

The Kingdom of Heaven Shutting Up Heaven Matthew 23.1-33, cf. 13

Who is Jesus talking to in this chapter? He is speaking to the Pharisees, the most religious people of His day. They claimed to have the key to Heaven, but they shut up Heaven against men.

*Matthew 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men:** for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

When we think about and read about the Gates of Heaven we think about those glorious, shimmering Pearly gates, each composed of an immense and incredible Pearl. Twelve glorious gates each with its own unimaginable Pearl.

Christian, Born-Again child of God do you dream of entering through that glorious gate, walking past that glorious pearly gate to enter that New Jerusalem we call heaven.

But according to our text today those Glorious Pearly Gates have become the cold Iron Gates of denied access. Heaven is Shut Up against men.

Does it seem as though heaven is open or shut up to the people of our world in our day? Where are the multitudes of sinners coming in repentance reaching toward the great love promise of God, that promise of the open gates of heaven.

Why is Heaven Shut Up? What could possibly close those Glorious Gates of Grace for the souls of mankind?

A. The Shackled Gates Of Heaven – What are the things that shut up or seal the Iron Gates of Heaven?

Notice the transgressions of these religious leaders and those who follow them.

1. Insinuations (HYPOCRISY) (vs 3) – All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: *for they say, and do not.*

By failing to do what you know you should do.
(James 4:17)

James 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

By doing what you know you should not do.

Teaching one thing and doing another.

Your sinful habits and ways stand in the way of others.

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A. The Shackled Gates of Heaven

2. Indifference (primarily to the burdens of others) (vs 4, 13) - For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Many are not interested in the burdens of others.

*Matthew 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: *for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.**

They would literally pull those ready to walk into the very gates of salvation back from an entrance into God's grace.

Think of that, those standing on the precipice of entering through the door of eternal salvation, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, these religious leaders would pull away from that glorious gate.

There is no indifference like the religious indifference toward the eternal souls of mankind.

3. Infractions (vs 23) - Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

- Robbing Widows of their homes (vs 14) – Give your house to the Lord's Ministry.

- Religious, unsaved proselytes (vs 15) - Religion over salvation
- Religious ceremonies over a Spiritual Walk with God (vs 16-22; cf. 16, 19)
- Giving, unjust tithes (vs 23)

There were many religious evil's committed by the religious leaders of Jesus' day in the name of manmade religion; just as there are today.

4. Inconsistency (Inconsistent living) (vs 24-28)

Matthew 23:24 *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

Straining at a gnat, swallowing a camel.

Matthew 23:25-28 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. ²⁶ Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

5. Insincerity (false profession) (vs 33)

Matthew 23:33 *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

Jesus said, "You generation of vipers."

They were religious, but lost.

Jesus said, "How can you escape the damnation of Hell?"

If a person continues this way, he must perish. There is no escape without repentance.

False professors of religion "Shut Up Heaven"

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A. The Shackled Gates of Heaven

1. Insinuations – False Promises
2. Indifference
3. Infractions

B. The Silver Key Of Humble Service (vs 11-12)

What does it take to unlock the glorious, eternal, pearly gates of Heaven?

Matthew 23:11-12 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.
¹² And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Jam 5.16

When we think of humble service for a Born-Again Child of God we are talking about surrendering to our Lord Jesus Christ in total surrender.

Mark 8:34-38 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, **Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.** ³⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. ³⁶ For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? ³⁷ Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

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B. The Silver Key Of Humble Service

What are the marks of those who have truly surrendered to our Lord Jesus Christ?

1. Power In Prayer

James 5:16-18 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.** ¹⁷ Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Do you have power in prayer or are the Gates of Heaven shackled against you?

Those who have powerful prayers are,

- Effectual fervent in prayer – They are laboring deeply in prayer
- Righteous before their prayers – They are righteous people

Far too many people, even Christians think that sinfulness has no impact on their relationship with God. Righteousness matters.

Isaiah 59:1-2 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

God's people ought to know power in their prayers. They ought to pray and get answers to their prayers.

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1. Power In Prayer

Acts 1.8

Answered prayer reveals that your access to God's throne in heaven is open rather than shut up.

2. Persuasive Proclamation

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Mark 1:17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

1 John 4.7

Does your witness have soul saving power with mankind are the gates of heaven shackled against you?

3. Purposeful Passion – This is to fulfill the two greatest commandments that we just recently studied.

*Matthew 22:34-40 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. ³⁵ Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, ³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the law? ³⁷ Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.** ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.*

³⁹ *And the second is like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.***
⁴⁰ ***On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.***

Remember the warning given to Born-Again Christians in the Word of God,

*1 John 4:7-12 Beloved, **let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is **born of God, and knoweth God.*****

⁸ ***He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*** ⁹ *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* ¹⁰ *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* ¹¹ *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* ¹² *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

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1. Power In Prayer
2. Persuasive Proclamation
3. Purposeful Passion

*1 John 4:20 If a man say, **I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar:** for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

When I preach this morning about Christians having a Purposeful Passion I am talking about us Loving Our Fellow Man, Loving All People, as Our Lord Jesus Christ and Our God Loves Them.

How can you say you love your brother if you are content to watch them fall off into a Lake of Fire and Brimstone for all eternity without so much as a Word of Witness?

Are we like the religious leaders of our Lord's day literally plucking people off the threshold of salvation by our religious actions and decisions?

Would we take the open Pearly Gates of Heaven and bar them up with the cold iron bars of Human will and religion?

Psalm 51.1

Christian are you contributing to **“Shutting Up Heaven?”**

4. **Powerful Presence** – As Born again Christians we love to think of ourselves as Walking With God. But listen to what God says it takes to “Abide in God’s Tabernacle!”

Psalm 15:1-5 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

² He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

³ He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

⁴ In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD.

He that sweareth to his own hurt, and

changeth not.

⁵ He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

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For God’s People – Have you been a part of Shutting Up Heaven to mankind?

Repent of your religious hardness and turn back to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ and throw open those cold iron gates that would turn many away from the eternal glory and grace of God.

For the Lost - Perhaps there are those here today who have stood on the Threshold of Eternity. You almost walk through the door of the Lord Jesus Christ and something or someone convinced you to step back and not to enter in through the Grace of God into the glorious eternity of God.

Perhaps it was,

- The Devil and his lies
- Your worldly circumstances and the hardness of life
- Was some religious fanatic that Shut Up Heaven to you.

God’s grace and the eternal glory of heaven are far to precious for you to pass up. You too can be saved today if you will call out to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

CrossRoads Baptist, June 7, 2020

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