

11:29 As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah.

11:30 "For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

In 11:16, it said that some in the crowd "were demanding of Him a sign from heaven." A sign is visible, supernatural evidence that is of such significance that it would convince someone to believe. Evidently this demand was widespread; the imperfect tense verb "were demanding" indicates that their request was constant.

When the crowds increased Jesus turned from a call to repent to a rebuke. He addresses the people as "this generation," an expression often used in connection with a moral judgment. In Luke 9:41, Luke defines them as an unbelieving and perverse kind of people. Matthew calls them adulterous. The demand for a sign is characteristic of the perverse and unbelieving.

In this case, seeking a sign was an expression of unbelief because it was demanding something from God to compel them to believe. Jesus had already given enough evidence to prove who He was and they had rejected it; a sign would not generate belief (see Luke 16:19-31).

Nevertheless, in an act of pure grace Jesus would give them a sign, though not on their timetable or in response to their demand. Just as Jonah was a sign to the men of Nineveh, He himself was a sign to this generation. In Matthew it is clear that He is referencing the resurrection.

Matthew 12:39-40 says:

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

40 for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites in that he had reappeared after being apparently dead for three days. This miracle, or sign, was intended to cause the Ninevites to give heed to his message and repent (which they did). In a similar way, Jesus would reappear on the third day after His death. This sign would be definitive evidence of His messiahship and declare Him to be the Son of God with power (Ro. 1:4). Luke doesn't mention the resurrection, for his intent is to focus on the need of repentance and response.

NOTE: Some see these verses as meaning that Jonah was a prophet and through his preaching he was a sign to the Ninevites. In like manner, so was Jesus to His generation. Verse 31 is used as supporting evidence in that it refers to hearing Jesus. But in verses 29 and 30, Luke does not say Jesus "is" but "will be" a sign, as if something other than Christ's present ministry, "something future in His experience, was the sign" (Expositor's Greek Testament). Furthermore, it says "Jonah became a sign" and "so will the Son of Man be;" the *people*, not the *message*, were signs.

11:31 "The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

The guilt of the generation of Jews in Jesus' time is illustrated by the queen of Sheba in verse 31. She, a Gentile, was so impressed by the magnificent Israeli sovereign, that she was willing to make a long and difficult journey from southern Arabia (modern day Yemen) simply to hear his wisdom. At the judgment, those who had heard Jesus would stand condemned by such an example; her conduct would be brought as evidence against them. If she responded to Solomon, they should have responded to Christ, for they had seen and heard one who is greater than Solomon and had made no journey to do so; nevertheless, they were unmoved by His message.

11:32 "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Just as Jesus is greater than Solomon, so He is greater than Jonah. As Gill points out, the Ninevites "were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, and were not used to having prophets sent to them; and yet as soon as Jonas, a mere man, came to them, and preached but one sermon among them, they repented of their sins, and turned from them." By contrast, the Jews had the OT as their guide, and God as their God; they had the Son of God Himself among them. He had preached to them, and had done so many times. His ministry was verified by miracles. If the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, how much more should the Jews have repented at the preaching of Jesus. Nineveh will testify against the hardness of their hearts.

11:33 "No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.

This verse is almost exactly the same as Luke 8:16. The image of light is used as a picture of Jesus' revelation through His teaching (Lk. 1:78–79; 2:32; Jn. 1:4; 3:19–21; 9:39–41; Acts 26:18). Light is meant to illumine and guide (11:33). Nobody goes to the trouble of lighting a lamp just to put it in a location where the light is not used.

Jesus' teaching called for a response from the crowd. The truth that He proclaimed was not secretly disseminated. It was to be put to use. It was to be heard, not buried. The imagery sets up the application in Luke 11:34–36. Just as Jesus' message is light, one must receive the light for it to be of any benefit (11:36).

11:34 "The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness.

When a lamp is lit it gives off light which allows people to see. The eye is the vehicle that receives light; it is the part of us that uses the light to benefit us. But the amount of light that it can receive is

dependent upon its health. If the eye is bad, the light of a lamp will not benefit the person. The person will be in darkness as if there was no light at all. If the eye is clear, the whole person will be illumined.

This, of course, is an illustration of the necessity of receiving the revelation that Jesus offers. Jesus' teaching provided illumination to the body. The "body" is life in all its various manifestations that is illumined by the divine light (Ellicott). If He intended for people to take what He said and cover it (put it under a basket, or in the cellar – 11:33), He wouldn't have bothered providing light in the first place.

However, just because light is available it doesn't mean that all will benefit from it equally; just because truth is given it doesn't mean that truth will be received. If the person's ability to receive "light" is bad, it doesn't matter how much Jesus tells them. And if they cannot receive His teaching, they will remain in darkness. In other words, it's not a question of light; it's a question of sight. Light is everywhere. It's the sight that is the issue. Thus, Jesus issues a warning in verse 35.

11:35 "Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness.

11:36 "If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays."

Darkness in Scripture often refers to the moral sphere of wickedness apart from the light of God (I Jn. 1:5-7; Jn. 3:16-21). Light reveals and darkness conceals. Paul said in Ephesians 5:13, "All things become visible when they are exposed by the light." This is obviously Jesus' intended meaning here. The warning is one which calls men to self-scrutiny. People must take care that they do not prevent the light that is available to them to become darkness; they must be sure that they receive what is said.

The person who has a bad eye will remain in darkness (I Jn. 2:11; I Pet. 2:9; Col. 1:13); the person who receives Jesus' word will be full of light; there will be no darkness in him. In non-metaphorical terms this means that the person who receives the word of God will no longer be in spiritual darkness; God's word will illumine their life as a lamp illumines them with its rays.

Bock summarizes:

One's spiritual perception is central to one's spiritual fate. Care must be given to respond to the light that leads to truth. Jesus' teaching is given openly, but it must be received. One will either possess darkness because of what one believes, or one will respond to Jesus and have light. With His light one is able to discern the choices of life with spiritual perception. In fact, one can become light to others. As far as Luke is concerned, that choice is the one the reader needs to make or be reassured about, since the way of darkness leads to certain destruction. The way of light offers blessing from God and security before Him" (Bock, 1103).

Talbert adds, "those whose spiritual sight has not been damaged have no need for a sign from heaven; the light of God's rule manifest in Jesus' ministry is seen by them clearly. . . Hence the call for a sign is a symptom of spiritual blindness" (Talbert, 145).

Luke follows the warnings about rejecting Jesus' message (11:24–36) with one of Jesus' strongest condemnation discourses. Luke 11:37–54 describes a dinner in a Pharisee's house. Jesus rebukes a confrontational attitude about His failure to wash hands and engage in ritual cleansing. His response involves seven denunciations, though they are structured in six woes; three woes are linked to the Pharisees and three to the scribes. The account summarizes the religious leadership's failings. Jesus castigates the leaders for being hypocritical, ignoring God's justice, burdening the people with demands that they themselves do not keep, following their murderous ancestors, and blocking the entrance to heaven. The condemnation could hardly be stronger: among the most wicked of those in this wicked generation are the religious leaders themselves (Bock, 1105)

11:37 Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table.

11:38 When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.

After Jesus finished discussing the need to receive His word, a Pharisee invited Him to lunch. There appeared to be no hostility at first, but things changed when the Pharisee expressed his surprise over Jesus' failure to keep Jewish tradition. His surprise implies criticism, but it also tells us that the man didn't invite Jesus to lunch with ulterior motives of condemning Him; the Pharisee was surprised, but said nothing.

It's clear that the meal included others as well (11:45) so Jesus uses the opportunity to expand upon His previous rebuke of the "wicked generation" that demanded a sign while rejecting all that Jesus had said and done. The religious leaders most likely saw themselves as excluded from Jesus' earlier condemnation of the crowd, but by the time Jesus is finished, that misunderstanding will be completely cleared up!

Washing one's hands before eating is mentioned in the OT but not demanded. In Mark 7:3-4, Mark explained to Gentile readers that "the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots."

The Pharisees washed their hands before eating not to just wash off germs, but to be ritually clean in case they may have touched something unclean. That which was unclean included anything a Gentile, an unclean person, or an unclean creature had touched. The act was to symbolize holiness and the desire to be clean from all the defilements of the world. The Mishnah prescribes that one was to use enough water to fill one and a half eggshells. It was then to be poured across the tips of the fingers and let it run down to the wrist. The person was then ceremonially clean (MacArthur). When others didn't follow this tradition the Pharisees were offended. In Matthew 15:2 they said to Jesus, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat."

For the Pharisee and Jesus, Jesus' action was not neutral; the Pharisee saw it as a necessity to be clean before God; Jesus saw it as an unnecessary burden imposed upon God's people.

11:39 *But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.*

11:40 *"You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?*

11:41 *"But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.*

The concern about washing results first, in a rebuke about washing plates and cups. The title, "Lord", expresses Jesus' authority.

The washing of cups and plates comes from Leviticus 11:33 and 15:12. Bowls were to be washed or were at times even to be broken if they touched anything that was unclean. Jesus is not criticizing the Pharisees for following the OT; rather, He is condemning them for taking great pains to appear virtuous and to have a decent external conduct, but missing the real issue – true cleanness – purity of the heart. "They neglected to beautify their inward man with true holiness, and a conformity to the divine goodness" (Benson).

Verse 40 is a rhetorical question expecting a positive answer in Greek. The One who made the outside also made the inside. One cannot divide the outside from the inside. If the inside and the outside are not the same, then it is hypocrisy. To be outwardly pure means nothing if there is no inward purity.

In other contexts, where Jesus accuses the Pharisees of robbery, He is talking about robbing widows by taking oaths in order to avoid paying vows to them (Matt. 23:16–22; Lk. 20:45–47). Charity is "almsgiving" or giving money or food to the poor to ease their suffering; it is the opposite of robbery and wickedness (11:39). It was an act of mercy, and in the OT is an expression of the heart of God. The point is that proper internal character will issue forth in proper external behavior. If charity is the outworking of what is within, all things (things inside and out) will be clean. Matthew 23:26 says, "clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also."

11:42 *"But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.*

The first woe comes in verse 42. The Pharisees were thorough in their outward acts of piety, even tithing the herbs they grew. Although tithing was part of Jewish culture and Old Testament economy (Deut. 14:22–29), it was never practiced to the extent that the Pharisees were practicing it. Their excess was combined with their disregard for justice and their lack of love for God. They were majoring on the minors and minoring on the majors.

Jesus was not saying that they should turn their backs on tradition in their attempts to serve God, but that they had neglected that which mattered most to God.

11:43 "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places."

The Pharisees were interested in being esteemed by others whether they were in their religious institutions or the marketplace. Their attitude was self-seeking, not God-honoring.

11:44 "Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."

According to Leviticus, one would become unclean by touching a corpse. This idea was then extended to graves. "Concerned about ritual purity, the religious people under review are like unmarked tombs over which the wayfarer walks in ignorance. Far from being clean, they make others unclean through their presence (Num. 19:16)" (Danker, 241).

11:45 One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too."

The lawyers, "who were renowned for their mastery of the Torah, for which they commanded unrivaled esteem in the Jewish religious hierarchy" (Edwards, 357), also felt indicted by Jesus' comments to the Pharisees. The word "insult" as it is used here has the idea of "arrogance" or "presumption" (it bears the sense of גָּאֹהַ - *ga'ah* in Hebrew - Edwards, 357). "The lawyer, in other words, reproaches Jesus for haughtiness" (Edwards, 358). But Jesus neither defends nor explains Himself; nor does He apologize. Instead, He presses His point and goes on the offensive, condemning the lawyers as He did the Pharisees.

11:46 But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers."

By means of their distorted interpretations of the law, the lawyers put people under heavy burdens. They held others to strict obedience to their interpretations of the law, but had no compassion in helping people. By contrast, Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

11:47 "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them."

11:48 "So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs."

The Jews had elaborate tombs to honor the dead. The hypocrisy is that they honored those whom their ancestors had murdered.

At first glance this doesn't seem logical. How can the lawyers be accused of approving the killing of the prophets by their ancestors simply because they erected tombs in honor of the prophets?

The answer comes when the verses that follow are considered; God will send apostles and prophets (future tense) to them and they will kill and persecute them just as their ancestors did to the prophets in their day. Though they claim to honor the prophets, in reality they possess the same spirit that their ancestors had; they reject those who carry the same message. They are finishing the work that their ancestors had begun. Israel has had a history of violence against the messengers of God, and God will hold them accountable for it.

**11:49 "For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,
11:50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,
11:51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'**

Even though they built memorials to honor the prophets, they were plotting to kill Jesus and they would kill and persecute those who came after Him in His name. They would, therefore, be held accountable for the blood of the prophets since they are in agreement with their ancestors.

The “wisdom of God” could be the story told in the OT Scriptures of Israel’s persecution of God’s prophets (Edwards, 359), or it could be the will of God seen in sending apostles and prophets (Morris, 226; Bock, 1123). Whatever the case may be, their treatment of the apostles and prophets whom God would send would expose their murderous desires and their alignment with their ancestors.

Jesus’ use of the word “prophet” is very broad, including any who testified of the way of God’s righteousness, including Abel who isn’t normally called a prophet.

It is hard to know which Zechariah Jesus is referring to in Luke 11:51; however, 2 Chronicles 24:20-21 seems most probable. It reads, “Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said to them, ‘Thus God has said, “Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you.”’ So they conspired against him and at the command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the LORD.” The fact that Jesus says that Zechariah was killed between the altar and the house of God “reminds Jesus’ hearers that violence against God’s messengers occurs not in back alleys but at Israel’s holiest site!” (Edwards, 360).

11:52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering."

The lawyers thought of themselves as possessing the key to the door of the knowledge of the Scriptures. But instead of using it to make the treasures inside accessible, they used their knowledge to prohibit access. They had no interest in going through the door themselves and they prevented others from entering as well.

11:53 When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects,

11:54 plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say.

Jesus' interaction with the institutionalized religion had reached a point of no return. The practices the Pharisees claimed to help people avoid uncleanness were themselves sources of uncleanness to the people; the lawyers whose interpretations of the law were assumed to convey knowledge actually prevented it (Talbert, 150). They were to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and love their neighbor as themselves. Instead, they loved ritual more than God (11:42), law more than their neighbor (11:46).

With such a scathing denunciation, both the lawyers (the scribes) and the Pharisees turn to scrutinizing Jesus on many subjects, fervently trying to find something with which to incriminate Him. The word "catch" in verse 54 is used for hunting wild beasts and is a vivid word for intense opposition (Morris, 227).

The conclusion of Luke 11 may appear offensive to those who hold to a stereotype of "gentle Jesus, meek and mild." Jesus appears to be a rude guest who offends against good manners of ritual purity, who rebukes Pharisees for being internally filthy, and who concludes with an expose' of the worst offenses of both Pharisees and lawyers. Such a profile poses a challenge for an age, like ours, that equates Christianity with "niceness" and "tolerance." The present pericope also gives a fuller understanding of the virtues of 6:27-31. The denunciations of the Pharisees and lawyers demonstrate that "love of enemies" does not mean saying what people want to hear, but telling the truth they may not want to hear. "Doing good to those who hate you" does not mean being nice in the face of hatred and injustice, but speaking and acting in ways that have the potential to reduce or eliminate hatred and injustice. The great violation of the *agape* love-ethic is not confrontation, but indifference. Jesus is not indifferent. (Edwards, 361)

IN CONCLUSION, God wants you inside. He says in Deuteronomy 10:12, "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul." In Amos 5:23-24 He says, "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Through the prophet Isaiah God says, "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me? I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle; and I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer; incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies-- I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts. They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from

Ted Kirnbauer

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My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (Isa. 1:11-17).