kept telling me I was a sinner and I didn't appreciate hearing that and I told him I didn't say it I was just reading what the Bible said amen you see if you don't know you're a sinner you're not going to get help they emphasize all sorts of things except for the cross of Jesus they lift themselves up they don't lift up Jesus and they bring judgment on themselves because Jesus alone is to be magnified take the book and take it to the world this message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia for more information log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com) where you can find our service times location contact information and more audio and video recordings thanks

[ 29 : 16 ] Thank you.