

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
PPP. Christ's Condemnation Of Hypocritical Religiosity
(Luke 11:37-54)

I. Introduction

- A. When Jesus was invited to a meal in the home of a Pharisee, He sat down to eat without ceremonially washing His hands according to Pharisee regulation, stunning the Pharisees, Luke 11:37-38.
- B. Christ used this event to condemn the hypocritical religiosity of the scribes and Pharisees in Luke 11:37-54, and we view this condemnation for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Christ's Condemnation Of Hypocritical Religiosity, Luke 11:37-54.

- A. Regardless of Christ's recent sharp criticism of the religious systems that existed in Israel in His day, a certain Pharisee invited Him to dine at his home, and Jesus accepted the invitation and sat down to eat, Luke 11:37.
- B. On the one hand, the Pharisees had not been able to withstand Jesus' wisdom and criticism, so they invited Him to try to entrap Him in some deed or word to discredit Him (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 310). On the other hand, Jesus accepted their invitation as an opportunity to condemn their hypocritical religiosity. [Jesus' courage to confront these religious leaders in spite of His humanly lowly Galilean heritage is evidence of His divine enabling, a testimony to His claims to be the Messiah and God!]
- C. Accordingly, the Pharisees present marveled that Jesus did not first wash His hands before eating, a violation of strong Pharisee tradition but not of the Mosaic Law (Luke 11:38; Ibid.).
- D. Jesus thus critiqued the Pharisees' interests in external rituals without cleansing their inner man of sin (Luke 11:39-40), claiming that it would be better for them to show deeds of mercy by giving alms to the poor than to be caught up in external rituals like washing their hands before eating, Luke 11:41.
- E. What followed were several woes of Christ on the Pharisees, and one woe on the scribes, Luke 11:42-44:
 - 1. Jesus pronounced a woe on the Pharisees for carefully tithing their tiny herbal produce, thinking they were fulfilling the Mosaic Law while overlooking God's right to them and all they possessed so that they revealed righteousness toward other people and the Lord, Luke 11:42a; Ibid., p. 310-311. Jesus said they should have tithed their herbs without omitting the other weightier obligations of the Law.
 - 2. Jesus pronounced a woe on the Pharisees for loving the uppermost seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplace as it exposed a false pride and not a true love for the people they displaced, Luke 11:43.
 - 3. Jesus pronounced a woe on the Pharisees and the scribes for being as unclean as unsewn graves that men walked over, contaminating themselves by their contact with such leaders, Luke 11:44. These leaders were hypocrites who contaminated others rather than having a sanctifying influence on them, Ibid., p. 311.
- F. When a scribe present at the meal said that Jesus' critique of the scribes offended them (Luke 11:45), Jesus proceeded to pronounce three woes on the scribes, Luke 11:46-52:
 - 1. He pronounced a woe on the scribes for their loading people with man-made rules too heavy to be carried while not even touching the burdens with one of their fingers to lighten the load, Luke 11:46. There were 365 prohibitions and 248 commandments "into which the Mosaic law had been codified by the Pharisees" with the teachings of the scribes, a "crushing weight" for the people of Israel, Ibid.
 - 2. Jesus pronounced a woe on the scribes for building the tombs of Israel's righteous prophets that their fathers had killed, Luke 11:47. In rejecting Christ about whom the prophets wrote, Israel's scribes and Pharisees were in effect agreeing with their fathers who killed the prophets, and thus were building their tombs, Luke 11:48; Ibid. Thus, "Jesus said, 'This generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah' (Luke 11:50)," the latter being the last prophet in 2 Chronicles, the last book in the order of books in the Old Testament canon in Jesus' era (Ibid.; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, ftn. to Matthew 23:35).
 - 3. Jesus then pronounced a woe on the scribes for hiding the truth from those who depended on them for knowledge, Luke 11:52. The leaders of Israel had not revealed God, but obscured Him and His demands, and Christ had come to dispel such darkness and to reveal the Father to the people (Ibid., p. 311-312).
- G. The religious leaders at the meal then began to oppose Jesus fiercely, besieging Him with questions to get Him to say something unbiblical so as to discredit Him, Luke 11:53-54. They obviously failed, for Jesus is God!

Lesson: *Jesus condemned the hypocritical religiosity of Israel's scribes and Pharisees.*

Application: *May we resist hypocritical religiosity in our era and instead adhere to God's Biblical truths.*