

Luke 11:37-54 Woeful Religion

Jesus denounces religion that rejects God's revelation.

1) Woeful religion rejects God's revelation of heart sin (11:37-40).

- a) Pharisees' emphasis on man-made, external ritual (outside of the cup and dish) led to neglect of the heart (inside of the cup and dish), which was full of "greed and wickedness."
- b) The Creator/Potter requires both outside and inside cleansed.
- c) Application:
 - i) Pelagianism teaches that man is basically good in his present condition, he just needs good examples, a good environment, and some encouragement, and he can please God. It is a superficial view of the human condition that rejects what God has revealed about human sinfulness. Search your heart in the light of God's law.
 - ii) Every human needs a new heart (Ezek. 36:26), a new birth (John 3:3), which we receive in the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31ff.). This new heart becomes a tablet for the inscription of God's law. Then obedience comes from the inside and moves outwardly.

2) Woeful religion rejects God's revelation of love for neighbor (11:41-42, 45-46).

- a) "Alms" or "acts of mercy" are to be given from within—true charity from within is clean
- b) God's laws are not prohibitive of neighbor love. The OT law of tithing was an expression of love for God and neighbor.
- c) Natural man's religious rituals (adding to God's requirement of tithing) can distract from justice or neighbor love (v. 42).
- d) Natural man's religious stipulations hinder peoples' walk with God (v. 46).
 - i) "Burdens hard to bear"—Pharisaic/Scribal traditions
 - ii) "You yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers"
 - (1) They don't lift a finger to help people?
 - (2) They find loopholes to avoid keeping their own laws?
 - (3) Both?
- e) Application: "True religion" (even God's tithe, v. 42b) enables us to serve our neighbors. Is your "religion" keeping you too occupied to serve those that God has providentially brought into your life?

3) Woeful religion rejects God's revelation of love for God (11:42, 43).

- a) Natural man's religious rituals can distract from love for God (v. 42).
- b) Natural man's religion promotes self instead of God (v. 43).
- c) Application: Are you loving God? Is your religious practice empty formalism or is it a genuine expression of love and gratitude? Do you crave recognition from men above the glory of God?

4) Woeful religion rejects God's revelation through His Prophets and Apostles (11:47-49).

- a) Prophet Slayers and Sons—fathers kill them, sons bury them (irony: tombs meant to honor the prophets, simply complete what the murderers of the prophets did)
- b) Because they, like their fathers, do not listen to the prophets, they are no different from their fathers.
- c) They will prove it in their rejection of Christ's Prophets and Apostles.
 - i) "The Wisdom of God" (v. 49) is Christ (cf. 7:35).
 - ii) Future tense ("will send") indicates that Jesus is speaking of His Apostles and the prophets of the apostolic era.
 - iii) "some of whom they will kill and persecute" (read Acts)
- d) Application: Are you listening to the Word of God? Those who are committed to natural man's religion will not be able to submit to Scripture.

5) Woeful religion rejects God's revelation in His Son, Jesus (11:52-54).

- a) "Key of knowledge" is Jesus, as the One who reveals God and His kingdom.

- b) Natural man's religion is incompatible with faith in Christ.
 - i) "You did not enter yourselves"—rejects Christ
 - ii) "You hindered those who were entering"—tries to deter people from Christ
- c) Hendrickson's translation of vv. 53-54: "When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be **violently enraged** against Him, and to **ply Him with questions, plotting**, as if in **ambush, to catch Him** with respect to something that might fall from His lips."
- d) Application: Are you humbly learning from Christ? Are you trusting in Him alone for salvation? Are you causing others to stumble because you are promoting human traditions instead of the gospel of Christ?

6) Woeful religion results in judgment (11:50-51).

- a) Abel in Genesis to Zechariah in 2 Chronicles (first and last books in Hebrew OT order of books). All the martyr-prophets bear witness to the true religion in Christ.
- b) To reject this for the religion of the natural man is heinous.
- c) This was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. But the warning persists for you today.
- d) Application: Repent of all Christless religion. Live in the liberty of the gospel and the law of Christ.

7) Woeful religion deceives others, hindering them from entering the Kingdom of God (11:44, 52).

- a) Pharisees, who thought they were pure because of their meticulous ritual observance, were like walking corpses that defiled those who followed their example and teaching.
- b) "You hindered those who were entering"
- c) Application: Be careful not to commend the religion of the natural man, no matter what the external appearance may suggest.

Doxology:

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.—Jude 24-25