

Following the King – Sermon 8

“The King vs. the Spirit of Religion”

Matthew 21–22 (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: THE KING ENTERS RELIGION’S STRONGHOLD

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, He was not looking for applause - He was declaring war. The city was shouting “Hosanna,” waving palm branches, celebrating their idea of a King. But in just a few days, the same mouths that cried “Hosanna” would cry “Crucify Him.”

Because religion loves the idea of Jesus until He challenges its control.

Matthew 21 marks the moment the King walks into the heart of the system — the Temple — and confronts the most dangerous enemy of all: **THE SPIRIT OF RELIGION.**

- He didn’t confront the prostitutes first.
- He didn’t confront Rome first.

He confronted the people who looked the most spiritual but were the least surrendered.

- Religion is comfortable with a Savior who forgives sin but offended by a Lord who demands surrender.

- **Let us make it plain, the spirit of religion is not holiness. It is hypocrisy in a holy disguise.**

It doesn't mind you singing about Jesus as long as you never start obeying Him.

It's not a personality or a preference, it's a principality.

- **It wears the robes of reverence but hides the rot of rebellion.**
- **It can quote the Scriptures but will not live the Scriptures.**
- **It polishes the cup while poison fills the inside.**
- **It loves order more than it loves oil.**
- **It loves titles more than it loves tears.**
- **It wants the appearance of godliness without the authority of God.**

It doesn't mind a move of God - as long as it can manage it. It doesn't mind fire - as long as it's under control. It doesn't mind tongues - as long as they don't bring truth. It doesn't mind altars - as long as nobody actually dies on them.

- **The spirit of religion loves the sound of revival but fears the shaking that comes with it.**
- **It builds sanctuaries for God but won't make room for His Spirit.**

- **It honors the past but resists the present.**
- **It protects traditions even when truth is standing right in front of it.**

I MUST SHOUT IT AGAIN: **It is not a personality; it is a principality.**

- It is an ancient power that crucified prophets, persecuted apostles, and nailed the Son of God to a cross, all in the name of “order.”
- It loves rules but hates repentance.
- It loves structure but despises surrender.
- It wants to lead the parade but not carry the cross.

This is not about style, it’s about spirit. This spirit will shout “Hosanna” on Sunday and “Crucify Him” by Friday.

- It will weep in worship but whisper in gossip.
- It will tithe but never truly trust.
- It will fill a pew but not carry a burden.

Religion will let you come close enough to feel God, but never close enough to be changed by Him.

- It will tell you how to act in church but never how to walk in the Kingdom.

- It will tell you how to dress right but not how to live right.

It will make you loyal to a denomination while keeping you distant from the Deliverer.

I came to serve A DEATH WARRANT right now to the principality of religion - **RELIGION IS DEAD!!!**

- This principality is coming down.
- The days of lifeless worship, powerless preaching, and altarless churches are numbered.
- **God is raising up a people who care more about the fire of His presence than the form of their religion.**

A generation who won't just sing "Holy" - they'll be holy. Who won't just shout "Hosanna" - they'll surrender to the King.

POINT 1: RELIGION IMITATES FRUIT BUT PRODUCES NONE

Matthew 21:18–19 (NKJV) “Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, ‘Let no fruit grow on you ever again.’ Immediately the fig tree withered away.”

- When the King got hungry, He came to a tree that looked alive.
- It had leaves. It had promise. It had presentation. But when He got close, there was no fruit.
- He cursed it, not because it was barren, but because it pretended to be fruitful.

That's what religion does, it decorates emptiness. It builds systems of appearance without substance.

It perfects the sound of faith while denying the substance of it.

- Religion is a show without Spirit.
- It's a performance that polishes the outside but ignores the inside.
- It has the posture of life but the power of death.
- It impresses men but offends Heaven.

Jesus never cursed sinners; He cursed pretenders. The world can't taste Kingdom fruit if all the church gives them are leaves.

- Lord, expose every fig tree that has fooled the church into thinking it's alive.
- Every form without fire, every service without Spirit, every voice that says "Lord, Lord" but will not obey, let it wither in Jesus' name.

Transition: The first thing the King cursed was counterfeit fruit. The next thing He did was cleanse counterfeit worship.

POINT 2: RELIGION CONTROLS THE TEMPLE BUT BLOCKS THE PRESENCE

Matthew 21:12–13 (NKJV) “Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you have made it a den of thieves.’”

- I believe today Jesus is in His Father’s house, but **I fear he is finding merchants instead of ministers.**
- They were selling what God intended to give freely.
- They had turned the altar into an ATM and worship into a transaction.

When the spirit of religion takes over, it doesn’t remove the temple, it just redefines what it’s for.

- Religion says, “Come to the temple and get something.” The Kingdom says, “Come to the temple and give yourself.”

So, Jesus made a whip. He didn't hold a deacon's meeting. He didn't call for a survey. He started flipping tables.

You can't reform religion, you must remove it.

- The King doesn't negotiate with religion, He overthrows it.
- You cannot host the presence while protecting the tables.

The spirit of religion will always trade power for performance, presence for popularity, and prayer for profit.

If Jesus walked into many churches today, He'd have to start with the same words: “You've turned My Father's house into something it was never meant to be.”

- Some of us want revival but we don't want rearrangement.
- We want miracles but not movement.

But when the King walks in, He overturns everything that doesn't look like His Kingdom.

Transition: He cursed false fruit. He cleansed false worship. Now He confronts false authority.

POINT 3: RELIGION QUESTIONS AUTHORITY BECAUSE IT HAS NONE

Matthew 21:23–27 (NKJV) “Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?’”

Religion will always question authority because it doesn't walk in any. It recognizes power but can't reproduce it.

- They couldn't cast out demons, so they criticized those who did.
- They couldn't heal the sick, so they held meetings about the ones who could.
- They couldn't raise the dead, so they rewrote theology to explain why.

The spirit of religion hates spiritual authority because authority exposes performance.

- Every revival that ever died didn't die because of demons, it died because of religion.
- The Pharisees didn't fear Jesus' miracles, they feared losing their influence.

Prophetic Warning:

When control replaces consecration, Ichabod isn't far away. The glory will never stay where men are more concerned about titles than tears.

Transition: The King confronted counterfeit fruit, counterfeit worship, counterfeit authority - and then exposed counterfeit righteousness.

POINT 4: RELIGION WEARS THE GARMENT BUT MISSES THE WEDDING

Matthew 22:11–14 (NKJV) “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So, he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

- This man made it to the wedding but missed the wardrobe.
- He had access but no adornment, he wanted the celebration without consecration.

Religion knows how to come to church but not how to come to Christ. It knows how to lift hands but not how to lay down pride. It knows the invitation but not the intimacy.

- Religion wants the feast without the fire.
- It wants presence without purity, acceptance without repentance.
- Religion is content to stand in the room, but not to be changed by the Groom.

The King is walking through His banquet today, asking, “Where are those clothed in surrender? Where are those washed in My blood?” The danger of religion is that it convinces you you’re saved when you’re just dressed up.

But today I am issuing a death warrant: **RELIGION IS DEAD!!!**

- LET THE KING CLEAN HIS HOUSE

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowd threw down branches, but when He entered the Temple, He threw down tables.

He is still doing the same today. The King is coming through His church again. He's not looking for a platform, He's looking for a place of purity. He's not seeking applause; He's searching for altars.

RELIGION IS DEAD – it is time to FOLLOW THE KING!

I am not settling for religion anymore:

- Religion sings about revival but won't let it interrupt the schedule.
- Religion talks about the fire but can't stand the heat.
- Religion builds programs. The Kingdom births power.

It's time for every fig tree of religion to wither. It's time for every temple of transaction to tremble. It's time for every proud Pharisee spirit to bow or break.

The King is cleaning His house again!

- Let Him flip the tables of pride, topple the chairs of comfort, and break open the cages that have trapped His presence. Because **RELIGION IS DEAD!!!**

ALTAR CALL: This is not a moment for casual Christianity. This is a moment for consecration. If you've been going through the motions — if you've been near the fire but not in it, if you've loved the appearance of fruit but not the price of it, this is your call.

Step out and say: “King Jesus, cleanse me. Burn out every trace of religion in me. I don't want to act like a believer; I want to live like a disciple. Strip me of pride, self-righteousness, performance, and pretense. Make me a living altar where Your glory can rest.”

As you come, the King is flipping tables in hearts.

- He's cleansing temples.
- He's breaking the spirit of religion off this region.
- And He's raising up a people who don't just shout “Hosanna” - they live “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done.”