



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Heart not the Hands

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In the Gospel According to Luke (AD 60-61), Jesus withstood the barrage of verbal assaults and assuaged the compliments of bystanders as He liberated the demon-possessed man, received a blessing from a well-intentioned woman and exposed the Pharisees' hypocrisy. One Pharisee lied in wait for the opportune time to invite Christ into his home...but he had an agenda and an eagerly awaiting pre-arranged guest list.

And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw *it*, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you..." **(Luke 11:37-41...54, NKJV)**

The intentions of those who seek to replace Christ's righteousness with religious ritualism are exposed when truth becomes relevant. As the Pharisees sized Jesus up for dinner it became apparent that He was to be the "main course." This washing of the hands was not one of hygiene but of religious ceremony. It had developed over time to replace the necessary *internal* washing (forgiveness) with *external* washing. To them it was, in fact, a belief that the sins of the day were washed away with the careful ceremony of cleaning their hands. Jesus squeezed by the line and made His seat comfortably at the table—without regard to the ceremony.

Clean hands and clean reputation do not equal a clean heart. We are utterly incapable of covering up the filth of our sinful hearts underneath layers of ceremony and religion. There is no cleansing here on earth for our sin. Our good works cannot forgive our sin.

The pride of religious ritualism is only a temporary salve to our troubled hearts. What do we do with our guiltiness? How do we "make up" for our wicked thoughts and actions? Religion says that we simply construct an economy where we estimate the equality of good things to balance out the bad things. Sadly this religious "opium" does more than place us into an effectual stupor where reality is placed on "hold"—it deceitfully leads us away from God and eventually to an eternity without Him. These Pharisees had their social flaws and blind-spots, but overall they were enviable when it came to their moral performance in society. They were the religious elite. No one could compare with their projected holiness!

Sitting in this den of lions, Jesus began to roar with inescapable force. Nothing unleashes the clarifying judgment of God quicker than the air of religious hypocrisy. With 6 "Woes" Christ turns from being the Spotless Lamb to being the un-caged Lion of Judah. Rarely do we see this side of Christ's righteous fury portrayed in any artist's rendering. But in this passage we find the spark that ignites the flame of His condemnation—rejection of righteousness in Jesus Christ alone. Humanism is simply an alternate system whereby righteousness is falsely appropriated by anything other than God. Sadly even Christians fail to find safety and rest in Jesus Christ turning towards their performance as a replacement for the work that was accomplished at the Cross.

For Your Consideration:

- How is religious ceremony so appealing as opposed to resting/trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ?
- How does one measure his/her performance when their security for salvation lies in rituals?
- Why is God so opposed to religious ceremony when it relates to the heart?
- How do you find yourself wrestling through performance-oriented living instead of recognizing cleansing that only comes from Jesus Christ?

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: SESSION OR HEARING WEDNESDAYS AT 7:30AM, STATEHOUSE RM. 44

STAFF, LOBBYISTS AND CAPITOL SQUARE COMMUNITY: WEDNESDAYS AT NOON, STATEHOUSE RM.44