

## Religion Is a Lie

(Luke 3:1-14)

### Introduction

[Series] Resonate: Tune into Jesus' frequency to amplify the gospel in your life & church, and to impact the culture.

1. How do you relate to a God who's holy when His standards are so high and we know we're so imperfect?

### Sin, repentance & baptism [Luke 3:1-6]

1. [3:1-2] A clash of systems
  - a. [3:1-2a] Accurate historical record of state & religious leaders in power at the time.
  - b. [3:2b] John walks out of the woods, like a prophet of old, not part of the establishment.
  - c. Contrast: John is outside the system, and can call the nation/people of God to repentance.
2. [3:3] Three big ideas: Sin, baptism & repentance.
3. The problem is sin: Turning away from God because we don't love & trust Him.
  - a. Wicked internal thoughts & external behavior, sins of omission (what we fail to do) & commission (doing what we ought not do), moral transgressions against God's holy character & law.
  - b. It's not just by choice, but also by nature, passed down from Adam like a spiritual virus.
  - c. The only way to solve the sin problem is to deal with the internal condition of sin.
4. The answer is repentance: A change of heart, mind, lifestyle.
  - a. Turning from sin, to God, by faith, through Jesus.
5. Baptism is a demonstration of repentance.
  - a. It's not an external act that saves you, but demonstrates an internal response to the God who saves.
6. [3:4-6] John's ministry fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 40 about one who would come to prepare the way for Jesus.
  - a. [3:6] Repentance/baptism aren't something we do to get salvation; it's how we respond to Jesus who gives salvation.

### Religion: A brood of vipers [Luke 3:7-9]

1. [3:7-9] John's fury
  - a. [3:7] Viper: John calls them evil. Jews would associate serpents with sin, Satan, rebellion, folly [cf. Gen. 3].
  - b. [3:8] John tells them to repent, & not rely on their heritage through Abraham to make them right with God.
  - c. The righteousness of God came to Abraham the same way it comes to us all: By faith in the Lord.
  - d. [3:9] Their traditions & practices are fruitless.
2. Why John is furious: The people coming to him are religious. John calls religion a brood of vipers.
  - a. Religion: Man's effort to earn the favor of God, by the merit of our works.
  - b. [Phil 3:8] Paul calls religion rubbish, garbage, dung.
  - c. God gives love, salvation, mercy & grace as an unmerited gift.
  - d. Religion is the love of additional traditions & rules in place of Jesus.
3. Application: Do you hold yourself to additional religious standards to be a "good Christian"?
  - a. Do you live as if you'll be saved by functional moralism?
  - b. Do you obey & serve God out of guilt/duty? To earn brownie points?

- c. Our obedience & service to God should be *in response* to His love & grace, not to earn it.
  - d. Do you hold others to additional religious standards to be a “good Christian”?
    - i. Are you frequently angry / frustrated with people, have a critical nature, concerned with image?
  - e. If you’re not a Christian, do you see Christians as hypocritical, judgmental rule-keepers?
    - i. It’s the same religious spirit, except apart from God; something I do/don’t do makes me better.
4. Two directions of religion.
    - a. Pride: “God loves me because I earned it.” We become smug, self-righteous, critical & hypocritical.
    - b. Despair: “I’m not good enough for God.”
  5. Jesus lived the life you cannot live, died the death you should have died, rose to give you the gift you cannot earn.
    - a. When we hear about Jesus, we are liberated from religion.
    - b. Some of us need to repent of sin; others need to repent of religion.

### **A lifestyle of repentance [Luke 3:10-14]**

1. [3:10] The people ask: What should we do then?
2. [3:11-14] John’s response: Live a lifestyle of repentance in response to God’s grace.
  - a. Our lifestyle changes because God is good, and Jesus makes transformation possible.
  - b. A lifestyle of repentance is a four-stage process:
3. Conviction: It starts with awareness that something is wrong, parts of our life need to change.
4. Confession: Talk about specific sin with God & other people [cf. 1 John 1:9; James 5:16]
5. Repentance: In response to the grace/forgiveness Jesus gives, we turn away from sin toward Jesus.
  - a. Martin Luther: “All of a Christian’s life is one of repentance.” It is an ongoing lifestyle.
  - b. It’s not just nominal confession; Where we simply state we did it, but keep doing it without remorse.
  - c. It’s not worldly sorrow: Where we feel bad, but there’s no change.
  - d. It’s not religions repentance: Where we see everyone else’s sin instead of dealing with our own.
  - e. It’s not pagan repentance: Where we repent to try & manipulate God to give us blessing.
  - f. It’s not excuse-making: Where we sin, but there’s an “acceptable reason” we did (genetics, blame shift, etc).
  - g. Repentance accepts responsibility for sin, recognizes need to change, and asks Jesus to forgive/change me.
6. Restitution: In response to receiving the grace/forgiveness of God, make amends to others.
  - a. It’s not penance; you’re not paying anyone back to earn forgiveness from God.
  - b. [3:11-14] John says: If you’re ripping people off, stop. If you’re greedy/coveting, stop.
7. Application: What do you need to repent of this morning? Sin or religion?