

Question About What Jesus Meant in Matthew 23:13

By Pastor Ed Anderson

What does the Lord Jesus mean by Mathematics 23:13?

Answer:

Matthew 23:13 (not “Mathematics 23:13”) is a powerful rebuke from Jesus, found in what is often called “**The Seven Woes**” chapter — where Jesus directly confronts the religious leaders of His day.

Verse (KJV):

“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.”
— *Matthew 23:13*

Meaning Explained:

This is a **spiritual indictment** — Jesus is exposing how the religious leaders were not only rejecting God’s truth themselves but **blocking others** from receiving it.

1. “Woe unto you”

This is not merely a statement of pity — it is a **pronouncement of divine sorrow and judgment**. The Greek word *ouai* carries the weight of **grief and warning**. It is used by prophets to signal coming **judgment or disaster**.

2. “You shut up the kingdom of heaven”

Instead of opening the way to God, the Pharisees were **closing the door**. How?

- By **replacing God’s Word with human traditions** (see Mark 7:13)
- By **adding heavy religious burdens** (Matthew 23:4)
- By **judging people unfairly**, driving them away from grace
- By **rejecting the Messiah**, the only true Way into the kingdom (John 14:6)

They were supposed to be **guides**, like spiritual doormen — but they became **gatekeepers**, locking people out.

3. “You don’t go in yourselves”

They **refused to repent** and **reject their own Messiah** — thus **cutting themselves off from the kingdom**. Their outward religion was a mask, but inwardly they were far from God (see Matthew 15:8).

4. “Neither suffer [allow] others to enter”

Even when others were **drawn to Jesus** or the truth, the Pharisees discouraged, threatened, or excommunicated them:

- See John 9 — the man born blind was thrown out of the synagogue after believing in Jesus.
- Matthew 12:14 — they plotted to kill Jesus after He healed on the Sabbath.
- Luke 11:52 adds: “You have taken away the key of knowledge...”

They were **spiritual blockers**, not spiritual shepherds.

Spiritual Application Today:

- This is a warning to **any religious leader**, teacher, or even church culture that **hinders others from finding Christ**.
- When churches prioritize **man-made rules, image, tradition, or control** over the simple gospel of Jesus, they can still “shut the door” to seekers.
- The verse reminds us that **salvation is through Jesus alone**, and we are to be **open doors**, not locked gates.

Final Reflection:

Jesus is the **Door (Dalet)** — and all who enter through Him find life (John 10:9). But those who block the way, whether through pride, legalism, or deception, face a sobering “woe.” Let us lead people **into the kingdom**, not away from it.