

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

What's Missing in False Religion, Part 2

Scripture: Luke 11:51-54

Code: 42-167

We are studying the eleventh chapter of the gospel of Luke, and I would invite you to open your Bible to Luke chapter 11. And this is part four in a series called, "Jesus curses hypocrites." And I have to tell you, that as now we progress through the latter half of the gospel of Luke, there is going to be an increase in the level of conflict. There is going to be a growing hostility toward Jesus. There is going to be a greater emphasis on His teaching on judgment, condemnation, all of this, of course, culminating in His death and then His resurrection.

His ministry, for the most part, is behind Him. The gospel has been preached and powerfully affirmed by His miracles. It is now in the last year of His ministry, more than two years of it past. Enough has been said, enough has been seen, enough has been done to convince all but the most blind and the most indifferent. And the tone begins to change. His ministry becomes one of warning, judgment, cursing and conflict that continues to escalate. And at the heart, of course, of the blinding false religion in Israel was the apostate Judaism basically designed and maintained by the scribes and the Pharisees. They were the religious hypocrites who basically led the religious parade in Israel. And so they feel the brunt of Jesus' assault, and at the same time, they have the most to gain through His death. And so we're going to see conflict elevate in the remaining part of Luke's gospel.

At the same time, we're going to see Jesus focus His teaching on His disciples, turning to the ones who are still following, still interested, still believing to prepare them for the ministry which will become theirs when He is gone. As we come back to this text then, in Luke chapter 11, we come back to verses 37 to 54, this prolonged section, and remind ourselves that in verse 37 a Pharisee asks Jesus to have lunch. He went to the Pharisee's house, there were, of course, other Pharisees there as well as lawyers, another name for scribes...some within the Pharisees were the lawyers, the Law experts who basically were the theologians who developed the Pharisaic self-righteous works salvation system. And Jesus confronts these Pharisees and these scribes essentially with a series of curses, one in verse 42, one in verse 43, another in verse 44, another in verse 47...verse 46 then verse 47 and then down in verse 52...six curses, first three against the Pharisees, some of whom were scribes, second three against the scribes, all of whom were also Pharisees. So they all really address both scribes and Pharisees.

The illustrate for us not only the state of apostate Judaism at the time of Jesus, but they illustrate for us the character of false religion. Any false religion and all false religion is hypocrisy, all of it because it purports to know God and does not, it purports to know the truth and preach the truth, it does not. It purports to have righteousness, it does not. It purports to promise heaven, it does not. It is all lies, deception and hypocrisy, whatever form it may come in. And we've been seeing that seeing how we can use this as a sort of standard by which to measure the nature of false religion in general.

Now as we think about that before we get in to our text today, there is a definitive passage of Scripture that I want to point to your attention. It's at the end of 1 John chapter 5 and I think it's one of those sort of benchmark passages, one of those watermark passages that give us a very important, very general oversight, that simplifies how we view the world. This is one of those key world view perspectives. In 1 John chapter 5 verse 19, what you have here is the whole world divided into two categories. That's why I say it's a simplification, very helpful. Verse 19, "We know that we are of God," we being those who have confessed Christ, those who have been born of God. Back to verse 13, "Those who believe in the name of the Son of God and have eternal life. We know that we are of God and the whole world lies...the Greek says...lies in the evil one." Some translations say in the power of the evil one, some say in the lap of the evil one. We are of God, the whole world lies in the evil one. And the difference comes in verse 20, "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding in order that we might know Him who is true and we are in Him who is true in His Son Jesus Christ, this is the true God and eternal life." The reason we are of God is because we know Christ and the rest of the world lies in the lap of the evil one.

Jesus called Satan the ruler of this world. And Paul said he is disguised as an angel of light. He rules by religion. He rules by false religion. He is darkness and deception and nothing else. His kingdom is pervasive, it is dominant, it covers the globe. The whole world has settled in the lap of Satan. There are one billion out of the six billion in this world that are in Islam. By the way, only nine percent of them in the Near East and the Middle East...only nine percent of them. Sixty percent of them are in Asia. There are nearly one billion Hindus worshiping millions of deities. There are three quarter of a billion Buddhists trying to disconnect themselves from reality and create the illusion that they have entered Nirvana, the place of perfect tranquility and ultimate indifference. There are another billion-plus in forms of apostate Christianity. Rob Iverson was telling me, he came back from a trip to Norway that in Norway everybody is Lutheran and three percent go to church. So they would be included in the one-billion plus who are Christians and they go to church to be baptized as infants, confirmed, married and buried. That includes the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, Anglicanism, sacramentalism in different forms, liberalism, cults. You start adding the billions of people up and you understand when it says the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one, that's exactly the way it is. And these systems dominate with power and wealth, not just people power but monetary power. Islam has a choke hold on the whole world because of its possession of oil. The

Roman Catholic Church is the number one land owner in the world, massive wealth...massive. Every year eight billion dollars comes from the United States alone into the Roman Catholic system. Twenty-five hundred officials in the Papal Curia alone have a combined salary of forty-four million dollars. The Pope himself owns a thousand apartments in the city of Rome. Massive people power, massive wealth. There are sixteen million in some form or another in apostate Judaism, conservative Judaism, or liberal Judaism, or orthodox Judaism. But they've rejected the Scripture and their Messiah.

False religion obviously dominates the world, even within what is called Christianity. And when Jesus said, "And few there be that would find the narrow way," that's exactly how it is. And as we learn from this passage, look back at Luke 11, the greatest evil of false religion, the greatest evil of false religion, the greatest evil of the system, the greatest evil of the founders, the greatest evil of the leaders and teachers and purveyors is given in verse 52, middle of the verse, "You did not enter in yourselves, you did not enter into the Kingdom of God and those who were entering in you hindered." People who are in one degree or another trying to find ultimate reality, trying to find heaven, trying to find forgiveness, trying to find God...you hinder. The people who are involved in false religion do not know God, they are not in the Kingdom of God and they can't lead anybody else there, they obstruct people from going in. This is the most serious obstruction, this is the most serious form of terrorism, as we've been pointing out in Jude, in the world, preventing people from the Kingdom of God.

In our text then, our Lord Himself confronts the false teachers. They are, of course, the false teachers in His time and His place. They are the architects and adherence of apostate Judaism. And in one sense this confrontation, which we've been looking at in detail, is...is a bitter judgment. Woe is a word that means curse, or dam, or consign to punishment. It's a very, very bitter judgment. But in another sense, it's a merciful exposure because if by exposing them for what they really are and pronouncing curses upon them, our Lord can awaken them to the reality of their condition, that's a necessity for them to turn and believe the truth. Jesus back in verse 29 said of the Jews of His day, "This generation is a wicked generation." Any student of religion would have looked at that generation and said, "This is the most righteous generation ever perhaps. These are the most fastidious adherence to the Old Testament imaginable. These people have taken religion to its absolute radical extreme. But Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation." In fact, so wicked that verse 51 says, "All the blood from Abel to Zechariah is going to be charged against this generation. In fact, verse 50 says, "All the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world is going to be charged against this generation." The most religious and the most wicked at the same time because the more religious they became without the truth, the more they obstructed the Kingdom of God..the more they represented Satan and the less they represented God, the more they represented lies and the less they represented truth, the more they deceived and the less they illuminated.

And so, Jesus has perfect opportunity when He goes to lunch with this Pharisee to expose them for what they are...hypocrites. And we remember from verses 37 to 44 that He defines false religion as those who are devoted to the superficial, the symbolic, the secondary, the simplistic and their own status. And that was such an important message from verses 37 to 44. And in response to that, one of the lawyers who's there, verse 45, says to Jesus, "Teacher, when You say this You insult us, too." You're insulting us because we're Pharisees, in fact we're the theologians among the Pharisees, we're the ones who developed the system. They were there for the most proud of all Pharisees and they were there for the most offended by what Jesus said. And in an immediate response He just curses them. But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well." And He turned on them because they were to be cursed.

Now as these curses unfold, you will remember, I told you there are three things that false religion lacks, and Jesus exposes them in these curses. Number one, the first void in false religion is a lack of spiritual power. Verse 46, "Woe to you lawyers as well for you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers." You put on people burdens that they can't bear. In other words, you give them righteous standard, laws, regulations, all of this which they cannot carry. They had developed a system as all religions do of complex demanding and impossible laws and rules. And there was no power because there was no change in the heart. There was no Holy Spirit. God wasn't involved. And the leopard can't change his spots, and the Ethiopian can't change his skin and a man on his own energy and by his all own resolutions cannot change his heart. And so what you had was a religion typical of all religions, full of all kinds of standards of what is right and what is wrong and what is good and what is bad and a whole bunch of frustrated followers who can't keep the rules and neither can the leaders. So they don't help anybody keep the rules because they themselves can't keep them. They can't be righteous, positive. They can't kill sin, negative. That's the problem with false religion. It cannot be righteous because the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. And it can't kill sin, it can't mortify sin, so all that religion is absolutely useless and it just creates a complex system that frustrates people and when you get behind the surface of it you're going to find sin all over the place, as we've been saying. We're not at all surprised by endless scandals found not only in the Roman Catholic Church but in every other false religious system because false religion has no power, no ability to restrain the flesh, no ability to change anybody's heart. The leaders then become master hypocrites, and the better your hypocrisy, the more likely you are to be a leader in the system. If you can make people think you're holy, if you can make people think you're righteous and virtuous and somehow you're above the hoi-polloi, you're just the most adept hypocrite. You may be from a human standpoint a nice person, a compassionate person, a good person, but God knows you're not holy, God knows you're not righteous, we know you're not righteous because that's impossible apart from the work of the Spirit of God in regeneration. And so the people that rise to the top of these systems are just the most articulate, or the most adept and the most crafty of the hypocrites, or the most superficially acceptable people in terms of behavior.

The master hypocrites then become the models for the system. When Jesus cursed the Pharisees and the scribes in Matthew chapter 23, He called them hypocrites seven times...seven times. He was talking to the same people on the same occasion. And then He called them blind and then He called them fools and then He called them snakes because they had a venomous bite that poisoned the people that came in contact with them. False religion cannot restrain the flesh, it cannot produce anything that is truly pleasing to God. It cannot overcome sin and therefore it is useless. It obstructs the Kingdom, it keeps people out, lack of spiritual power.

Secondly, we said last time the lack of spiritual life that is the second void. And in verses 47 to 51 in this little bit longer section here, and I won't go back to all of it in detail, we'll pick it up kind of where we left off, He says, "Woe to you, you build the tombs of the prophets and it was your fathers who killed them, consequently you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers because it was they who killed them and you build their tombs. For this reason also the wisdom of God said I will send to them prophets and apostles and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute." Just to give you a summary statement, they put on a campaign to embellish the tombs of the prophets. And they were going around either building tombs or embellishing these tombs of the prophets and they did it for a very specific reason. They wanted to convince people that they were better than their fathers, better than their ancestors who had killed the prophets. If you read the Old Testament and the history of the prophets, it was a pretty touch thing to be a prophet in Israel. Not only would you likely be persecuted, but it is very possible that you might be executed. And they killed the prophets. This generation of Jews having the illusion or create the illusion that they were better than their ancestors wants to convey somehow that they shouldn't bear this national guilt of having killed the prophets and persecuted the prophets, that they wanted to distance themselves from that kind of conduct toward the prophets and so they went around building monuments to the prophets, as if to say we're far better than our fathers. And as they actually came out and said if we had been alive when our fathers were alive, when the prophets came, we would never have treated the prophets the way our fathers did. They wanted to portray themselves as better. And Jesus said that's not true. You're no different than your fathers who killed the prophets and ironically you building their tombs is simply you doing what actually is no different than what your fathers did. You are no less guilty than they, you're just reiterating the very things that they did. They rejected the Word of God, they rejected the prophet of God, they rejected the message of God and they killed the prophet and now you think by embellishing tombs you're portraying yourself as something better. The truth of the matter is, the irony is your building those tombs is linking you with what they did because your heart is the same. Truth? They were plotting to kill Him the greatest of all prophets...the greatest of all prophets.

Jesus turns this whole thing upside down. It doesn't distance you, it links you to them. You're not better than your apostate ancestors, you're just as bad, if not worse. And your association with those tombs doesn't demonstrate that you're better, it just reminds everybody that you're no different...you're no different. In fact, verse 49, the proof will be that God in His wisdom says I'll send to them prophets and apostles, some of them they will kill and some they will persecute. And that's what they did, right? They killed...well they killed John the Baptist, they killed Jesus, they killed James, they killed Stephen and it went from there. You read the early chapters of the book of Acts, they threw Peter in prison. You get into the eighth chapter of the book of Acts and the hostility of the Jews toward the preachers of the gospel is very great. Acts 8, Saul was in hardy agreement in putting him to death, that is Stephen, preacher. And on that day a great persecution rose against the church in Jerusalem. And so the prophecy was, the truth of your character is going to come out in what you're going to do to the apostles and the prophets, to the messengers of the gospel and you will kill some and you will persecute others. And that is exactly what they did.

False religion, as we noted last time, is always the persecutor of the truth because false religion is the system of Satan and, of course, Satan wants to destroy the truth. An ungodly society, you take the American society, don't be under any illusion that America is a Christian nation. In an ungodly culture like this, they'll tolerate a kind of Christianity that's less than the real thing, they'll tolerate a sort of fraud, a sort of a fake, a forgery. But an ungodly society like ours will always accept false religion before it will accept the truth. They'll always be far more tolerant of false religion, so don't be surprised if you find it a little hard to believe in the future how much freedom false religion has as opposed to the truth. And that's because Satan propagates false religion and does everything he can to destroy the truth. People in false religion are blind and dead. Jude calls them doubly dead. They have no power because they have no life. And Jesus is saying to these...these lawyers and these Pharisees, you are no different than your fathers. You have no capacity to understand the truth, to know the truth. You can't know the messenger of God, you can't know the Messiah of God because you are so blind and so doubly dead in your sins, you are no different, you have no more life than your fathers had.

Then comes a really remarkable statement where we pick up the text. "In order that the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation." That is just a shocking statement. Jesus says not only are you not better, you are in fact worse. You're not better, you're worse. And you might ask the question...What does He mean the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world is going to be charged against this generation? Why is it that they have to pay a price for all the persecutions and all the executions of the people of the past? Why?

Well the answer is pretty simple. Because the message of those prophets even though they killed the prophets has been around for years, for centuries and they have had the benefit of those messages. They have had the holy Scripture. They have read it every single week, time and again in the synagogue and gone over it and over it and over it. And while they would embellish a tomb to honor a prophet, they still do not hear what the prophets said. And they reject the greatest message of the prophets, the message of the coming Messiah. And so, in a sense they are more guilty than any generation before them because they have had the most opportunity for the longest period of time and the most accumulated revelation. And add to that, they had John the Baptist and they had Jesus and they had the Apostles and they had the seventy. And so He says, "You know, it's all going to fall on your heads because you've had the most exposure to the truth. And I am charging this generation right here with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world. You are...here's the bottom line...you are as guilty as your fathers who killed them because you no more accept their message than their fathers did. And your fathers may have only heard it briefly, you've had it for years and for centuries and you've studied it and poured over it and supposedly interpreted it, etc., etc., etc, so you have systematically and for the longest period of time ignored and rejected the accumulated message, the constant relentless message of the very Scripture to which you have given your attention."

How can it be that one generation suffers the wrath of God for the sins of earlier ones? Somebody might say, how can God's accumulated wrath fall on one generation? It does. The best illustration of that I know is the Flood. Sinners had lived and died before the Flood but finally God was full up to here and would no longer strive with man and He obliterated the whole of the world, except for eight people. And the generation alive at the time of Noah felt the wrath of God for all the accumulation of evil for all the generations leading up to that point.

The same is going to happen in the future when the great holocausts at the time of the Tribulation and you read the book of Revelation and everything begins to disintegrate in the universe and all hell breaks loose on earth and demons run rampant and the Holy Spirit doesn't restrain evil and Antichrist rises and slaughter and persecution goes on and natural phenomena begins to disintegrate life as we know it in the world and the whole of the world begins to collapse. It will all fall down on the heads of those people living at that time, but it will be the accumulated wrath of God coming at the very end of time to people who have had the opportunity to receive the truth, the accumulated truth and the message throughout all of history.

And He's saying that here. This is the end, you're it. The patience of God is over. You will be the generation on whom the judgment falls. You are engaged in the very same sins as your fathers and you've had the long opportunity to get it right and to obey. You are engaged against the very God you purport to love and worship and you're plotting to kill Him as He stands right here in your presence. God's accumulated vengeance, God's accumulated judgment falls when God determines it's going to fall. You have the Old Testament, you've had John the Baptist, you've had Me, you've

had the Twelve, you've had the seventy. This is it.

Now keep in mind, the judgment He's talking about is a temporal judgment, it's a physical judgment. It's essentially death to people and death to the nation as an entity. People who lived and died before that without the truth went to hell. They're already suffering outside the presence of God. This generation will die in a holocaust in a judgment that comes very soon after this, and they will die and go to the same place where all the sinners before them, all the religious sinners before and after them go. So He's only talking about a temporal judgment. All the generations before that died in some form of apostate Judaism are already out of the presence of God forever. But this generation is going to feel the temporal fury of God, such as has not been felt since the Babylonian captivity. In other words, rejection of the true God, rejection of His Word has reached its climax. Rejection of His Son is the last straw, the one promised in Genesis 3:15 who would come and bruise the serpent's head. And the Jews had it all, according to Romans 9. They had the Law and the promises and the adoption and the covenant. And in the parable of Luke chapter 20, God sent them servants and servants and servants and they killed the servants. And then He sent His Son and they killed the Son. It's every generation that rejects the truth passed down from the prior generation increases its guilt and accumulates wrath against the judgment to come.

So for emphasis, the Lord shatters the lunch crowd, believe me, with a statement showing the extent of their guilt in verse 51. "I'm going to charge you...I'm going to charge you with the blood of all the prophets from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah." From A to Z. "Who perished between the altar and the house of God. Yes I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation." This generation is going to feel the judgment of God for all the accumulated slaughter of the prophets because you have amassed an apostate system that has ignored their message.

What you have here is two Old Testament righteous martyrs. Really in a sense, the first and the last martyr of the Old Testament, the A to Z. The first martyr was Abel. Who killed him? Cain. Cain was engaged in what kind of religion? False religion, works righteousness brought the fruit of the ground when he should have brought the sacrifice that God required. He hated his brother. Why did Cain hate Abel? Because Abel had a right relationship with God. And Satan hates those who do. Abel was the first martyr.

Zechariah is the last one, sort of the A to Z. Many commentators say this is the son of Jehoiada who was stoned to death in the temple court at the order of King Joash. And they stoned this man, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, to death because he had rebuked the government and he had rebuked the people for idolatry and they didn't like it. That's in 2 Chronicles, by the way, chapter 24 verses 20 to 22. So this was a man who spoke for God as a prophet who indicted the people and under the authority of the king they stoned him to death. However, this is not who it is and the reason

we know that is because in Matthew 23:35 which is a comparative text where Jesus says on another occasion essentially the very same thing, Jesus identifies this man, Zechariah, with this identifying note. "From Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berachiah whom you murdered between the temple and the altar." The Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24 is the son of Jehoiada. But in Matthew 23 and obviously in this passage parallel to it, where Jesus refers to Zechariah, we have one that is the son of Berachiah. Also, the Zechariah who is the son of Jehoiada died in 800 B.C....800 B.C. That is by no means the last Old Testament martyr. So it doesn't fit the parallel with Abel because he just said in verse 50, "The blood of all the prophets." And then verse 51, "From Abel...which is the starting point...to Zechariah," which would be the ending point. So it has to be a Zechariah at the end. So the solution is simple, there is a Zechariah at the end, Zechariah the prophet who was the son of Berachiah. If you look toward the end of the Old Testament, you see the last two books are Zechariah and Malachi. Zechariah then, son of Berachiah, was martyred some time between 5 A.D. and 570 at the end of the Old Testament era, or near the end. He must have been martyred. We don't have a record of it except right here in Matthew 23. So he had the same name as one martyred three centuries before, but this is Zechariah the son of Berachiah. So you have one at the beginning of the Old Testament, one at the end of the Old Testament era.

By the way, unless you be sort of put off by the idea that it could be a different Zechariah, there are 27 different individuals in the Old Testament named Zechariah. So it's a very common name. And the temple was a common place to murder people. It seems like a strange thing but the mob murdered people on a number of occasions in the temple courtyard so it wasn't at all surprising that the man of God, the prophet Zechariah, was murdered in the temple ground. That seemed to have been a choice place for murdering people.

They tried, you remember, in Acts 21:27 and following to murder Paul in the temple. You remember that? It was sort of a great way for mob rule to take over and be pretty hard to indict any particular person for the crime. But it says he perished between the altar and the house of God. Outside the holy place, the house of God is the holy place and the Holy of holies place. So outside in the courtyard he was killed by the religious Jews. The religious Jews of the time of Zechariah murdered him, just like religious Cain when he brought his own self-styled sacrifice killed his brother. And both Abel was killed because he had a right relationship with God, and Zechariah was killed because he had a right relationship to God and that's always what false religion does if it can.

And then Jesus stuns them. At the end of verse 51 He says, "I tell you, it will all be charged against this generation." You're all going to pay. Back to verse 29, "This generation is a wicked generation." You're going to pay. That's it. There's no more tolerance. It's going to come down on your head.

What was He talking about? Go to chapter 21 of Luke, real quick, chapter 21 verse 20. And here Jesus gets specific. "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand" and they would see that. Remember the year? Seventy A.D., the Romans under the leadership of Titus Vespasian, the Roman general. "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand." God's judgment came through Rome. "Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the midst of the city depart. Let not those in the country enter the city because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Woe to those who are with child, to those who nurse babies in those days, for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to the people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and will be led captive into all the nations and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

And then He goes on to tie that into the future judgment that's yet coming. It didn't have to be that way. It didn't have to be that way. Jesus had told them the truth, called them to salvation, called them to the kingdom. Back in chapter 23 of Matthew, He says, "Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her, how often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were unwilling. So, behold your house is being left to you desolate." It didn't have to be this way, but your unbelief and your resistance and your rebellion makes it so. By the way, that same statement is made at the end of Luke 13, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, your house is left desolate."

So barely a lifetime, a very short lifetime from the murder of Jesus came the days of vengeance. It all started in May of 66. Radical zealots, a party within Judaism who hated the Romans, they were killers and terrorists who went around stabbing Romans. They did deeds of violence and rebellion. They finally broke in open revolt in May of 66. Rome struck back by starting a bloody butchery in Galilee. They swept into Galilee and started massacring the Jews there. This went on for some time and shortly before the full moon in the spring of 70 A.D., the great Roman general Titus marched with an enormous army outside of Jerusalem, something in excess of 80 thousand men. Jerusalem was swarming with people at the time because it was Passover. The Romans moved into their camps outside the city and called for a surrender. They put on a siege. The Jews laughed at the Romans. Siege machines were then brought in. They threw hundred pound stones, massive stones at the city, battering rams smashed at the gates and the walls and eventually the Romans broke through the wall and called again for surrender and the Jews said no. The battle began again and the death toll was absolutely enormous. It's hard to know exactly how many died, there are some estimates as high as a million from in the hundreds of thousands to a million. Tree after tree was cut down to make crosses, ramps, scaling ladders, campfires. The land was completely raped of trees in this tremendous siege. The Romans sealed off the city with a dirt mound all around it and killed

everybody who came out by crucifying them so that they crucified thousands of them. The historians said an unbearable stench from the dead bodies thrown over the wall piled outside and one estimate a hundred thousand dead bodies were pitched over the wall because of their corruption and their stench. Famine resulted. Whole families died daily. Finally in August of 70 A.D. the Temple itself was destroyed. The Roman soldiers erected their banners in the holy place and sacrificed to their idols there. They took about a hundred thousand prisoners. Took out about a hundred thousand corpses. This was divine judgment. One writer said, "That generation that filled up the final measure of iniquity was the one to reap the full consequences of sin." And so Jesus says it's coming. Apostate Judaism at this point, at this level is not only no different than the past, it is worse and you've demonstrated it by the fact that you're plotting to kill Me and you will kill Me and all the preachers and apostles of the gospel. You are headed for judgment. More terrible than anything you've known historically. And, of course, beyond that they would be cast into eternal hell as well.

They were utterly void of spiritual life. They were dead in their trespasses and sins as evidenced by the fact that they could never receive the truth and they bore the guilt of all before them, as well as their own. One final point. They had no power. False religion has no power. It has no power because it has no life. Third thing, it has no life because it is void of spiritual truth...it is void of spiritual truth.

Here is the bottom line, folks. Verse 52, "Woe to you, lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge." That's the bottom line. At the bottom of every false system is the utter absence of knowledge, truth. You have taken away the key of knowledge...the knowledge of truth is in the Scripture. You have taken away the key that unlocks the truth and therefore unlocks the message of salvation and so you don't enter in and those who were entering in you hinder.

What is the key? What is the key that you've taken away? You have taken away the key of knowledge. I'll tell you very simply what the key is and it's got to be twofold. You must rightly divide the Scripture. The key is accurate interpretation under the illuminating direction of whom? Of the Holy Spirit. They are void of the Spirit, like the false teachers in Jude. They have not the Holy Spirit and they had the most perverse approach to interpreting the Word of God. What they did with the Old Testament because their hearts were evil and unchanged and blind and dead and void of the Holy Spirit is they turned the Old Testament into a mish-mash and muddle of riddles, puzzles, allegories, secret meanings, obscure interpretations that did nothing but create fanciful nonsense and support their false system of self-righteous works. They discarded the true key to the knowledge of Scripture and that is an accurate interpretation. And, of course, one could even argue that rejecting Christ is for sure throwing away the key to the Scripture. You remember on the road to Emmaus Jesus walking along with the disciples and He opens the Old Testament and teaches out of it all the things concerning Himself. If you don't accept Christ, you can't unlock the Old Testament.

Jesus earlier in His ministry it said, "Search the Scriptures, they are they which speak of me." If you don't accept Jesus, the Old Testament is absolutely locked up. And so what you have is some kind of book of riddles and allegories and imaginary ideas and fanciful interpretations and utter nonsense. And I have listened extensively to rabbinic interpretations on tape and I've read them of the Old Testament and they are so bizarre as to be beyond comprehension. In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and...what?...and knowledge. Christ is made unto us wisdom and understanding. You start with Christ and that unlocks the Old Testament. And then the Holy Spirit, He illuminates the Old Testament and then a literal historical grammatic interpretation of the Old Testament. Reject Christ, void of the Spirit, and a bizarre and fanciful allegorical mystical interpretation device and the truth is locked up. They couldn't lead anybody else to the truth because they didn't know the truth.

I've said this so many times in dealing with men we've trained to preach. The meaning of the Scripture is the Scripture. That's something to keep in mind. The meaning of the Scripture is the Scripture. If you don't know the meaning of it, you don't have the Scripture. If you have ten people who come along and say, "I think it means this...I think it means this..I think it means that," you may call that Bible study, but that's not Bible study. To study the Bible is to get the true meaning. There's only one true meaning for a given text. If you don't know the true meaning, that's not what God said. That's why interpretation is so important. That's why you work hard to rightly divide the Word of truth because if you don't get it right and then you say this is what God says, God didn't say that and now you're attributing to God something He didn't say. That's why you want to be careful before you teach the Bible. That's why you don't want to have a Bible study that's just a pooling of ignorance. I think this means that, and I think this means...well nobody cares what you think, that's not how you interpret the Bible. It's nice to have some insight and some thoughts about the Bible but you have to understand what it means because what it means is the Word of God. And if you don't know what it means, then you don't have the Word of God. The meaning of the Scripture is the Scripture and if the meaning isn't right, that's not the Scripture. It takes tremendous diligence and effort and you have to see the role of Christ in the middle. He's the real key and then the work of illuminating Holy Spirit as you endeavor to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

So He says you threw the key away and you can't understand it and neither can anybody else. So you didn't enter and those who are entering in you hindered. There you have it, folks, in a nutshell. Here's the problem with false religion, a system with no power, people with no life because there is no truth. And the whole world is engulfed by the billions in systems like this, deception and death and impotence.

Well as usual, the response to the false teachers to the truth is tragic. Verse 53, "And when He left there," boy, you can imagine what was going on when He went out. "The scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and they questioned Him closely on many subjects, plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say." The Greek verb here, "to be very hostile," means to have it in

for someone, to have a severe grudge against someone and very *danos(?)* means terribly, they had it in for him terribly. And they had to find a way because He was so popular to expose Him, so from now on in public they're going to question Him closely on all kinds of subjects to try to catch Him in His words. And if they can catch Him in His words, somehow. Literally the word here "to question Him closely" is *apostomatizo*, it means to attach someone with questions. They,....they set out to attack Him with questions so they could catch Him in something He might say and discredit Him before the people. That was their plot.

By the way, plotting against Him to catch Him in verse 54 is language taken out of a hunt. Plotting against Him is the Greek *enedreuo*, it means to lay in wait, hunting language. It's used in Acts 23:41 where 40 men were lying in wait, crouched hiding to pounce on Paul. And the idea was to hunt Him down like an animal, to stalk Him for the kill. The word catch, *agreuo*, is connected to *nonthereon(???)* which means a wild animal. It's like hunting down a wild animal, stalking Him trying to catch Him in something. They never could so they ended up at His trial lying about Him and then the judgment came. And it always comes, folks, on false religion. It may not always be temporal but it will always be spiritual and eternal. Jude says we have a responsibility, and we're going to study this tonight, powerful message, to rescue people out of false religions. Tonight we're going to find out how. This message will continue tonight. How do we snatch them out of the burning? How do we rescue them without getting dirty ourselves from their filthy pollution? Some of the most graphic language anywhere in the Bible is used in Jude. This is our responsibility to deliver people from these false systems and sometimes it takes as direct affrontal attack as Jesus gave that lunch that day. And they may hate you for it but you've discharged your responsibility.

Father, we do thank You again this morning for the way in which the Word comes clear to our hearts. Hear our cry, Lord, that we would be faithful to apply this, to understand it. Deliver souls, O Lord, from judgment, deliver souls from hell, deliver them from false religion, bring them to the knowledge of truth. Awaken dead hearts. Open blind eyes as only You can. Grant faith and grace and mercy and repentance in Christ's name. Amen.

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