

THE CHURCH WILL BE JUDGED TOO
1 Peter 4:17-18, Exodus 20:7, Proverbs 21:3
By Raymond White

The church has two responsibilities: to God and to our fellow man. And the church will give account for both. The first duty involves the third commandment.

Exodus 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

We overly simplify this commandment to mean don't cuss using God's name. That's not the point. The point is, don't use God as your pretext to do evil. Don't kill in God's name or do anything amiss and attach God's name to it because that's a double sin: a sin against the victims and a sin against God for implicating him.

The second duty involves justice and judgment.

Proverbs 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Apparently they didn't take this too seriously, that God might be more interested in how we treat each other than how faithfully we practice our religion.

Jesus seldom spoke harshly to anyone. He never spoke harshly to prostitutes, to tax collectors, or to soldiers. The only ones he ever got upset with were religious leaders.

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

These religious leaders managed to violate both of their responsibilities at once. They profited by harming weaker people and they used God as their pretext.

That Jesus got angry with religious leaders (and with no one else) should be a wakeup call to priests, pastors, bishops, and all spiritual leaders who claim to represent God to the world. God has his eye on them first. Everyone is guilty of something but leaders should know better. Being in a place of high trust, wielding God's name, and exploiting the people rather than serving the people, in a sense makes God a criminal. And nothing makes God angrier than implicating him by attaching his name to evil.

[1] OLD TESTAMENT

Jesus was not the first to show hostility to false religious leaders. Throughout the Old Testament God frequently condemned his own servants for abusing their high office.

Isaiah 1:13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my

soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. :15 ... because your hands are full of blood.

People of faith often think that their religious observance is what pleases God the most. That's wrong. Israel's religious practices became an abomination because their "hands are full of blood." They thought they could sacrifice children and God wouldn't notice because he was so pleased with their ceremonial rituals.

Jeremiah 9:25 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised.

God will punish Jews right along with the Gentiles. Merely being in the right church and practicing the right religion is not enough to save you.

Jeremiah 23:1 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! Saith the LORD. ***:2*** ... Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them ...

What does "have not visited them" mean? If we take it literally, God is expecting the priests to make house calls, to check in on people and see how they are really doing, not just how they appear to be doing at church. Mormons might think: home teaching.

Jeremiah 23:11 For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 23:14 I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. ***:15*** Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profanesness gone forth into all the land.

It was not just that the prophets were doing bad things, but that because of who they were, their bad examples filtered down and influenced the entire nation to follow their bad examples. Bad role models are contagious.

Jeremiah 25:34 Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like pleasant vessel. ***:35*** And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.

Lamentations 4:13 For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her.

Hosea 6:6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.:**8** ...polluted with blood.:**9** ...the company of priests murder in the way by consent.

It's not your religion (sacrifice, offerings) that impresses God, it's your mercy, and knowledge of God. It's just as Jesus said: love God and love your neighbor.

Here is the point: How can they claim to be merciful when they are polluted with blood? They will defend: But we're not killing anyone. Then God will answer: Yes, you are — *by consent!* In other words, you allow it to happen by not objecting, and thus your silence, your wink and nod, makes you just as guilty as those who wield the knife.

Hosea 8:13 They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

Because of their sins, God rejects their religion. For Catholics and Mormons that would mean God rejects your sacraments and ordinances. For Evangelicals that would mean God rejects your claims of salvation by faith. Whatever you think you're doing to get into heaven won't work unless it is coupled with righteousness.

Amos 5:21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. :**22** Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat breasts.

Micah 3:5 Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err... :**6** Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. :**7** Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.:**8** But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

God stopped talking to them. Why? Because the prophets made the people err. But God did speak to Micah. And why was that? Because Micah spoke the truth, he exposed the nation's sins.

Zechariah 10:3 Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds...

[2] NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus, on one occasion, asked a scribe for his opinion on what was really important. The scribe gave a good answer and Jesus agreed with him.

Mark 12:33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as

himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. :34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly...

Jesus agreed with the scribe thus validating the scribes comment.

Basically what the scribe was saying is that loving God and loving your neighbor is more important than your religion observance. This scribe knew his Bible, he knew and believed —

Proverbs 21:3 *To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

But not all the religious leaders understood that, or if they understood it, the certainly did practice it.

Luke 20:47 *Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.*

Jesus could not have said it more clearly. They thought that their long prayers impressed God, and therefore God would not notice how inhumanly they treated the weakest among them.

John 18:28 *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover.*

This was hypocrisy at its worst. These Jewish leaders were committing murder but they wanted to be religiously pure so they wouldn't enter the Roman judgment hall on the Passover. It's hard to imagine such religious pretense. And oddly enough, they actually believed it.

1 Peter 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin with us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? :18* *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

Today there is a huge abortion industry which is appalling, and one day those baby killers will answer to God. But what is doubly appalling is that so many Christians and even church leaders have bought into the murderous message of a “woman's right to choose.” Babies are dying by the millions, and come judgment day, God's judgment will be meted out, not just to abortion practitioners, but to Christian abortion apologists who think that their religious observance so pleases God that he won't notice the blood on their hands.