

THE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT – LESSON 28(ABC)

QUESTION

Just as Joseph, David and Jonah, in certain ways personify Jesus, the Pharisees and Scribes personify religious spirits.

Matt 16:6-12

6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"

9 "Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?"

10 "Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?"

11 "How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?-- but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

(NKJ)

Using Matt. 23 and other related scriptures, outline the characteristic features of religious spirits/operating systems. Use the underlined verses.

Matt 23:1-39

1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,

2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

3 "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

4 "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

5 "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.

6 "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,

7 "greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

8 "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

9 "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

10 "And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

11 "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses,

and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.
15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'

17 "Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

18 "And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.'

19 "Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

20 "Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it.

21 "He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.

22 "And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

24 "Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

26 "Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

28 "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

30 "and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

31 "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.

32 "Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt.

33 "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,

35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

36 "Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

38 "See! Your house is left to you desolate;

39 "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"
(NKJ)

Mark 3:6

Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Mark 14:1

After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death.

(NKJ)

Mark 3:22

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."(NKJ)

Matt 2:3-6

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.' (NKJ)

Mark 8:11-12

11 Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him.

12 But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."(NKJ)

ANSWERS-LESSON 28(ABC)

CHARACTERISTICS OF A RELIGIOUS OPERATING SYSTEM

INFLEXIBILITY

saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

The Pharisees and Scribes occupy a sitting position – a position of immobility. Those under a religious spirit are unable to flow or move with God's Spirit – they are unable to move in progressive revelation.

ALLEGIANCE TO THE PAST

saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

Moses represents the past. Moses' exploits and ministry was powerful and divinely ordained for a past season.

The Pharisees and Scribes could not shift their allegiance to the one greater than Moses.

Luke 11:31

"The queen of the South will rise up in 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 indeed a greater than Solomon is here.(NKJ)

Past allegiance contributes to inflexibility.

This condition results in an inability to live by a “now word” – the “proceeding word”. The Pharisees and Scribes could only take you as far as Moses did – Moses never crossed Jordan. Moses survived in the permissive will, and died unfulfilled.

ILLEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

Moses' seat was meant for Moses – not the Pharisees and Scribes. Thus the authority of the Pharisees and Scribes was illegitimate.

A religious operating system gets its authority from a past move of God.

Religious spirits make each restoration move a seat and usurp that seat.

Any authority not based on proceeding truth has religious bondage.

4. INCONSISTENT LIFESTYLE

3 "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

They do not practice what they preach. They cannot model the Word into their lifestyle. The written Word does not become living Word. Consider the priest and the Levite of the Good Samaritan parable - they could not show mercy although they constantly prayed “Lord have mercy”.

Matt 3:7-10

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

9 "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

10 "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

(NKJ)

Matt 12:7

"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.(NKJ)

5. IMPOSE BONDAGE BY ADDING TO TRUTH

4 "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but

they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

The ministry of religion brings into bondage instead of liberty. It adds to truth.

Examples: strict legal criteria for salvation and church acceptance.

Confirmation before acceptance.

A 7-year mandatory study period before approval.

The traditions of men are taught as doctrine – this is their heaven.

Mark 7:7-9

7 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'

8 "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men-- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."

9 And He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.(NKJ)

EXTERNAL PREOCCUPATION

5 "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.

6 "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,

7 "greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

26 "Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

28 "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

The religious system is more concerned about externals rather than the state of one's heart. It cannot see beyond the superficial.

It judges by external appearances. (Samuel chose Eliab out of a religious mentality)

Looks for God in the fire, wind and earthquake – not the still small voice.

Thus it misses John the Baptist and Jesus in the manger.

It chooses the Tabernacle of Moses rather than the Tabernacle of David.

It demands strict external codes: dress code, age code, national code, gender code, educational code, race code, employment code etc.

It waits for opportunity to express.

Uses public platforms to launch e.g. funerals, thanksgiving.

Matt 15:2

"Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."(NKJ)

JESUS WARNED ABOUT OSTENTATION.

Matt 6:2-8

2 "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

3 "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right

hand is doing,

4 "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

5 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

6 "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

7 "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

(NKJ)

SELF-EXALTATION

6 "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,

7 "greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'

Characterised by position seeking and title consciousness.

Those under this system cannot serve from the heart, love recognition and are involved in activities for recognition.

They are preoccupied with a "my ministry" mentality.

Matt 9:11-13

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

13 "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

(NKJ)

AIMS TO SUPPRESS KINGDOM INFLUENCE

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

This system shuts men and women out of the kingdom of heaven. It brings people near, but does not allow them to enter. It's a thief that steals. The local church is the office of the kingdom of God. The religious system exalts the local church above the kingdom of God - hence the local church becomes an idol.

Rom 14:17

for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.(NKJ)

The religious spirit robs the individual of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy

Spirit.

ABUSIVE INTENT

14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

Using the guise of spirituality ("long prayers") this system abuses the underprivileged. It's a thief that kills.

DECADENT INFLUENCE

15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

This system damages the new convert.
It's a thief that destroys.

John 10:10

10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.(NKJ)

SUPERSTITIOUS

(A BELIEF SYSTEM BASED ON IRRATIONAL FEAR, FALSE UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUAL THINGS OR IGNORANCE)

16 "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'

17 "Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

18 "And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.'

19 "Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

20 "Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it.

21 "He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.

22 "And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

The religious system inculcates a false understanding of spiritual things. Spiritual significance is attached to material things to fulfil personal desires rather than the purposes of God. They taught that an oath made by the gold of the temple and the gift on the altar was binding whilst oaths made by the temple and the altar were null and void. They exalted the gold above the temple and the gift above the altar to fulfil their pecuniary interest in religion. Thus superstition was used to extort material things from ignorant followers.

The religious system undermines the altar and the temple (both are pictures of Christ) through superstition.

Heb 13:10

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.
(NKJ)

John 2:21

But He was speaking of the temple of His body.(NKJ)

The religious system uses superstition to undermine the binding nature of any oath.
(An oath is a promise, which must be kept.)

Num 30:2

"If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.(NKJ)

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.
"Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

They major on minors.

Examples:

They spend R20000.00 on an oak door and R100.00 on missions.

They worry more about length of hair and your attire, rather than holiness.

They fight about the position of instruments, yet sanction a disco in church.

They are so focussed on minor issues that they forget about weightier issues like justice, faith and mercy.

DEAD SPIRIT

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

The religious system ministers death.

Her proponents are eloquent, well-read and informative but have no life-giving word.

SELF-RIGHTEOUS BELIEF

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

30 "and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

This system (spirit) claims to be better than her predecessors, yet she persecuted Jesus just as her predecessors persecuted the prophets.

VENOM IN THEIR MOUTHS

33 "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?

Those with a religious operating system, carry venom in their mouths.

Prov 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.
(NKJ)

Death is in their tongues.

KILLS, PERSECUTES AND OPPRESSES SENT MEN

34 "Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,

35 "that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Uses the guise of spirituality to destroy those whom God sends.

SHUNS INTIMACY WITH GOD

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

The people under this system cannot get intimate with God because of bondage to rules and regulations. This is a consequence of not being led by the Spirit. They want a professional relationship with God, not a father relationship.

ROBS THE CHURCH OF THE MANIFEST PRESENCE OF GOD

38 "See! Your house is left to you desolate;

This system drives out the manifest presence of God.

Any system that does not receive the sent man, cannot receive Christ.

Matt 9:14-15

14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?"

15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

(NKJ)

Although the Pharisees were a people of consistent fasting they never had the abiding presence of Christ.

John 13:20

20 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."
(NKJ)

BLOCKS OTHERS FROM SEEING CHRIST

39 "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"
Christ is blocked from view due to rules, regulations and external preoccupation.

OPERATES THROUGH CONSPIRACY

Mark 3:6

Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Mark 14:1

After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death.(NKJ)

This system obtains strength from groups and democracy.

ASCRIBES THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT TO SATAN

Mark 3:22

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."(NKJ)

Often a majestic move of the Spirit will be labelled as occult.

CANNOT LEAD ANYONE TO CHRIST

Matt 2:3-6

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.' "(NKJ)

The chief priests and scribes knew where Christ would be born but did not lead the wise men to the place.

Matt 15:12-14

12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"

13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

14 "Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the

blind, both will fall into a ditch." (NKJ)

They can only lead you into a ditch. They have no spiritual perception.

KNOW THE WORD

Matt 2:3-6

3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

5 So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.' (NKJ)

This is the one of the greatest deceptions. THEY KNOW THE LETTER.

Knowledge of the word does not mean relationship with God

This is the difference between the religious and the godly.

LIVE IN A SIGN SEEKING CULTURE

Mark 8:11-12

11 Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him.

12 But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."(NKJ)

Signs are for deaf people.

Those under religious bondage cannot hear the voice of the Spirit-hence the quest for signs and wonders.