

Luke 11:37-54 – Jesus Confronts Dead Religion

A. Introduction

- Doctor Luke, the author of Luke-Acts writes to persuade Theophilus that the Christian faith is historical, supernatural and personal (Luke 1:1-4)

4:14-9:50 -	The Galilean Ministry - the deeds of the Saviour
9:51-19:44 -	The Journey to Jerusalem - the teaching of the Saviour
19:45-24:53	The Passion of Chris - the victory of the Saviour

- The long central section of Luke’s Gospel is a Discipleship Manual, preparing the disciples for their future mission. It is marked by growing conflict which will culminate in his arrest and murder.

B. The Diagnosis of dead religion (11:37-41)

- A Pharisee invites Jesus for lunch (11:37). The “*Perushim*” or “*separated ones*” were a group of 6,000 laymen who took their religion very seriously. They believed in the Bible and they were orthodox and zealous.
- The man is shocked that Jesus did follow the non-biblical commands about how to washing before a meal that they had invented (11:38).
- Jesus lovingly lambasts their religion – they are oblivious and dangerous.
- Their religion is dead – it is made up of man-made rules which make them feel superior to others, but which do not touch the heart. It concentrates on externals without touching the inside (11:39). God is more concerned with their hearts (Luke 11:40-41; Proverbs 4:23; 1 Samuel 16:7).
- Without God’s supernatural life we are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1) and an ocean of water on the hands cannot change this.

C. The symptoms of dead religion (11:42-54)

In a series of “woes” Jesus pinpoint the symptoms of dead religion. He begins with the Pharisees (11:42-44) and moves on to the lawyers – the “*clergy*” who teach God’s Word (11:45-52).

- ***It is legalistic (11:42)*** – it involves ticking boxes and it majors on minors (Isaiah 1:10-18; Micah 6:8; Amos 5:21-24).
- ***It is arrogant (11:43)*** – it wants the praise of men more than the glory of God (Matthew 6:1-18)
- ***It is toxic (11:44)*** – it defiles people without their knowing it.
- ***They crush the people of God (11:46)*** – it is joyless, loveless, lifeless and graceless – unlike a relationship with Jesus (Matthew 11:28-30)
- ***They despise the Word of God (11:47-51)*** – the prophets brought God’s word and were killed for it. Jesus is the Word of God and the theme of the Prophet’s message – they will kill him (Luke 20:9-19)
- ***They obscure the truth of God (11:52)*** – by not focusing on Jesus, the key who unlocks truth, they shut other out of the knowledge of God.

D. The remedy for dead religion

- The religious leaders become furious and try to trap Jesus (11:53-53). We can apply this section in at least three ways:
- ***It is counsel for churches*** – you can be dying without knowing it (Revelation 3:1-3).
- ***It is direction for disciples*** – dead religion is like leaven which spreads (12:1). Listen to what God is saying to you (Isaiah 5:8,11,18,20,21,22;6:5)
- ***It is a summons to seekers*** – don’t settle for dead religion – seek the real thing – a living relationship with God through Jesus.