

# The Danger of Dead Religion

Isaiah 29

**Isaiah 29:1-4** Ah, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped! Add year to year; let the feasts run their round.<sup>2</sup> Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be moaning and lamentation, and she shall be to me like an Ariel.<sup>3</sup> And I will encamp against you all around, and will besiege you with towers and I will raise siegeworks against you.<sup>4</sup> And you will be brought low; from the earth you shall speak, and from the dust your speech will be bowed down; your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost, and from the dust your speech shall whisper.

**Isaiah 29:5-6** But the multitude of your foreign foes shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the ruthless like passing chaff. And in an instant, suddenly,<sup>6</sup> you will be visited by the LORD of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.

**Isaiah 29:7-8** And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, all that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her, shall be like a dream, a vision of the night.<sup>8</sup> As when a hungry man dreams, and behold, he is eating, and awakes with his hunger not satisfied, or as when a thirsty man dreams, and behold, he is drinking, and awakes faint, with his thirst not quenched, so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.

## I. What is Dead Religion?

### A. A heart that is not interested in God

**Isa. 29:13** And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while **their hearts are far from me**, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,

**1 Pet. 3:18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, **that he might bring us to God**, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

**2 Corinthians 5:19-20** that is, **in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God**.

### B. Spiritual blindness

**Isaiah 29:9-12** Astonish yourselves and be astonished; **blind yourselves and be blind!** Be drunk, but not with wine; stagger, but not with strong drink!<sup>10</sup> **For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes** (the prophets), and covered your heads (the seers).<sup>11</sup> And the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed. When men give it to one who can read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed."<sup>12</sup> And when they give the book to one who cannot read, saying, "Read this," he says, "I cannot read."'

**Isa. 6:9-10** And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' <sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

### C. Superstitious worship

**Isa. 29:13** And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,

**Rev. 3:15-17** "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup> For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

NAS **Isaiah 29:13** Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,

**Matt. 15:1-2** Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, <sup>2</sup> "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat."

**Matt. 15:7-9** You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: <sup>8</sup> "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; <sup>9</sup> in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

### D. The loss of common sense

**Isaiah 29:14** therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, with wonder upon wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden."

*As God is pushed out of the center of life and marginalized, a man's ability to think sensibly diminishes, eventually leading to outright foolishness.*

## II. How to Avoid Dead Religion?

### A. Acknowledge God's sovereignty

**Isaiah 29:15-16** Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?" <sup>16</sup> You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

**Ps. 111:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

## B. A Contrite heart

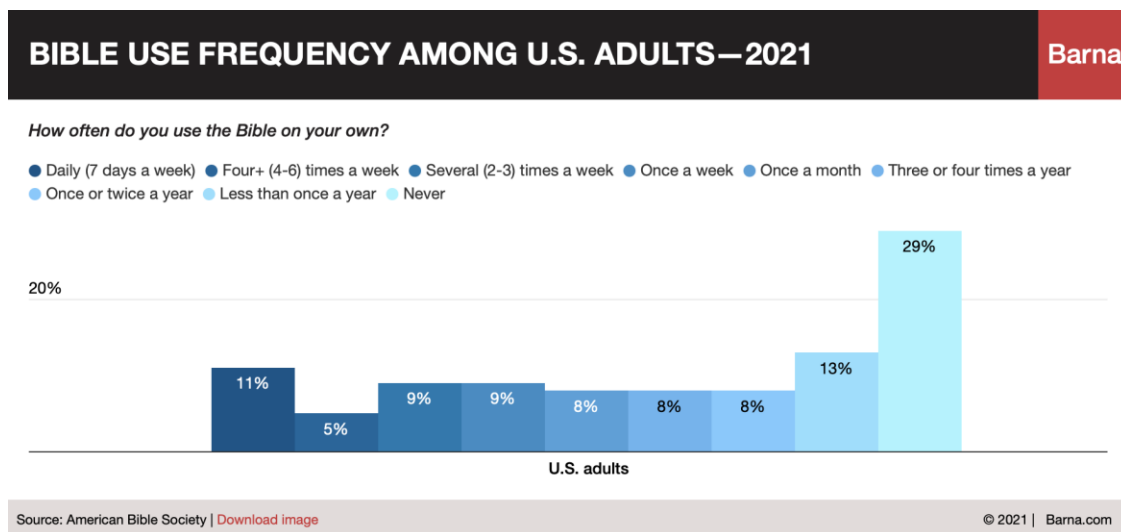
**Isaiah 29:17-19** Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest? <sup>18</sup> In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. <sup>19</sup> **The meek** shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and **the poor** among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

**Matt. 5:3-6** “Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> “Blessed are **the meek**, for they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

## C. A change in attitude toward God's word

**Isaiah 29:18** In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.

**Isaiah 29:24** And those who go astray in spirit will come to understanding, and those who murmur will accept instruction.”



## D. Rejoicing in the Lord

**Isaiah 29:17-19** Is it not yet a very little while until Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be regarded as a forest? <sup>18</sup> In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see. <sup>19</sup> **The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD**, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

## E. Reverence for God

- Acknowledging the reality of God's person
- Contrition of heart before Him
- A change in attitudes toward His Word

- The true joy that comes from our belonging to God and communion with Him.
- Heartfelt reverence for God

**Isaiah 29:22-23** Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: "Jacob shall no more be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale.<sup>23</sup> For when he sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name; they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel.