



Lip Service or Radical Transformation?

by Herb Montgomery

Happy New Year Everyone!!

So much has happened in 2011, the most recent is the new sixteen presentation series The Jesus Dialogue which is now on our website. Let me encourage each of you to check out the new series online. We are getting such good feedback, and I trust you will be tremendously blessed as well.

To begin our new year together I'd like to turn your attention to Jesus' words in Luke chapter 11. The statements we will be looking at come at the end of a long list of Woes. If you'd like more information about this section of Luke 11 I want to encourage you to listen to last fall's Podcasts or read the eSights on our website beginning with August and going through to date. In this article I'd like to focus on Jesus words to the Pharisees as He is reaching His climax.

"Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between

the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all" (Luke 11.47-51).

All throughout this passage, Jesus had been warning of the impending, but not unavoidable Woe that would be coming upon the abusive religious system of His day. He cautioned that if people remained unchanged, destruction would occur in AD 70. This quite possibly would be the final generation. The cumulative shed blood of all the prophets from the first in their sacred cannon (Able) to the last (Zechariah) was about to be accounted for. Sadly, history tells us that this is exactly what happened.

Jesus begins this section with a reference to the Pharisee's building of tombs for the prophets. Here, Jesus accuses the Pharisees of a kind of "lip service" to the prophets. Yet in their hearts, they were actually aligned with the spirit that led the original leaders of Israel to kill the prophets.

"Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs."

Have you ever felt like the religious environment around you is simply giving lip service to the gospel? That it carefully used all the right phrases and terms but remained antithetical to what the Gospel is really all about? We must be careful not simply to clothe our teachings in the terminology of the Gospel, but to allow the Gospel to actually reshape our teachings from the inside out.

We must make sure that our religious program and agenda is not just giving lip service to Jesus. The Pharisees "spoke" highly of the prophets and built tombs in their honor, but in their words and actions, they were part of the very paradigm that led their predecessors to murder the prophets. With their mouths, they spoke of honor while their hearts meditated on murder. They "spoke" highly of the prophets, but they were only months away from killing the Greatest Prophet ever sent to Israel, Yahweh Himself, in human flesh. Rather than allowing God to confront their religious system, they would reject God Himself to

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sustain and protect the system in which they had become so invested.

Today are we trying to make our religious agenda fit the true message and meaning of Christ's kingdom of radical, self sacrificial, other-centered love, while engaging in a religious paradigm that is completely antithetical to this kingdom? Or are we really allowing Jesus and His teaching on the Kingdom to turn our religious agendas on their head. We cannot force Jesus' teachings into our own religious program, and we cannot try to force Jesus to support not simply what we are doing, but how we are doing it as well, when too often He is saying just the opposite.

This new year, I'd like to challenge you. In 2012, we cannot pretend to follow Jesus. If and when we see a contradiction between our religious program, no matter how invested we are in it, we must not ignore it. We must come to Jesus and His teaching with an honest heart, holding our religious agenda in an open hand, allowing Jesus to confront it. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken in this process, and what remains at the end will truly reflect the beauty of the Kingdom. But in 2012, when this happens, we will no longer simply be enlarging a religion, a denomination, or an institution; we will find ourselves, like Jesus, humbly and lovingly serving others, enlarging a Kingdom.

We must allow these words to confront us. We must allow God's Spirit to collapse our defenses. It is a very scary thing when religious people are so sure that their agenda, program, and system are absolutely "right" when fundamentally, they are as far from the kingdom as imaginable.

That generation was held responsible for it all. In AD 70, it all came to an end. Those who had received the promise of being God's people "forever" had rejected Him while giving Him lip service all along the way.

Wherever Jesus' words find us this new year, may God save us from the very same mistake.

I know these are solemn words. But in my heart of hearts, as we begin this new year, I feel that this issue is one with which we must come to terms with ourselves as those who claim to be God's people living today.

Thank you for reading this with an open heart. I pray God's spirit, in 2012, will usher us all into the glorious love, joy, peace, and beauty of His Kingdom.

Keep living in love and letting the love of the Kingdom transform everything we are about from the inside out.

Happy New Year!

I love you guys,

Herb



The following is taken from our news page on our website. For more up to date news on what's going on with RHM please check out www.renewedheartministries.com.

The JESUS Dialogue Honolulu Central SDA Church Honolulu, HI, October 7-22, 2011

Opening night and I was a nervous wreck. All new thoughts. All new material. And a whole new audience. The Jesus Dialogue is a unique series of 16 presentations that grew out of a six hour conversation I had with an Atheist sitting together in first class on a cross country Delta flight almost a decade ago. Questions were raised, topics were discussed, challenges on both sides were put forth, but honest and transparency prevailed and a journey began of finding answers to the questions that had been created even within myself. From the age of 16 I have had a passion to help others encounter one reality above all others and that is the reality that God loves. That simple. God loves. That's what God does. Nothing more, nothing less. It set me on a journey of travelling from venue to venue almost every weekend helping others grasp a more accurate picture of our Heavenly Father's character through the lens of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. But this event was where all of it had been leading to in my ministry to date. Night number one, I must start with a formal apology. Not to those who are in the church, but to those who are not. For causing them to steer clear of me as folks did of old with the Pharisees rather than showing them such radical love that would attract them like it did with Jesus. I must apologize for thinking I was some how morally superior to them, for judging them and their sins as worse than my own. For making them feel a lot of things from me, but admitting the humility and humble servant love were qualities that didn't even make the list of top 100 qualities (or lack of them) in their description of what me as a Christian represented. I must open wide the gate, invite them to come sit at the table too, because the Master "just wants His house full."

The response was astounding. The modern Pharisees were up in arms but the "sinners" of our present day began to let down their defenses and begin to listen.

ISTORY PDATE

Over the next few nights we began to look not simply at their own pictures of God contrasted by Jesus, but also at the representation of God by modern Christianity in contrast to Jesus. The lights began to turn on. Especially on the night where we dealt with the Problem of Evil and how a God, if they were out there, could be good in light of how things are down here.


Some of the more notable presentations in the series were talks such as Concentric Circles where we took the rightness of our beliefs and the rightness of our behavior, and while esteeming their intrinsic worth, we allowed Jesus to place those in priority to Himself the way He would have us follow Him. (See John 5:39,40) Others were nights such as What About the Bible where, even though it was about how to handle passages in the Bible that contradict the type of God we see in Jesus, it was largely focused on the Old Testament God verses the New Testament God and the response here, for one atheist in particular was revolutionary. He at the end of the series was still very leery of Christianity, but He began to embrace Jesus as His God and Lord. I felt, given his own life story, was HUGE!

We ended the series with eight baptisms, one of which was a 20 to 30 something that had left the church but who, given what they had seen about the Character of God through Jesus was coming back. I personally was blessed with the privilege of baptizing this young man myself.

We will be releasing certain presentations from this series as upcoming sermon of the month selections as well. The entire series is online and I'd love for you to check them out as you have the time. There are 16 of them so I know it will take some of you a bit of time, but I believe with all my heart that what ever time is given will be well worth "the price of admission."

Lastly, without mentioning names or embarrassing anyone or violating anyone's trust. There were two very special people who attended this series. I was introduced to them opening night and immediately tears came to my eyes. You see, there is a section of our society that doesn't frequent "church" very often, much less come out to a series being hosted by a church. And I have, for years now, felt such a burden on my heart for this section of our populous. Here they were. They had seen the advertising, been invited by family and friends, and said, "yeah, this looks different." So they came. They came night after night and as what Jesus was truly all about and as a truer picture of God's character began to unfold before their

hearts they approached me one evening and expressed, "I want to follow a God like that. What keeps me from being baptized?" I have to admit every fiber of my being did "backflips" in excitement at hearing this question. Over the next two weeks, I fell in love with my two new friends. And I'm happy to share that they made decisions to follow Jesus, they "entered the house" so to speak, now they will begin a journey with Jesus to determine which "room of the house" Jesus is asking them to dwell in. Their journey will look different from mine, but even at that I have to chuckle. Which one of our journeys with Jesus looks the same as someone else's. We are all unique, with unique backgrounds and unique present situations. And my picture of God, the picture of God revealed through the ministry and death of Jesus reveals that God meets each of us where we are and patiently and lovingly grows us over time into the image of His own perfect love. I'm just thankful to have been a part of their beginning. Please keep my two new friends in your prayers as they continue to grow with all of us now. They are raising a son together too and want so badly to raise Him with this new found knowledge of what God's love is truly like. And, if you're out there reading this, I love the two of you so much. You both are precious to me. Meeting you, and I don't expect you to get this, but meeting you two has become a defining moment for me and Jesus. Thank you for changing me too.



*For Christ's love compels us,
because we are convinced that one
died for all, and therefore all died.
15 And he died for all, that those
who live should no longer live for
themselves but for him who died
for them and was raised again.
— 2 Corinthians 5:14,15 (TNIV)*

RHM Testimonials

Thanks so much Herb for your emails, they are a constant blessing to me! – **KK**

I've been hearing several of your audios, very profound. I'm so happy to see people like you preaching from the heart, focusing on change from the inside out, and following Jesus. What I have heard is amazing to me. It really has restored in my mind an understanding and clearer belief in the love of God for me. – **OP**

Just thinking of you and wanted to express appreciation for your work. We have been thinking a lot about all the teachings through the years that have brought us to the

understanding we now have of God, and are so grateful for them all! Just wanted to say thank you. You are doing such an important work and we are very grateful for you. – **T&D**

I want to say a great big "thank you" to you. There's no way I can describe what your sermons and book have meant to me over the past few months, and I thank you so much for making them available on your website. I am supporting you daily with my prayers, and whenever possible with my finances. I pray that God will continue to give you the strength, courage and wisdom that you need to carry on His work. – **JB**

Sermon of the Month



Have you ever wrestled with what many find to be a significant difference between some the pictures we get of God from certain passages in the Bible with the beautiful picture of God we get when we look at Jesus? One example of this is the difference many see between the Old Testament God and Jesus. This month I'd like to offer you a presentation I gave last October in the series The Jesus Dialogue. Jesus is our significant clue, not simply to God's existence, but to

God's character as well. He is the lens through which we are to go back and reread everything else. Jesus had those same Old Testament stories growing up, but somehow He perceived a radically different picture of God than most of us get from them. This month, I want to offer, as our gift to you, the presentation entitled What About The Bible? It is my prayer that your heart will thrill as you begin to see God afresh or maybe even for the very first time.

OSchedule

JANUARY 13,14, 2012

Riverview Adventist Church
Reno, NV
755-322-9642

JANUARY 20-21, 2012

Williston SDA Church
Williston, ND
701-580-1676

JANUARY 27-28, 2012

Grace Family Fellowship
Greenbrier, TN
615-554-7281

FEBRUARY 24 -

MARCH 3, 2012

Chinook Winds
Adventist Academy
Calgary Alberta Canada
403-286-5686

MARCH 9-10, 2012

Crescent City SDA Church
Crescent City, CA
707-464-5229

MARCH 16-24, 2012

Kaneohe SDA Church
Kaneohe, HI 96744
808-247-4345

MARCH 30-31, 2012

Seventh Day Adventist
Church
Lee's Summit, MO
816-697-3772

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