

LUKE Lesson 31

Religious Men Oppressing and Persecuting God's people (Luke 11:37-54)

4 January 2019

This passage of Luke reveals to us what happens when men place more emphasis on a system of religion than they do on the word of God. Observe as Jesus deals with pious men who want to discredit Him. These men still carry on their destructive work today. Take heed and take precautions.

37-38 Jesus accepted an invitation to eat with a Pharisee (a Hebrew religious leader). The Pharisee was shocked when Jesus didn't follow their religious practice of hand-washing before dinner. Since they didn't use silverware in those days, it was polite to wash your hands before dipping into the food which everyone would be sharing. The pharisees had taken a simple act of propriety (decency) and made it a matter of ceremony, incorporating it into their religion. Jesus knew this and took this opportunity to reprove them for it.

This reveals the common problem of religious people: they put too much emphasis on the "mote" (tiny splinter) in their brother's eye and ignore the "beam" that's in their own eye (Luke 6:41); they strain at a gnat, but swallow a camel (Mt 23:24). The Pharisee was a man who was always found nitpicking other peoples' supposed faults, but who refused to take care of his own sin problems.

39-40 Jesus knew the man's thoughts. He reproved him for making an outward religious show; a disguise of righteousness, while ignoring the filthiness that was inside him. God made your inside and your outside; He expects us to keep both clean.

Vs 41 Rather than putting on a phony show of piety, give alms. The Pharisees were covetous (Luke 16:14) and needed to be confronted about it often. They thought their outward show of religion would result in blessings from God (like riches and other material things). They were wrong; God looks at the heart.

Vs 42 You ought to tithe, but if that's all you do, you haven't done enough. If you're only performing outward religious duties for others to see, you're off track. You need a love of God that moves you to obey Him. He commanded you to love others and serve them (Jn 13:34-35, 15:12, Ro 12:10, Gal 5:13).

Vs 43 The Pharisees wanted recognition and attention. This is a sin caused by the pride of life (1 Jn 2:16, Gen 3:5).

Vs 44 Graveyards are usually quite beautiful on the surface. But you don't want to see what's underneath.

Vs 45 The lawyers realized that Jesus was also referring to them. "If the shoe fits, wear it."

Vs 46 The sin of hypocrisy. These lawyers loved to tell people what to do, but they didn't practice what they preached. They also made up new laws (heavy burdens) requiring people to do things that God didn't command.

Vs 47 Another act of hypocrisy: building monuments to the prophets when you're doing the same things as the men who killed them. The people who hang a crucifix around their neck are just like the men who wanted Jesus to die; self-righteous adherents to a dead religion.

48-49 Jesus prophesied that the religious leaders of Israel would persecute and kill God's prophets and apostles. That's exactly what happened. A cross-reference for this prophecy is in Revelation 18:25 and 17:6, but most likely is limited to saints in the Tribulation period. In that case, the persecutor is Rome rather than Jerusalem. The Romans and the Jews both had their part in the crucifixion of Christ. Both are guilty of the deaths of the Old Testament and New Testament saints.

50-51 Jesus tells the generation of men who would put Him to death at Calvary that they would pay for the deaths of all the prophets who were killed by unbelieving Jews throughout the ages; from **Abel** (the first to die; Gen 4:8) until **Zacharias** (the last to die in the Jewish Old Testament; 2 Chron 24:21).

Note: the Jewish Scriptures contain the same books as the Christian Old Testament, but in a different order. Their last book is Second Chronicles.

Note: Jesus' statement here establishes the Old Testament Canon of scripture. Any books added after Second Chronicles cannot be accepted as inspired scripture (i.e. all the books of the Apocrypha).

Abel...he being dead yet speaketh (Heb 11:4). God still hears the testimony of his martyr.

The blood of Jesus Christ "**speaketh better things than that of Abel**" (Heb 12:24). Through His blood we can be saved. His blood still speaks today! His sacrifice is still valid today for all who will believe.

Vs 52 These religious lawyers had "**taken away the key of knowledge**" and prevented others from entering into a relationship with the Lord. Salvation requires a simple childlike faith; getting to know God through His word. Religious men try to complicate it so that no one can be saved.

53-54 Religious people hate men and women who speak the truth. These men tried to urge and provoke Jesus to speak something unwisely or do something sinful so they could accuse Him. If you speak God's truth, expect the same treatment from those who oppose the truth. Don't fall prey to their efforts to stumble you. Moses learned that lesson the hard way (Psalm 106:32-33, Numbers 20:10).

They never could stumble Jesus with all their provocative talk. The only way they could condemn him to be crucified was to lie about him (Matthew 26:60). Stephen also had this testimony (Acts 6:13).

Religious people don't like to be rebuked with the truth, but we are commanded to rebuke false teacher (Titus 1:13). This will often result in attacks against you (verbal or physical), which might cause you to be angry. Anger is not a sin, but it can lead to sin (Eph 4:26), so we need to guard our testimony and do our best to remain blameless (1 Tim 3:2, 10, 2 Pet 3:14, 1 Thess 5:23).
