

Reversing religious values

a. Delusions of a 'wicked generation' (11:27-36)

11:27,28 One problem with Judaism: you are blessed because of your connections (which connection ONLY ultimately counts with Jesus? - 8:19-21)

[1] [11:27,28] It is not physical relationship to Jesus that is supremely important, but one's attitude to God's word. What matters is hearing and keeping the word of God. This points to patient, unspectacular religious practice. *The word of God* came to the men of that day through the teaching of Jesus as well as through the study of Scripture. They had a certain advantage over others, but Jesus is saying that wherever men have Scripture the path to blessing is open. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p. 200

[2] [11:27,28] These two verses are peculiar to Luke, and illustrate his Gospel in its special character as the Gospel of Women. Christ's Mother is once more declared by a woman to be blessed (1:42), and Mary's prophecy about herself begins to be fulfilled (1:48). The originality of Christ's reply guarantees its historical character. Such a comment is beyond the reach of an inventor. ... Here Jesus does not deny the woman's statement, but He points out how inadequate it is. She has missed the main point. To be the Mother of Jesus implies no more than a share in His humanity. To hear and keep the word of God implies communion with what is Divine. The saying is similar to 8:21. The relationship with Christ which brings blessedness is the spiritual one. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* pp. 305, 306

[3] [11:28] We cannot doubt that the words of this verse were spoken with a prophetic foresight of that unscriptural worship of the Virgin Mary, which was one day to arise and prevail so extensively in the Church of Christ. By no ingenuity, or torturing process, can the words be made to bear any but one plain meaning. They declare, that to hear the word of God and keep it, is be more blessed than to be connected with Christ by the ties of flesh, and that to be the mother of Christ according to the flesh does not confer on any one greater honour and privileges than to believe and obey the Gospel. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.35

"What matters is hearing and keeping the word of God. This points to patient, unspectacular religious practice."

— Leon Morris

11:29,30 What is the Lord's view of this most religious of ancient peoples? (vv.13,16)

[4] [11:29] At first sight Luke appears to make the parallel between Jonah and Christ to consist solely in their preaching repentance.

He omits the explanation that Jonah was a type of the burial and resurrection of Christ ... Christ had for long been preaching; yet He says, not that the sign has been given or is being given, but that it *shall* be given. The infallible sign is still in the future, viz. His resurrection. Nevertheless, even that ought to have sufficed. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* pp. 306

[5] They pretended to want more evidence before they believed. Our Lord declares that the Queen of Sheba and the men of Nineveh would put the Jews to shame at the last day. The Queen of Sheba had such faith that she travelled a vast distance in order to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Yet Solomon, with all his wisdom, was an erring and imperfect king. The Ninevites had such faith that they believed the message which Jonah brought from God, and repented. Yet even Jonah was a weak and unstable prophet. The Jews of our Lord's time had far higher light and infinitely clearer teachings than either Solomon or Jonah could supply. They had amongst them the King of kings, the Prophet greater than Moses. Yet the Jews neither repented nor believed! Let it never surprise us to see unbelief abounding, both in the church and in the world. So far from wondering that there had been men like Hobbes, and Payne, and Rousseau, and Voltaire, we ought rather to wonder that such men have been so few. So far from marvelling that the vast majority of professing Christians remain unaffected and unmoved by the preaching of the Gospel, we ought to marvel that any around us believe at all. Why should we wonder to see that old disease which began with Adam and Eve infecting all their children? **J.C. Ryle** p.33

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11:31,32 What 'signs' did Solomon and Jonah show? (1 Kings 10:1-9; Jonah 3:1-10)

[6] [11:31] Let it be observed, that the point in which the queen of the South

Edersheim decries two opposite misunderstandings re Mary

[7] [11:27,28] Israel is described as breaking forth into these words on beholding the Messiah: 'Blessed the hour in which Messiah was created; blessed the womb whence He issued; blessed the generation that sees Him; blessed the eye that is worthy to behold Him.' And yet such praise must have been peculiarly unwelcome to Christ, as being the exaltation of only His Human Personal excellence, intellectual or moral. It quite looked away from that which He would present: His Work and Mission as the Saviour. Hence it was, although from the opposite direction,

as great a misunderstanding as the Personal depreciation of the Pharisees. Or, to use another illustration, this praise of the Christ through His Virgin Mother was an unacceptable and unsuitable as the depreciation of the Christ, which really, though unconsciously, underlay the loving care of the Virgin-Mother when she would have arrested Him in His work, and which (perhaps for this very reason) St. Matthew related in the same connection. **Alfred Edersheim** *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* Vol 2 pp. 201, 202

surpassed the Jews of our Lord's time and put them to shame, was "faith." She had faith enough to come a long journey to hear a wise man. The Jews, on the other hand, had "the wisdom of God" actually in the midst of them, preaching and teaching for three years and yet they would not believe. Let it be observed, that the point in which the Ninevites surpassed the Jews and put them to shame, was repentance. They had among them for a short time a prophet, and a very weak and erring prophet too. Yet they repented and turned to God. The Jews had among them the mightiest and most faithful preacher that ever warned a people, and yet they would not repent. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.36

11:33,34 A great warning for Christians surrounded by Satan's world: Guard what goes in those eyes! (Psalm 101 - esp. vv. 3,6; 2 Samuel 11:1,2)

[8] [11:33-36] The single heart is a heart which is not only changed, converted, and renewed; but thoroughly, powerfully, and habitually under the influence of the Holy Ghost. It is a heart which abhors all compromises, all lukewarmness, all halting between two opinions in religion. It sees one mighty object – the love of Christ dying for sinners. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.39

[9] [11:34] Faith, when diseased, becomes the darkness of superstition; just as the eye, when diseased, distorts and obscures. Com-

"But when the eye is *not sound* (the Greek word can mean 'evil'), when the man's attention is focused on evil, then the whole man is corrupted. He is *full of darkness*."

-- **Leon Morris**



"God's light neglected will be a heavy charge against many at the last day" – **J.C. Ryle**

pare Matt 6:22,23. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* pp. 308

[10] [11:34] A man can perform almost any bodily function when he has good illumination. But if his eyes are impaired so that he cannot make use of the light, almost every function is impaired. The failure of the eyes affects for the worse everything the man does. There is a spiritual parallel. It is possible for the eye to be *sound*, where the Greek means 'single'. A man's eye may be single-mindedly fixed on the good: then the whole man is *full of light*. But when the eye is *not sound* (the Greek word can mean 'evil'), when the man's attention is focused on evil, then the whole man is corrupted. He is *full of darkness*. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p. 202

11:35,36 How might the light in us be darkness? (Isaiah 5:8-25, esp. v.20; Hosea 4:1-14)

[11] [11:33-36] When the Gospel of Christ is placed before a man's soul, it is as if God offered to him a lighted candle. It is not sufficient to hear it, and assent to it, and admire it, and acknowledge its truth. It must be received into the heart, and obeyed in the life. ... The guilt of such conduct is very great. God's light neglected will be a heavy charge against many at the last day. ... He must strive to hold his candle in such a way, that many may see it, and as they see it, admire and believe. ... A man's religion may well be suspected, when he is content to go to heaven alone. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 pp.37,38

b. The main culprits for that 'wicked generation' (11:37-54)

11:37-41 How shall a Pharisee become clean inside?

[12] [11:37] Let us go into company in the same frame of mind, and our souls will take no harm. If we feel that we dare not imitate Christ in the company which we are invited to join, we may be sure that we had better to stay at home. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.43

[13] [11:38] *That he had not first washed*. Let this expression be carefully noted. The Greek word literally translated would be rendered, "that he had not first been baptized" before dinner. It is clear that the washing spoken of cannot be a washing of the whole body, but a partial washing, as of the hands and feet, or a sprinkling of water on the hands, after the manner of Eastern nations. (2 Kings 3:11) The opinion held by some Baptists that the Greek word to "baptize" is never used except in the sense of a total immersion of

'... the wisdom of God also said ...'

[17] Olshausen asserts that Jesus intends an allusion to the words (2Chron. 24:19): "He sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto Him; but they would not receive them." But the connection between those two sayings is very indirect. I think there is a more satisfactory solution. The book of the O.T. which in the primitive Church as well as among the Jews, in common with the books of Jesus Sirach and Wisdom, bore the name of ... *wisdom of God*, was that of Proverbs. Now here is the passage which we find in that book (1:20-31): "Wisdom uttereth her voice in the streets, and crieth in the chief places of concourse ... Behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you ... and I will make known my words unto you ... But ye have set as nought all my counsel,

and would none of my reproach. Therefore I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh ... (and I shall say), Let them eat of the fruit of their works!" This is the passage which Jesus seems to me to quote. For the breath of His Spirit, whom God promises to send to His people to instruct and reprove them, Jesus substitutes the living organs of the Spirit – His apostles, the new prophets; then He applies to the Jews of the day (ver. 49b) the sin of obstinate resistance proclaimed in the same passage; finally (vers. 50, 51), He paraphrases the idea of final punishment, which closes this prophecy. The parallelism seems to us to be complete, and justifies in the most natural manner the use of the term, *the wisdom of God*. **Frederic L. Godet** *Luke* p.335

the body, is one that cannot be reconciled with the expression used in this text. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.47

11:42-44 Three woes for legalistic, showy religion!

[14] [11:42] The moderation and wisdom of Jesus are conspicuous in the last words of the verse; He will in no wise break the old legal mould, provided it is not kept at the expense of its contents. **Frederic L. Godet** *Luke* p.332

[15] [11:37-44] The conduct of the Pharisees in this matter, unhappily, does not stand alone. There have never been wanting religious professors who have exalted the second things of Christianity far above the first, and in their zeal for the second things have finally neglected the first things entirely. There are thousands at the present day who make a great ado about daily services, and keeping Lent, and frequent communion, and turning to the east in churches, and a gorgeous ceremonial, and intoning public prayers, – but never get any further. They know little or nothing of the great practical duties in humility, charity, meekness, spiritual-mindedness, Bible reading, private devotion, and separation from the world. They plunge into every gaiety with greediness. They are to be seen at every worldly assembly and revel, at the race, the opera, the theatre, and the ball. They exhibit nothing of the mind of Christ in their daily life. What is all this but walking in the steps of the Pharisees? **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.45

[16] [11:42, 43] The neglect of distinction between that which is great and that which is small, that which is first and that which is second, that which is essential and that which is non-essential, has been the source of enormous evil in every age of the Church. It is a distinction which the never-dying school of the Pharisees is unable to draw. Let it be noted, that ambition and the love of precedence are common marks of the formalist and the self-righteous. To exalt themselves under cover of obtaining respect for their own *order*, has been the practice of Pharisees all over the world and in every age of the Church of Christ. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.49

11:45-52 Analyze the sins of the religious leaders of Judaism (Matthew 23; 2 Chron. 24:20,21)

[18] [11:45] The verb *hubrizo* is an old one and common for outrageous treatment, a positive insult (so Luke 18:32; Matt. 22:6; Acts 14:5; 1 Thess. 2:2). So Jesus proceeds to give the lawyers three woes as he had done to the Pharisees. **A.T. Robertson** *Word Pictures* Vol. 2 p.167

[19] [11:46] The Mishnah lays it down that it is more important to observe the scribal interpretations than the law itself (*Sanhedrin* 11:3). The reasoning is that if it was a serious matter to offend against the Law which was sometimes hard to understand, it was a much more serious matter to offend against the interpretation which, the scribes thought, made everything clear. ... On the sabbath, they taught, a man may not carry a burden 'in his right hand or in his left hand, in his bosom or on his shoulder'. But he may carry it 'on the back of his hand, or with his foot or with his mouth or

with his elbow, or in his ear or in his hair or in his wallet (carried) mouth downwards, or between his wallet and his shirt, or in the hem of his shirt, or in his shoe or in his sandal' (*Shabbath* 10:3). **L. Morris** *Luke* p. 205

[20] [11:47] They have sought to raise in the minds of others the thought, "If these men love the memories of the good so dearly, they must surely be of one heart with them." They have forgotten that even a child can see that "dead men tell no tales," and that to admire men when they can neither reprove us by their lips, nor put us to shame by their lives, is a very cheap admiration indeed. Would we know what a man's religious character really is? Let us inquire what he thinks of true Christians while they are yet alive. Does he love them, and cleave to them, and delight in them, as the excellent of the earth? Or does he avoid them, and dislike them, and regard them as fanatics, and enthusiasts, and extreme, and righteous over-much? The answers to these questions are a pretty safe test of a man's true character. When a man can see no beauty in living saints, but much in dead ones, his soul is in a very rotten state. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.52

**A sense of proportion
in priorities –
missing from church just as
much in the 21st century
as the 1st!**

[21] [11:48] Externally the Pharisees seemed to honour the Prophets. Really they were dishonouring them as much as those did who slew them; for they neglected the duties which the Prophets enjoined, and ignored their testimony to Christ. **A. Plummer** p. 313

[22] [11:51] The blood of Abel is the first shed in the Old Testament (Gen. 4:10), that of Zacharias the last in the [Hebrew] O.T. canon which ended with Chronicles (2 Chron. 24:22). Chronologically the murder of Uriah by Jehoiakim was later (Jer. 26:23), but this climax is from Genesis to 2 Chronicles (the last book in the canon). **A.T. Robertson** *Word Pictures* Vol. 2 p.169

[23] [11:52] Their methods were such that people could not get at the essential meaning of God's word. Instead of opening up the treasures of knowledge, the lawyers closed them fast. They turned the Bible into a book of obscurities, a bundle of riddles. Only the experts could understand it. And the experts themselves were so pleased and preoccupied with the mysteries they had manufactured that they missed the wonderful thing that God was saying. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p. 207

11:53,54 What do they then add to their catalog of sins? (Rev. 12:10; Job 1:6-12, 2:3-6)

[24] [11:45-54] The sin here denounced is awfully common. The guilt of it lies at far more doors than at first sight many are aware. It is the sin of the Romish priest who forbids the poor man to read his Bible. It is the sin of the unconverted Protestant minister who warns his people against "extreme views," and sneers at the idea of conversion. It is the sin of the ungodly, thoughtless husband who dislikes his wife becoming "serious." It is the sin of the worldly-minded mother who cannot bear the idea of her daughter thinking of spiritual things, and giving up theatres and balls. All these, wittingly or unwittingly, are bringing down on themselves our Lord's emphatic "woe." They are hindering others from entering heaven! **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p.54

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