

Message Eleven

**Christ versus Religion**

Scripture Reading: Matt. 21:41-46; 16:13-16; 9:14-17; 12:1-14

**I. To have a religion is to worship God, to serve God, and to do certain things to please God, yet without Christ:**

- A. To be religious means to do something for God without Christ and without the Spirit—Matt. 9:14-17.
- B. Christ did not come to establish an earthly religion of rituals and dead religious practices but a heavenly kingdom of life with Himself, the all-inclusive One, as the full enjoyment of His followers that they might become the constituents of His kingdom—21:41-46.

**II. The Gospel of Matthew reveals that Christ is versus religion and that the things concerning Christ are outside of religion:**

- A. The birth of Christ, the finding of Christ, the recommending of Christ, and the following of Christ were all outside of religion—1:18-23; 2:1-12; 3:1-12; 4:12-22.
- B. Any thought of doing things miraculously in religion is a temptation of the devil—4:5-7:
  - 1. The devil tempted the Lord Jesus to assume His position as the Son of God and to display His power and authority by casting Himself down from the wing of the temple and having a miracle of protection by the angels.
  - 2. If we would be the kingdom people, we must overcome the temptation to exhibit religious power and the desire to be a great one in religion.
- C. As the Physician and the Bridegroom, Christ is versus religion—9:12, 15:
  - 1. In dealing with the self-righteous and dissenting Pharisees, who were of the old religion, the Lord Jesus indicated that He was a Physician who had come to heal the sick—vv. 9-13.
  - 2. In dealing with the fasting and dissenting disciples of John, who were of the new religion, He revealed Himself as the Bridegroom who had come to take the bride—vv. 14-15.
- D. Old wineskins signify religious forms, rituals, and practices; all religions are old wineskins—v. 17:
  - 1. To put new wine into old wineskins is to put Christ as the exciting life into any kind of religion.
  - 2. We need to experience and enjoy Christ as the Forgiver, the Physician, the Bridegroom, the new garment, and the new wine so that we may be the fresh wineskin, the corporate Christ, to contain Him—vv. 1-17.
- E. The Lord Jesus exposed the Sanhedrin and the synagogues as being opposed to God's economy—10:16-33:
  - 1. The Lord indicated that there were wolves in the synagogues, and He spoke of the synagogue of Satan; this proves that the synagogue had become satanic—v. 16; Rev. 2:9; 3:9.
  - 2. The religious world and the political world are the same in opposing the kingdom of the heavens, for both are under the usurping hand of the

- enemy; nevertheless, the heavenly King intends to establish His kingdom on earth within the territory of religion and politics.
- F. After the Lord called people to rest from striving to keep the law and religious regulations, He deliberately broke the regulation concerning the Sabbath—Matt. 11:28—12:8:
1. The Lord Jesus brought His hungry disciples into the grainfields so that they could be satisfied and enter into rest.
  2. As the real David, the greater temple, and the Lord of the Sabbath, He could do whatever He liked on the Sabbath, and whatever He did was justified by Himself—12:3-8.
- G. On the Sabbath the Lord Jesus restored a man's withered hand, likening this man to a sheep—vv. 9-14:
1. The Lord cares not for religious regulations but for the healing of His members and for the rescue of His fallen sheep.
  2. Christ cares for Himself as the Head of the Body and for the members of His Body—vv. 8-13.
- H. The Lord Jesus does not care for religious tradition; He cares for inward reality—15:1-20:
1. The heavenly ruling of the kingdom requires inward reality, not mere outward practice, in that it deals with the condition of the heart—vv. 11-20.
  2. Since the Lord cares for inward reality, not outward practice, we also should care for inward reality, that is, for the inward experience of Christ.
- I. In 16:6-12 the Lord Jesus warned His disciples concerning religious leaven:
1. The teaching of both the Pharisees and the Sadducees was likened to leaven, which was not to be seen among God's people—vv. 6, 12; Exo. 13:7.
  2. As we are enjoying Christ as the bread of heaven sent by God, we must beware of religious leaven, which comes from Satan.
- J. The revelation concerning Christ with His church was given outside of religion, in a place with a clear atmosphere—Matt. 16:13-19:
1. If we are under the influence of religious leaven, we cannot be clear regarding Christ and the church; this revelation is hidden from religious people.
  2. The living God is in contrast to dead religion; Christ is the embodiment of the living God, having nothing to do with dead religion—v. 16.
- K. The Lord's rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees in 23:1-36 affords an accurate picture of today's religion; the kingdom life and the kingdom people are the opposite of what is exposed here.
- L. The Lord Jesus stayed away from Jerusalem to lodge in Bethany—21:12-17:
1. In Jerusalem He was rejected by the religious leaders, but in Bethany He was welcomed by His lovers.
  2. Today's religion is a Jerusalem to the Lord Jesus, not His lodging place; the lovers of Christ are in Bethany, not in Jerusalem.
- M. The religionists hated the Lord Jesus and wanted to kill Him, but His lovers took the opportunity to express their love for Him—26:1-13.