

CHRIST AND KINGDOM CONTROVERSY

PART TWO

LUKE 11:14-54

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I want to start at the end of our passage today, then move forward. In Luke 12:1-2, Jesus says:

^{ESV} Luke 12:1-2: In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

What is leaven? Leaven is any agent added to flour mixture or liquids to produce a state of fermentation. Leaven penetrates pervasively the dough and works itself through the whole batch of bread.

What is hypocrisy? [ὑπόκρισις, εως *f* *hypocrisy, insincerity, pretense*] In Greek literature and the Hellenistic meaning of Jesus' time, hypocrisy was a person who played a part on the stage. He usually wore a mask and in speech and action imitated the character of whom he represented. ***It is essentially pretending to be someone or something you are not really in actuality.***

More on this later, but I wanted to address this first so that we might better understand in our passage how Jesus comes to this particular conclusion with regard to Israel's teachers and more broadly applied to all of Israel ("this generation").

An important point to address before we look at Luke 11:29-54 is that Jesus addresses Israel's teachers with his prophetic judgment because ultimately they are to blame and are guilty as those who have leavened Israel with hypocrisy and false teaching. Through their leadership example and from their false interpretations of God's Old Testament Scriptures they have caused all of Israel to become "this evil generation" as Jesus calls them in verse 29.

In fact, in the larger context of this passage, we remember last week the parable about the demon that was cast out of the "house" that came back with seven more demons and caused the "house" to be more evil than before ("the last state becomes worse than the first" 11:24-27).

We considered how Jesus taught this parable with regard to individuals, but there is also a corporate application of this parable. Jesus is speaking of the House of Israel, and particularly the Teachers of Israel here, in how that they after they have seen the Kingdom of God in its full manifestation as the very "finger of God" in the Person and

Work of Christ (11:20), yet they continue to reject him (and the Kingdom), and they are worse off in their unbelief than before Christ came.

After Jesus' clear revelation as the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament: Moses, the Prophets and the writings, if there is still unbelief in Israel that last state will become worse than the first, and thus the reason why Jesus so severely rebukes the Teachers of Israel in the unbelieving crowds.

Jesus has addressed the first controversial comment in Luke 11:15 about Jesus being a "Son of Satan", now he addresses the request of those unbelievers in the crowd who want to see a "sign" from heaven (v. 16).

Jesus knows the unbelieving thoughts of the people in the crowd (v. 17) and realizes that they want a sign that they assign to Jesus in order to "prove" he is who he says he is ("to test him"). In line with the prophets of the Old Covenant and consistent with their revelation (Luke 24:24ff) Jesus tells this "evil generation" of unbelieving Israelites that they will be given a sign, but the sign will be a sign given from God and that it will be the sign of Jonah.

Jesus continues to teach the "evil generation" by telling them of their darkness (11:33-36) and rebuking them severely for their mere external outward religious practices that do not come from a regenerated heart given by God alone (11:37-54).

²⁹ When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹ The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. ³² The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

One Greater than Jonah and Solomon

God gives sign-miracles in Jesus, but he does not give sign-miracles without Jesus Christ. The sign-miracles point to the fact that the hope of mankind is not in bare and empty signs from heaven, but in Jesus Christ, the King of the Kingdom! God has given sign-miracles to show that Jesus is from God and who he says he is: Lord of heaven and earth and the only hope for sinners. One sign miracle Jesus has just performed that should be clear for all to see is the exorcism of the man with a demon that made him mute (11:14).

Israel has witnessed (and even marveled, cf. Luke 4:22; 7:9; 8:25; 11:14!) at Jesus' Kingdom signs, but they have rejected the King himself at the point. Jesus says to them: "This generation is an ***evil generation***. It seeks a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah" (v. 29).

Jesus is saying by using the term "this generation" [αὕτη γενεὰ ποιηρὰ] that all of Israel at the time of Jesus was in spiritual bankruptcy and unbelief from her leader-teachers

down (cf. Luke 7:31-35). This language of “this generation” is the language of prophetic judgment for unbelief. In fact, “This evil generation” is a reference to the unbelieving wilderness generation that disobeyed God and died:

ESV Hebrews 3:8-10: ...Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works ¹⁰ for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.'

As Matthew further records Jesus’ words of judgment on “this generation” of Israelites in his gospel:

Matthew 12:37-39: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'”

So, Jesus says basically to the unbelieving Israelites in the crowd: “You want a sign? I will give you a sign- -but the sign is found in your own Bibles and if you cannot see it there, you will not see it here fulfilled in me!”

Jesus draws from two great periods of Old Covenant redemptive-history. This reminds us that all of the Old Testament teaches us about the Christ and the purpose of the Old Testament was to point forward to the Messiah-Christ and prepare the people for the day when he would come.

One of Dr. Luke’s main purposes in his gospel is to show that the all of the Old Covenant spoke of and anticipated the time that had dawned in the ministry and mission of Jesus of Nazareth:

ESV Luke 24:24-27: Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” ²⁵ And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

The first time period that Jesus teaches to them and that they should have understood was the time of Jonah the Prophet. We should not two important points of Jonah’s ministry:

- 1) Jonah’s preaching repentance to the people (Gentile people! → Jesus’ preaching repentance to the people).
- 2) Jonah’s powerful work of salvation-deliverance from God that was obvious for all to see → Jesus’ salvation-deliverance-resurrection from the dead.

Jonah the Prophet's period was characterized by preaching and the miraculous and powerful salvation of God. Jonah preached (initially unwilling, but later coming to grips with God's will after a powerful act of God's salvation from a huge fish) and the Ninevites repented of their sins before God. There was a manifested repentance from Gentiles (the Ninevites) when they saw that Jonah had undergone a powerful salvation experience "from the dead" that only God could have performed and responded to his preaching by repenting from sin.

Jesus is essentially saying that the sign that you will be given is: As Jonah preached to Ninevah (the Gentile Nations), and they repented of their sins and turned to the Living God, so although many in Israel are not believing, the Gentiles will respond (this prepares us also for further elaboration in Luke's second volume, the *Book of Acts*). In other words, as Ninevah realized that Jonah had been in the belly of a great fish for three days and when he returned only through the power of God, the Ninevites repented and turned to God.

Jesus' great sign for all to see will be that after he preaches and makes known the Kingdom he will be killed and be in the heart of the earth for three days. Like Jonah, he will return and this sign will serve to show men that only the power of God could accomplish this, and the entire world will be without excuse that God has vindicated the truth of Jesus' identity as the Divine Son!

ESV **Jonah 3:6-10: The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, ⁸ but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish. " ¹⁰ When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.**

As Greydanus wrote: "The Lord does not state here that Jonah's preaching was a sign and that His own preaching will be a sign, but Jonah himself and his experiences were the sign."

In Matthew's Gospel chapter 12, verses 38-41 we read:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." ³⁹ But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. **40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.** ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Jesus' preaching and the repentance of many of the Gentiles and a remnant in Israel will be the sign that Jesus is who he says he is!

AND

Jesus' resurrection will be the sign that Jesus is who he says he is!

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself [...including the prophecy of Jonah] –Luke 24:27

The second time in redemptive-history that Jesus uses as an example to the people in the crowd as a sign was the time of King Solomon, David's son. King Solomon's reign was characterized by a Davidic-King, one who ruled according to God's wisdom, and was widely known for his wisdom as king, even to be recognized by the Gentiles.

Jesus presses the crowds' unbelief further by saying that they would be condemned by the Gentile Woman Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-13; 2 Chronicles 9:1-12) who at least understood that Solomon was God's king and ruled wisely on his behalf. Even a pagan Gentile Woman would travel over land and sea to come and listen to King Solomon- -and one greater than Solomon is here- ***-and many in Israel will not listen because they cannot hear.***

This generation is evil because it rejects the mighty acts of God revealed clearly in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ - -One greater than Jonah and Solomon are here and He is the very fulfillment of their persons and their work!

Gentiles will respond to the Kingdom of God better than many in Israel (Gentiles represented by the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites), and the reason for this is that the light that Israel's teachers were called to make known to the people had been placed in a cellar under a basket and their light-revelation was truly just darkness (v. 35).

³³ "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵ Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. ³⁶ If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

The Light of the Gospel in Jesus Christ and the Darkness of Unbelief

The gospel of Jesus is a bright shining light that blind and sinful man cannot see without the regenerating light and power of the Holy Spirit! (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:3-6). Israel's leaders' bodies were full of darkness (v. 34) because they had no regenerating light from God's powerful Spirit. As we learn from 2 Corinthians 3-4, there must be a powerful work of God's Spirit so that men have light in darkness and can see and be a light before the world:

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6: Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ ***But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.*** ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case ***the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*** ⁵ For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ ***For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.***

Jesus is saying in the context of Luke's gospel that only in Christ can Israel's veil be lifted and allow them to see he and his ministry in the Old Covenant as well as fulfilling the Old Covenant. If you remember at the end of Dr. Luke's gospel, Jesus removes the blinders of those who have hardened minds and hearts slow to believe:

^{ESV} **Luke 24:25** *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"*

...^{ESV} **Luke 24:31** *And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"*

In other Gospel contexts, Jesus speaks of the light in this way as the responsibility of the disciples to by faith be a lamp and shine the gospel light through word and deed. Here in Dr. Luke, Jesus' focus is rather on how he is clearly making the gospel light shine and that some men full of darkness cannot see it- -revealing their spiritual blindness- - especially as they are blind teachers of Israel who are leading the people astray as Jesus goes on to rebuke severely.

Woes Against Israel's Teachers for Unbelief and False Teaching

After Jesus addresses the crowds accusations of his being a "Son of Satan" and he addresses the request for a sign, he directs his greatest rebuke against Israel's teachers who represent Israel as a whole as the visible church of the time.

As the prophets in the Old Covenant had already brought warnings against Israel's unbelief, so Jesus as Last and Greatest of the Old Covenant Prophets comes to issue a final covenantal lawsuit for their transgression of the covenant.

Not only does Jesus show the consistency of his ministry with the Old Testament prophets and kings (like Jonah and Solomon), but he reveals a consistency in the content

of his preaching, as he also rebukes the Israelites with woes as the Old Covenant prophets did as well.

Jesus accepts a dinner invitation to recline at table at a Pharisee's house. After reading these woes of Jesus carefully, as he rails against the teachers of Israel, one can only respond with a sobering "ouch!"

Outwardly Religious, but like Murderous Mobsters in Their Hearts

³⁷ While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. ³⁸ The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. ³⁹ And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

The Pharisees were part of the Jewish religious leadership and were members of the Sanhedrin along with the Sadducees and scribes or lawyers. The Pharisees were the strictest of the teachers in Israel, desiring to keep God's law through obedience down to the smallest detail. They were the smallest "denomination" in Israel of Jesus' day, having about 6,000 members during this time.

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for a concern for mere outward appearances and mere external obedience while the heart is idolatrous and full of greed and wickedness. The Pharisee is concerned that Jesus is not ceremonially clean (not that he is worried about hygiene! See Lev. 11:33; 15:12). In the Pharisaical interpretation of the Mosaic Law of Jesus' day there was a group of Pharisees that believed that the cleanliness of the outside of a cup does not affect the cleanliness of the inside. Jesus is rejecting this distinction as false!

At this time, scrupulous Jews were greatly concerned about purity, and water poured over the hands showed a concern to be clean from the evil and sinful influences of the world in which they would come into contact. Jesus did not conform to this practice.

Rather, he told the Pharisee that cleaning his hands would not make one pure. The Pharisee (like all sinners) needed an inner-heart cleansing that only God can perform powerfully and authoritatively by faith in Jesus.

Jesus castigates the Pharisees for being fools who are only concerned with outward appearances and not mindful of their heart-uncleanness before God! As the Scriptures teach elsewhere, God knows the heart is desperately wicked and knows it more intimately than we do!

^{ESV} Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

^{ESV} Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the

thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ ***And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.***

Jesus says to Israel's teachers: "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness" v. 39). As a guest prophet at a certain Pharisees' house Jesus does not seek to "win friends" but he does want to influence people to hear the truth of his words.

Jesus tells Israel's teachers that they are full of greed [Gk. ἀρπαγῆς which means to take something by violence] and wickedness [πονηρίας]; he describes these outwardly religious men like murderous mobsters of our time!

We should understand Jesus' woes here against the Old Testament prophets who made similar accusations many years before Jesus came: Isaiah 1:10-17; 58:4-8; Amos 5:21-24; Mic. 6:6-8-

ESV Micah 6:6-8: "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" ⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Detailed and Faithful in Tithing, but without Love for God and Neighbor

⁴² "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

The Pharisees tithe and give as they should before God (Lev. 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21-32; Deut. 14:22-27; 26:12-15), acknowledging that all that they possess belongs to God and has been given by him. Yet they neglect justice and the love of God that is revealed by God's gracious provision to them.

It should be noted that in their tithing the Pharisees were going above and beyond what God required, but they were not doing it with the right heart-motivation of love. The Law of God is to teach us what God requires of us, but it is summarized by teaching us what it means to love God and our neighbor as ourselves (see sermon on Luke 10:25ff).

The Pharisees desired to tithe even the smallest things such as mint and rue and herb, but did not want to show true love for God and neighbor by showing justice and the love of God. What Jesus is saying is that they did the "little things" but at the expense and ignorance of the more important things!

Treated Special, but Leading People to Death

⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their desiring ordained office sitting in Moses' seat (cf. Matthew 23:1ff) just to be seen by men and to receive preferential and special treatment in society. The Pharisees were only concerned about outward appearances of purity, cleanliness and righteousness, and do not truly have regenerated hearts that can love God and their neighbor as themselves. So they are very proud of their position as the leader-teachers in Israel.

He says the Pharisees are like unclean, unmarked graves full of dead people (cf. Lev. 21:11; Num. 6:5-8; 9:6-7; 19:11-16), and yet other people cannot see it because only God can see the impure and unclean heart of sinful man.

When people come into contact with the Pharisees they are unbeknownst to them touching unclean graves "full of dead men's bones"- -and this makes them unclean as well; as Matthew records one of Jesus' woes:

Matthew 23:27-18: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

We cannot miss the severity of what Jesus is saying to them. The Pharisees sought above all things to be pure (11:38), but this concern for purity can only fool other men who see the outward appearances only.

In God's sight they are impure and unclean because they neglect things that God reveals clearly and passionately to his people such as justice and love. When others come into contact with them (their impurity) and their teaching (their impurity) they are contaminated like a person was contaminated by corpses under Mosaic Law. In other words, all of Israel (except for a remnant) has been made impure and unclean and unrighteous because of the Pharisees' life and doctrine (cf. 1 Timothy 4:16).

We should be reminded that the Old Covenant ceremonial laws of impurity, or the Mosaic Law distinction of clean and unclean was to show (and remind) the people of Israel their ***impurities, uncleanness, and sinfulness before God.*** The only way to become pure and clean in God's sight is through the sovereign, regenerating work of God's Spirit (cf. Ezekiel 37; Psalm 51).

As Isaiah the Prophet taught concerning Israel's sins before God:

^{ESV} ***Isaiah 1:16-18: Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, ¹⁷ learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. ¹⁸ "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.***

As Psalm 51 teaches purity of heart and cleanliness before God even in the Old Covenant was not merely outward but a cleansing and purifying of a sinner's heart that only God could accomplish by His grace:

*Psalm 51:1-7: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ² **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!** ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ **Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.** ⁷ **Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.***

*Ezekiel 24: 13-14: **On account of your unclean lewdness, because I would have cleansed you and you were not cleansed from your uncleanness, you shall not be cleansed anymore till I have satisfied my fury upon you.** ¹⁴ I am the LORD. I have spoken; it shall come to pass; I will do it. I will not go back; I will not spare; I will not relent; according to your ways and your deeds you will be judged, declares the Lord GOD."*

⁴⁵ *One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also."*

A lawyer is insulted by Jesus' remarks to the Pharisees! The hope of Israel was to be made pure and clean by God's Spirit. The response of the lawyer reveals his impure and unregenerate heart as well!

Anyone (especially one who studies God's Law) who comes face to face with God's requirement of purity in the Old Covenant laws should be moved to repentance and finding hope alone in God's grace found in Christ. However, the lawyer was offended by Jesus' remarks rather than repentant!

The distinction of lawyers and Pharisees was minor, but significant. A lawyer's full time profession was study of the law and while the Pharisees studied the law, they were more of a political party of the day like the Sadducees. Both groups studied the Law, and so the lawyer knew that what Jesus said of the Pharisees could also be applied to them.

Loading Others with Burdens, but Unwilling to Offer Gracious Help

⁴⁶ *And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers."*

Jesus takes the opportunity to rebuke the lawyers for failing to lead Israel humbly to repentance and for failing to believe in the Kingdom now that it has come in Jesus. The burdens that Jesus speaks of are the scribal interpretations of the Law and the traditions of the elders.

In fact, in Matthew 15, Jesus describes these traditions as man-made without God-given authority, and that in teaching something that God had not prescribed was really in truth to break God's commandment in order to uphold the tradition!

Matthew 15:1-2: "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." ³ He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?"

In the *Mishnah* (the Jewish interpretation of the Law) it says that it is more important to observe scribal interpretations than the Law itself (*Sanhedrin* 11:3). What this meant was that while many misunderstood the Law of God itself, the interpretation of that Law was clear and should be obeyed. What does Jesus mean that they will not lift a finger to bear the burden of the people?

We can illustrate this from a traditional interpretation of the Sabbath. On the Sabbath day men could not carry a burden in his right or left hands, nor on his shoulders. He could carry a burden on the Sabbath on the back of his hand or with his foot, his mouth, his elbow, or in his shoe and sandal (*Shabbath* 10:3). Jesus is saying that the lawyer prescribed all of these duties to God's law, but did not help the people to keep the law in any way- -they just made keeping the law all the more difficult - - and confusing!

The lawyers' sin was primarily in teaching the Law of Moses to the people without an understanding of grace (see the lawyer in 10:25ff who also did not understand the gospel). The lawyers place burdens on the people by damning and condemning them with the requirements of the Law with no gospel to relieve them!

Jesus controversially says that it was the fathers of the lawyers who killed the prophets when they said the same things in the Old Covenant time period. The lawyers built these great and beautiful tombs to the prophets, but while they honored the dead prophets, they refused to listen to the prophets living word (that still speaks to them!!).

They were not merely to remember the ministry of the prophets, but to hear the present word of the prophets that further elaborated on and interpreted the Law of God for them.

⁴⁷ Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.

Jesus is essentially saying to the teachers of Israel is that all of the blood shed of redemptive-history (all the bloodshed from Abel to Zechariah, like we might say all of the bloodshed from George Washington to George Bush...) will be upon the heads of this evil generation (upon Israel). Abel was the first martyred-prophet of God and Zechariah was the last of the prophets in the Hebrew canon (2 Chronicles 24:20-25; The Book of Chronicles is found last in the Hebrew canon (*Masoretic Text*) or the Old Covenant Bible that the teachers of Israel would have read).

Acts 7:51-55: "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² ***Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered,*** ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it." ⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Jesus is saying to the teachers of Israel that they are not true sons of Abraham like the prophets; they are truly sons of those who killed the prophets, or children of the devil (cf. John 8:31-59). They built the magnificent mausoleum's or tombs of the prophets with expensive marble and stone (11:47-48) but by acknowledging that they built the tombs, they consent to the deeds of their murderous fathers.

In other words: What good is a dead prophet? A prophet is called by God to speak and for the people to hear and listen leading one to repentance. A dead prophet is one who has been silenced as the teachers of Israel have had a part in (and will continue to do so in taking God's Final Eschatological Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ as they are "lying in wait" presently to do so, 11:53-54).

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 7:25-29:** *From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day. ²⁶ Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. ²⁷ "So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you. ²⁸ And you shall say to them, 'This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips. ²⁹ 'Cut off your hair and cast it away; raise a lamentation on the bare heights, for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.'*

⁵² ***Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.***"

The lawyers in their misinterpretations of God's Law took away the very key of knowledge- the revelation of God's clearly revealed will and his gospel that is rooted in God's promises and forgiveness.

Jesus is the key of knowledge to God's Word and he is the center of God's Old Covenant revelation that they are missing and denying and they are hindering others from understanding the full meaning of the Old Covenant because of this.

⁵³ ***As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.***

The scribes and Pharisees, the teachers of Israel are now "lying in wait" for Jesus in order to "catch him" like an animal in a hunt. The Greek word for "catch" here is **θηρεύω** and means to catch, pounce on like one hunting for game (LXX, Genesis: ^{ESV} **Genesis 27:5**

Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it...)

The woes of Jesus against Israel's teachers sadly leads to hardness of heart rather than repentance!

The passage ends with Jesus teaching his disciples to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy:

ESV Luke 12:1-2: In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

What is leaven? Leaven is any agent added to flour mixture or liquids to produce a state of fermentation. Leaven penetrates pervasively the dough and works itself through the whole batch of bread.

What is hypocrisy? [ὑπόκρισις, εως *f*hypocrisy, insincerity, pretense] In Greek literature and the Hellenistic meaning of Jesus' time, hypocrisy was a person who played a part on the stage. He usually wore a mask and in speech and action imitated the character of whom he represented. ***It is essentially pretending to be someone or something you are not really in actuality.***

The teachers of Israel during Jesus' day were pretending to be pure in heart, clean, and righteous when they were not in reality because they were rejecting God's purification, cleansing and righteousness found in Jesus Christ alone!

Through the gospel received by faith, Jesus frees all men from hypocrisy in order that they might be humble, submissive and honest before God and man as they grow in Christ-likeness. To state it plainly and as truthful as possible; Christians are the only people who can (that is have the ability by grace) to be totally honest with God, themselves and others.

Like the Pharisees though, play-religion is easier for everyone than honesty from the heart before God and man; anyone can play-like they love God and neighbor and anyone can wear deceptive masks, even those religious deceptive masks. Like leaven to bread, Pharisaical hypocrisy can work its way through the whole loaf of God's people. Like leaven to bread, Pharisaical hypocrisy can work its way through the whole loaf of each congregation of Christ (as Paul dealt with the Galatian Churches and the Church at Corinth):

ESV Galatians 5:9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

ESV 1 Corinthians 5:6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

What we cannot do is hide our true hearts and our condition before God. The gospel of Jesus Christ sets men free to avoid this leaven of hypocrisy by being “honestly sinful” before God and man. How does this happen?

The Law reveals the depth of our sinfulness and reminds us that even our best works are tainted by sin (this is being “honestly sinful” before God and man). We must admit honestly that even our best efforts at righteousness are not perfect (because they’re tainted by sinfulness), and that only the righteousness of Jesus Christ will give us purity, cleanliness, and right standing before God!

The gospel is the good news that we have been given the righteousness in Jesus Christ received by faith that is the righteous perfection that God requires of every man. Because of this gospel we realize our sin is greater than we have imagined, but we also realize that our redemption-salvation is a greater salvation, and that ultimately our Christ is a much greater Savior than we ever imagined.

In light of this, our lives are lived gratefully obedient, honestly repenting when our sins are made known to us; honestly admitting before God and man that we are not only “not perfect” but that we are *pretty imperfectly bad* as well!

In Christ we find the hope of righteousness that we need so that we don’t have to pretend and play-act by wearing masks of righteousness of our own making before God and man.

We can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but we can not fool all of the people all of the time- -and we can never fool God! He is the one who knows our hearts and is the searcher of our hearts!

^{ESV} **Hebrews 4:12-13:** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the ***thoughts and intentions of the heart.***¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

In other words: “Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.”

It was really quite simple (humanly speaking) for the Teachers of Israel to be set free from their hypocrisy. All they had to do was to admit that they were hypocrites, that their hearts were desperately wicked and that before God they had no hope of purity, cleanliness-holiness, or righteousness apart from Jesus Christ (who is standing right before them).

But sadly, it was indeed quite complicated and not so simple. God did not do a work of regeneration on many of them and so they serve in this text from Luke’s gospel as an example of God being glorified in his justice and wisdom by leaving the unbelieving Pharisees and lawyers in their unbelief.

They also serve to remind all who are impure, unclean and unrighteous before God that it will take more than a mask of external obedience and the washing of one's hands to be saved and redeemed. The unbelieving teachers of Israel remind us all that we must repent and seek Christ and his salvation while he may be found- -to call upon him while he is near (Isa. 55).

Unlike the Pharisees and teachers of the law, true Christians are those who repent in response to Jesus' preaching found in His Word and are those who joyfully acknowledge the sign of Jonah revealed in Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension to God's right hand! True Christians recognize the very wisdom of God in Jesus Christ! Christians are those who through a sovereign work of God's grace by His Spirit are made ***truly pure, clean and righteous from the inside out.***

Listen to the hope of the Book of Hebrews:

^{ESV} Hebrews 10:18-24: Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...

What the blood of bulls and goats could never take away (Heb. 10:1-4); what the millions of sacrificed animals could not fully cleanse; because the millions of sacrifices could never atone once and for all, that is permanently for our sins and bring us close to God; God sent his Son (Heb. 2:10-18) to do his will and make a final and permanent offering for sinners (both Jew and Gentile).

The Author to the Hebrews says that we now as the people of God do not find confidence merely in our outward external manifestations of religion (although we do show forth our good works that glorify God, Matt. 5:13ff; Eph. 2:10). Rather, we find our hope and confidence to enter the very throne room of God himself by the precious blood of Jesus, Our Great Prophet and High Priest of God.

In drawing near to God through Jesus we have a full assurance of our faith and we have purified and cleansed hearts so that our purity, cleanliness, and righteousness before God and man is found in Christ alone.

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