

## The Hypocrisy of Religion, Part Four

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In Matthew 23:13. Jesus pronounces dogmatic judgment against those who in the hypocrisy of religion and religious works. They were guilty of shutting up heaven against men.

Mt 23:13-14, "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.**" NKJV

This means simply that by their religious leadership, they robbed others of the forgiveness of sins by creating another way to God through religion rather than faith. In doing so they caused others to miss the one and only way to God, the forgiveness of their sins and absolute assurance they would enter into heaven one day. Jesus put it very simply when He said that these religious leaders were BLIND LEADERS of blind followers (Matt. 23:16-22). Followers who through blind allegiance to these leaders, tragically fell into the pit of eternal judgment together with their leaders.

Mt 15:14, "Let them alone. **They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.**" NKJV

In Verse 14, Jesus then attacked the hypocrites who take unfair advantage of widows and the elderly folk.

Mt 23:14, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation." NKJV

Since I am in the category of elder life myself, and as a Pastor I am personally aware of those who deceive and mislead others. Often they do so when the person has lost a loved one and or has lost their health, and perhaps some of their mental capacity, leading them to financial ruin. In the years past, I knew of a pastor, who because he had an older person in his congregation who had been blessed with plenty of money, he called in that home with some regularity. He did so to mislead that person, talking them into placing large sums of their money into his account for his old age. As a Pastor myself I disciplined myself to avoid folk in the congregation who had great wealth and they were always wanting to give me

some of their money. Before God I did not want to be caught up in that wicked temptation. We read all the time of the scams that are played on older folk who have lost a loved one, who are so susceptible to being easily deceived and robbed of their own means.

Then Jesus went on to rebuke those who, by long lengthy and beautiful prayers and other religious works done before men, sought to deceive others into thinking they were something before the Lord that they were not. Jesus said they will receive the greater condemnation in the judgment yet to come. People will seek to deceive by swearing by the Bible, by God, and Heaven itself to convince others to think more highly of them than what men should. Jesus said they strain at the gnat and end up swallowing a camel. God help us to be humbly honest with humble and contrite hearts and spirits before both men and God.