**TOP ENEMY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD NEXT TO MONEY:**

**Text: Matthew 23:13-16**

* Mat 23:13 "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.
* Mat 23:14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.
* Mat 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.
* Mat 23:16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged [to perform it].'

**INTRO:**

* What do you think is the kingdom’s top enemy next to money?
* This kingdom enemy is the top reason for war and chaos.
* Whether we are aware or not, all of us are looking for something even if we cannot say what it is.
* We are looking for a kingdom and only by finding it we can experience satisfaction.
* Most of us haven’t found what we’ve been looking for because of this enemy.

**AIM:**

* FOR US TO KNOW THE KINGDOM’S TOP ENEMY NEXT TO MONEY
* FOR US TO BE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD NOT RELIGIOUS

**I. CONTRAST BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

* Religion preoccupies man until he finds the kingdom
* Religion is what man does until he finds the kingdom
* Religions prepares man to leave the earth; Kingdom empowers man to dominate earth
* Religion focuses on Heaven; the Kingdom focuses on earth.
* Religion is reaching up to God; the Kingdom is God coming down to man.
* Religion wants to escape earth; the Kingdom impacts, influences, and changes the earth.
* Religions seeks to take earth to heaven; the Kingdom seeks to bring heaven to earth.
* Rev 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

**II. RELIGION DEFINED**

* The adherence to a set of beliefs that regulate the moral, social, and ritualistic behaviour of an individual.
* This definition would include the so-called atheist, secularist, communist, socialist, humanist or agnostic, for they all adhere to a belief system of some kind.
* Every major problem in history can be traced to some religious foundation.
* The 911 tragedy is related to religion
* The London bombing is related to religion.
* John 16:1"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.
* John 16:2 "They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.
* The very things that by its nature is supposed to provide hope and faith for life, has itself created more problems throughout history than it has solved.
* Jesus was killed in the name of religion.
* John 12:10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also,
* John 12:11 because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.
* Religion is the result of an inherent hunger in the human spirit that man cannot define yet must seek to satisfy.
* This undefinable hunger, arising from a vacuum created by the loss of something man used to possess, drives him to pursue answers beyond his own realm.
* Religions attracts because they promise their adherents power to control the circumstances of their daily lives.

**III. ALL RELIGIONS ARE THE SAME**

* They all attempt to answer the questions of power and meaning.
* They all promise power to control life and circumstances and to explain life and death.
* They all claim to have the truth.
* They all claim superiority over each other.
* They all demand adherence to their particular belief system while ignoring the others.
* John 18:31 Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,"
* 2Ti 3:5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!
* They are all motivated by contention and usually thrive in an isolated culture that excludes other segments of humanity.
* In fact, all religions seem to glory in the spirit of segregation and separatism.
* Instead of achieving unity, religion is the great divider of mankind.

**IV. RELIGION HINDERS US FROM SEEKING THE KINGDOM**

* "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
* These are the teachers of the law, teachers of religion.
* They should be the ones leading people to God’s kingdom, instead they teach religion so people become religious but not righteous.
* For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men;
* They are false teachers/prophets/pastors.
* Mat 15:8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honour Me with [their] lips, But their heart is far from Me.
* Mat 15:9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching [as] doctrines the commandments of men.
* Traditions are being preached instead of God’s Word.
* They would rather die without being saved as long as they can keep their religion.
* Devotions and even worshiping idols are promoted in religions.
* Lots of studies in Theology, Mariology, Catechism, and others but none on the Kingdom of God.
* For you neither go in [yourselves],
* They stick on their religion or beliefs denying the kingdom of God.
* The reason they reject Jesus as the Messiah was religion. His teachings were contrary to their religion.
* Psalm 78:60 So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, The tent He had placed among men,
* Psalm 78:68 But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved.
* Psalm 78:69 And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has established forever.
* Psalm 78:70 He also chose David His servant, And took him from the sheepfolds;
* Religion could be there gods.
* Nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.
* Paul persecuted the believers because of his zeal to his religion.
* 2Sa 6:20 Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!“
* 2Sa 6:21 So David said to Michal, "[It was] before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over
* Israel. Therefore I will play [music] before the LORD.
* 2Sa 6:22 "And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honour."
* 2Sa 6:23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.
* They travel land and sea to win one proselyte and when he is won,
* You make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.
* You blind guides-v 16
* Mat 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.“
* Mat 6:22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.
* Mat 6:23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great [is] that
* darkness!

**V. THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

* The governing influence of a king over his territory,
* impacting it with his personal will, purpose and intent,
* producing a culture, values, morals, and lifestyle that reflects the king’s desires and nature for his citizens.
* It is the government of God or His administration in our lives.
* The more we stick to the kingdom the more we become like Christ
* Rom 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

**CHALLENGE:**

* Who is regulating your life, your religious beliefs of God Himself?
* Are you religious or righteous (right standing with God)?
* Are you reflecting the King in your life?

**CONCLUSION:**

* **Mat 23:13 "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.**
* **Jam 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this:**
* **to visit orphans and widows in their trouble,**
* **[and] to keep oneself unspotted from the world.**