

## False Religion and Its Victims

Mark 12:38-44

February 2, 2014

### Introduction

This morning we come to Jesus' warnings against false teachers. Jesus uses the word, "Beware!" It is a word that urges us to pay attention, to watch out. When we see these false teachers, then we are to flee from them. We are not to develop any type of relationship with them. Jesus tells us to beware of them, and He does this to protect us from harm. He is truly the good Shepherd.

False teachers have been around since the beginning of time. These are people that tell us that they have the right teachings about God, but in reality they are leading people straight to hell. They claim to represent God, but they are actually agents of Satan. They do not represent truth. They are very dangerous people who will subvert the truth and lead many astray on a broad path to destruction.

Scripture is full of warnings and reality of false teachers.

***2 John 7** For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*

***Romans 16:17-18** Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. **18** For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus<sup>[G]</sup> Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*

***Jeremiah 5:31** The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?*

***Jeremiah 14:14** And the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.*

False teachers are dangerous because their deception is destructive. The destruction comes from Satan who disguises himself as an angel of light and his servants as ministers of righteousness (**2 Cor 11:13-15**). Some false teachers are heretics—those who openly reject the Word of God and teach contrary to it. Others are apostates—those who once followed the faith but have since turned away. Then there are deceivers who pretend to still believe the truth. They want to look like orthodox fundamental evangelical Christians, but they are liars.

In **Matthew 7:16**, Jesus says, "You shall know them by their fruits." It's not what they say but what you see in their lives that matters. They are incapable of showing good fruits. Jesus gives us strong warnings against false teachers.

After the attacks by the Sanhedrin in their efforts to trap Him, Jesus then tells the people to watch out for false teachers. He is in full attack mode against the false leaders of Israel. Some think that Jesus is being uncharitable by not opening a dialogue with them to talk about their wrong beliefs. Jesus does not do this because He knows their hearts are hardened against anything He says. He is being merciful by exposing them of their lies and wickedness. Sometimes we have to do this because by keeping silent, we are sending untold number of people to hell because we are not telling the truth.

Mark only gives us a brief statement of Jesus' condemnation of the religious order. **Matthew 23** goes on for 36 verses. Here we see the characteristics of the false teachers and its victims.

**Mark 12:38-44**

**38** Then He said to them in His teaching, "Beware of the scribes,

- Jesus is teaching in the temple courts—massive amounts of people
- Scribes
  - Usually Pharisees
  - They are usually teachers of the law

**Characteristics of False Teachers**

*who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, 39 the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, 40 who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.*

1) It is all about externals

*who desire to go around in long robes,*

- Long robes
- Large tassels

**Matthew 23:5** *But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.*

**Note:** In **Numbers 15:37-41**, we read that God commanded the Israelites to make tassels on the garments to remind them that they have a responsibility to God's Word and that they belonged to God. However, over the years, the tassels have changed into something for the "elites" of the Jewish religion. It was made for attention. Jesus condemned them for this.

2) Love the attention given them

*love greetings in the marketplaces,*

- What kind of greetings?

**Matthew 23:7** *greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'*

- Rabbi means Teacher (or rather Doctor)
  - They loved to have titles with their names
  - Talmud is full of titles for Rabbis—great one, father, most holy, etc

3) They have no humility

**39** *the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts,*

- They want to be elevated—best seats

**Luke 14:7** So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them.

#### 4) Destroy the weak

**40** who devour widows' houses,

- Widows are to be protected according to OT law

**Exodus 22:22-24** You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. **23** If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; **24** and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

**Malachi 3:5** And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien—because they do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts.

- Devouring widow's houses—means to eat them up
  - Ask money from widows
  - Cheat her from her estate
  - Pretend to manage her estate
  - They would own the house if she had died—regardless if she had children
  - Demanded that widows purchase blessing from God
  - Jews believed that giving alms were a path to salvation

#### 5) False appearances

and for a pretense make long prayers.

- Prayer is a sham, mockery
- Use many words (exactly like Jesus condemned in **Matthew 6**)

*These will receive greater condemnation.”*

**Hebrews 10:26-31** For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, **27** but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. **28** Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. **29** Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? **30** For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” **31** It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

#### **Victims of False Religion**

**Note:** The following passage is often used as a noble gesture for tithing: Giving everything you have...even if you are hurting for money...to the Lord, and He will bless you. The problem is that

this is not what Jesus said. He does not tell the disciples to do what this woman did. There is nothing in what Jesus said that she is in the kingdom or that she had the purest motives. This is not a giving lesson, but a judgment context. This passage is sandwiched between the woe to the scribes / Pharisees and the judgment of the temple in **chapter 13**. This is all about judgment against the system of works righteousness and its victims.

*41 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.*

- Treasury—in Women's Court
  - 13 trumpet shaped boxes (shaped like shofar)
  - Each box had different purpose for giving
  - 9 mandatory giving
  - 4 voluntary giving
  - People gave money with assumption that God would bless them

*42 Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.*

- Mites
  - Smallest coin used by the Jews (much like our penny)
  - 1/64<sup>th</sup> the value of a denarius
- Poor widow—very poor
- Poor because of the system in **verse 40**

*43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;*

*44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."*

- Jesus points out the widow to the disciples
- What Jesus says is actually a critique to the false religion of the Jews
- Because of the system, the woman gave all she had so she could receive blessings from God
- They abuse the widows in the name of God