

REBELLION

Characteristics of Religious Rebellion

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ confronted the Pharisees on many occasions, but none were so strong as Matthew 23. He exposed religious characteristics that condemn a man's soul to eternal judgment.
 - A. Matthew 23:1, Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples who are learners of doctrine, ("disciple" is MATHETES, a learner of truth).
 - B. At this time the Pharisees had set themselves up as the only bona-fide interpreters of the Mosaic Law.
 - C. The Jews of the first century used the Torah (Genesis thru Deuteronomy), but they also had an oral Torah that was held in high esteem. They preferred this oral Torah and its interpretations over the written Torah found in the original Scriptures. Other writings were substituted or added to the Old and New Testaments in order to reinterpret, compromise, or discredit the original teachings of the Word of God. The following list are non-Biblical additions that distorted the original meaning of the Old and New Testaments.

Targums – This was a paraphrase and explanation of the Torah in the Pharisees ideology. It contained the Targum of the Torah, Targum of Prophets, and Targum of Hegeographa for the Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Chronicles and Esther. They were written in Aramaic for the Jews who did not understand Hebrew.

Talmud – This contained the civil and religious laws not found in Torah of Bible. It was a list of taboos with commentaries. It represented 800 years of legalistic interpretation of the Bible. It had two parts: the Mishna, or oral law, and Gemarah, commentaries and illustrations.

Mishna – It was called the second Mosaic Law and covered feasts, women, seeds, damages, sacred things, and purifications.

Gemara – Second edition of the Talmud, notes, commentaries, illustrations, written in Aramaic and completed in 500 A.D.

Midrash – Attempted exegesis in Hebrew and Aramaic, and it actually tried to interpret the Torah.

Halakhah – Explained the Law and added rituals, homologetical approach and gave decisions of rabbis on controversial issues. This was the main piece of literature used by the rabbis in the time of Christ. It covered the entire Old Testament, including stories, legends, parables, beliefs, customs, allegories, tradition, and was used from 100 B.C. to 300 A.D.

Septuagint – This is a translation of Hebrew to Greek, 280 B.C. to 180 B.C. It was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and sheds much light on Jewish thinking. It was accepted by the early church as accurate.

Pseudopiriphical Writings – not accepted into the Canon.

Old Testament – Books added to the 39 original books of the Old Testament by various groups included Apollyce, Legendary Man, Poetical books, Apocalyptic books such as Enoch, Secrets of Enoch, Apocalypse of Baruch, Words of Baruch, Assumption of Moses, Revelation of Moses, Prophecy of Isaiah, Apocalypse of Elijah, Apocalypse of Zephiniah, Apocalypse of Exdras, and Sibylline oracles.

New Testament – Books that were added to the original 27 books of the New Testament by various groups were the Gospels of Andrew, Bartholomew, Barnabas, Matthias, Peter, Thomas, Philip, Acts of John, Paul, Peter, Andrew, Thomas, Philip, Thaddeus, Apocalypse of Peter, Paul, Thomas, John the Theologian, Epistle of Paul to Laodiceans.

More books that were added to the Old Testament Books – Legend of Adam, Book of Jubilees, Testimonies of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Apocalypse of Abraham, Life of Asnath, Joseph's wife, Testament of Job, and Solomon, Penitence of Jannes and Jambres, Psalms of Solomon, Eighteen Psalms in Greek, Addition to Psalter, Book of Moses, Story of Achiacharas.

Apocrypha – Means “hidden from the masses” and revealed only to a few. This is the book of the Roman Catholic Church and it is not recognized by the Church Councils of the first 400 years of the Church Age. They are; 1 and 2 Esdras, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Additions to Daniel, Book of Baruch, Tobit, Judith, Fourth Esdras, Wisdom of Solomon, Bel and the Dragon.

When Jerome wrote the Latin Vulgate, he did not use or preface the Apocrypha. He set it aside as separate from the Old Testament and New Testament. There are twenty reasons for rejecting the Apocrypha as being part of the Word of God.

All of this was going on in the world when Jesus confronted the Pharisees and their religious attitudes. It is no wonder they were uptight and confused for “the natural man cannot perceive the things of God, for they are foolishness to him,” 1 Corinthians 2:14.

2. Religion always elevates itself to the mediatorship position between God and the people. Matthew 23:2, “sit in the seat of judges.”
 - A. They always claim to have authority that God gave them when in reality they have nothing but money and power, not God’s blessings.
 3. Religion always is ready to condemn the actions of others but never follows thru with what is right in their own life, Matthew 23:3, they do not live a life of righteousness.
 4. Religions always cause a burden upon people by laying heavy burdens of taboos, legalism, rules, regulations, guilt upon them and then they show no compassion when people fail, Matthew 23:4.
 5. Religion always seeks the approval of men, not God. See Matthew 6:1ff in regard to prayer, fasting and giving.
 - a) A leather strip was tied around the head and wrist to hold a Phylacteries (leather box with Scripture in it; it contained the scriptures Deuteronomy 11:13-21; 6:4-9; Exodus 13:1-16, but the Pharisees made the bands wider so that others could see them).
- PRINCIPLE: Religion is always impressed and appearance. It always seeks to appear “holy” and/or “righteous” by wearing religious clothing, uniforms, or religious symbols.
6. Religion always seeks the positions of honor and self-promotion. They enjoy being noticed for it feeds their approbation lust and arrogance, Matthew 23:6-7.
 7. Religion always demands special titles to place them above others, such as “father.” Jesus said to call no one father, Matthew 23:9-12.
 8. Religious men may appear to be “holy” but they are hypocrites who actually keep people away from the Truth and Jesus Christ (Mark 12:40, Luke 20:47, Matthew 23:13-14, Luke 20:47).

9. There are eight “woes” or damnations that religion brings upon people (Matthew 23:14, Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47). For example;
- They take advantage of widows and their wealth
 - They prey upon them to take their money
 - Wear them down with long prayers to sound holy. The long prayers relax the widow and make her unaware of destruction. Widows keep religion alive thru donations.