



**FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH**

# **“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 47”**

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**Pastor Darryl R. Curtis**

Family Life Baptist Church  
909 West Saginaw Street  
Lansing, Michigan 48915  
Phone: (517) 882-0921  
Email: [info@familylifebc.com](mailto:info@familylifebc.com)  
Website: <http://www.familylifebc.com>

***Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.***



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### The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 47

#### Matthew 23:37-39

**“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You have killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to you! How often I would have gathered your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings—and you refused! Look! Your house will be left desolate. I tell you the truth, you will not see Me anymore until you say, ‘Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”**

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

People are often bored by an intellectual, Biblically oriented sermon. Boredom is caused by a lack of interest in the subject matter. You may find a lecture on English grammar boring, because you know English, but a crowd that was learning the language as they emigrated here from a foreign country would find a lecture on English grammar extremely interesting. We generally find things that concern us to be interesting, and things that do not concern us to be less so.

But God has decided to transmit His truths within the framework of archaic language and ancient customs. I recently read an anecdote about a Jewish boy that wanted to go to his classmates' birthday party at McDonalds. His parents, being orthodox Jews, were kosher, meaning that they only ate meat prepared in a specific way to keep the commandment of Leviticus 11 that Jews not eat meat with any blood remaining in it. Since the food prepared by McDonalds is not prepared in the kosher method, the father told his son that he could go to the party, but he could not eat the food.

When the father came to the McDonalds to pick up his son, the mother of one of the children at the party began to chastise him. “I think it's terrible that you embarrass your son by not letting him fit in with the other kids at the party”, the mother began, “Eating a hamburger is not going to kill him. That's not good parenting, if you ask me.”

While the mother was speaking, the boy ran up to his father. “Hey, Dad”, the boy said, “Thanks for letting me come to the party. I had so much fun with my friends.”

The father turned to the mother. “It seems that my son is not embarrassed about not eating the hamburgers. But madam, let me tell you something. My son



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is learning to not let peer pressure affect his principles, that he can choose to participate in those things of which I approve without participating in the things of which I do not approve. That ability is really going to come in handy when he finds himself in a dorm room in college in which one or more of the fellows has alcohol or drugs. It never hurts to teach your child self-control. But you have a nice day now, and enjoy your hamburger.”

Although there is no requirement in Christendom that we keep a kosher kitchen, the father makes a good point. And I think that, although we may never have to practice the ancient customs of the Bible, it is still good to know about them, because God gave each custom to Israel to reinforce a specific principle that we probably still need today.

In our text for today, Jesus is condemning the religious leadership of Israel. He says, in **Matthew 23:37-39**:

**“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You have killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to you! How often I would have gathered your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings—and you refused! Look! Your house will be left desolate. I tell you the truth, you will not see Me anymore until you say, ‘Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”**

The Jewish religious leaders have misrepresented the Word of God in order to lord it over the people and steal from them. That is why they kill those that God sends to clarify His word. In order to explain this situation, I have to talk about Israelite history in the Old Testament, which is the boring part of the sermon. I guess that this would be a good time to get your nap in, if you need one.

God does not always call people to lead because they are the best people for the job. After the Egyptian Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites, God called Moses to lead the Nation of Israel out of the Egypt. At the time that Moses was born, the Pharaoh had decreed that all male Israelite babies should be killed when they were born, but Moses’ mother devised an ingenious plan that caused the Pharaoh’s daughter to have mercy on Moses, spare him from execution, and raise him as her own. So Moses became the leader of Israel because of his mother’s ingenuity, the care of the Pharaoh’s daughter and the grace of God, not necessarily because of his own skill or ability.

As a matter of fact, when God first called upon Moses to speak to the Pharaoh, Moses declined, protesting that he could not speak well. **Exodus 4:10-16** records:

**10 Then Moses said to the LORD, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”**

**11 So the LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?”**



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**12 Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”**

**13 But he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.”**

**14 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.**

**15 Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.**

**16 So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.**

Moses is a reluctant leader, and Aaron is just his mouthpiece. But, such as they are, God designates them as the leaders, to speak and perform miracles, and to become the heroes of the story, although God is the one that makes the Egyptian Pharaoh release the Israelites. After the Israelites leave Egypt with all of the treasures that they can carry, God lays down His prescription for the Israelites to worship Him. God says, in **Exodus 13:1-2**

**1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

**2 “Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine.”**

Moses relayed this commandment to the Israelites in **Exodus 13:11-15:**

**11 “And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you,  
12 that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the LORD’S.**

**14 So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ that you shall say to him, ‘By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.**

**15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’**

This is the law of the firstborn. Since God took the flocks and herds from the Egyptians and gave them to the Israelites, the Lord commands that the Israelites worship Him by offering the first born of each animal in those flocks and herds back to Him as sacrifices. Offering the sacrifices entails killing the animals, pouring their blood on the altar and then butchering the meat so that it can be eaten. To facilitate this worship, God command that the Israelites construct a large tent, known as the Tabernacle, with rooms to offer the animal sacrifices to



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God. God recognizes that Moses and Aaron could not offer the animal sacrifices of all of the Israelites by themselves, and so, in **Numbers 3:5-7**:

**5 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**6 “Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him.**

**7 And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle.**

The work of the Tabernacle is setting up and taking down this big tent, making sure that all of the furnishings are in order, and performing the animal sacrifices, preparing God’s portion to burn on the fire on the altar and preparing the rest to be eaten. God continues, in **Numbers 3:9-13**:

**9 And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are given entirely to him from among the children of Israel.**

**10 So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.”**

**11 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

**12 “Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine,**

**13 because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the LORD.”**

God appoints Aaron and his sons to be His priests, and the men of Aaron’s extended family, the Levites, to be in charge of the Tabernacle. When God gives each tribe land upon which to live, God omits the tribe of Levi, because the Levites job is not agriculture, but administering the worship of God.

My point is that religious leadership in Israel is a function of being in the right family. Aaron, the chief priest, is not necessarily the most holy person in the land, but became the spokesman for God because he was Moses’ brother. Being chief priest is kind of like being the Pope; the Pope is not necessarily the most holy Catholic, but he is the one that gets the most votes when the College of Cardinals meets.

Along with the law of the firstborn, there is another relevant law about offerings to God. **Deuteronomy 14:22-27** records:

**22 “You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year.**

**23 And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.**

**24 But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry**



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the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you,  
**25 then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses.**

**26 And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household.**

**27 You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.**

Twelve tribes have inheritances in the land upon which to grow crops and raise animals. Every year at the time of the feast, they are to bring ten percent of their produce to Jerusalem to eat at the feast. Of course, the family cannot eat ten percent of their crop in the few days of the feast, so the produce that is left over is to be given to the Levites, who do not have farms upon which to grow crops or raise animals. The law of the tithe was developed so that the Levites could take care of the worship of God without either overtaxing any tribe or calling for any tribe to sacrifice more than that which is fair.

Deuteronomy 14:24 instructs the tribes that lived farther away from the Tabernacle to bring their tithe in money and buy animals at the feast. The tribes that lived closer to the Tabernacle gave the Levites their tithe in livestock, and so the Levites had animals to sell, and monopolized the trade. The Israelites that sold their animals in their home territory received the Roman money commonly used in the land, but when they came to Jerusalem to buy animals, the Levites made the rule that the animals could only be bought with Jewish money, which was not commonly used. So, before the Israelites could buy animals, they first had to exchange their Roman money for Jewish money, and, of course, the people that made the exchanges had to make money on that trade.

The temptation to manipulate this trade was too great for the Levites, and unfortunately, by the time that Jesus came on the scene, the trade was corrupted. The moneychangers were cheating the people on the exchange, and the priests and Levites were cheating people on the prices of the animals.

**Matthew 21:12-13 records:**

**12 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.**

**13 And [Jesus] said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”**

The purpose of the worship of God was to bring all of the Israelites together for a great family meal, one in which God would be worshipped and thanked for His generosity and each person would have plenty to eat. God designated the tribe of Levi to serve as the hosts for the meal, and rather than





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concentrating on how to make the meal as pleasant as possible for the pilgrims coming to town, the Levites decided to concentrate on making the most money that they could.

Worship was not designed to enslave or oppress people. God designed worship so that when the Israelites left, they would feel as though they spent a pleasant time with extended family. Although worship was intended to be a family reunion celebration with God as the Father and all of the Israelites as brothers and sisters, the Levites decided to change the celebration to one in which they were the vendors and all of the other Israelites were their customers.

In Christianity, the signature ritual of worship is also a meal, which we call Communion. The word communion means “the act of sharing, or holding things in common”. That which we hold in common is Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross for our sins, which He commemorated by giving His disciples bread as a symbol of His broken body and wine as a symbol of His shed blood. That’s why that when we come together we eat together; we have communion every week, and also why we have food and beverages, discuss our personal situations with one another and pray for one another. The church is intended to be a family, just as was the Nation of Israel.

But God had a problem with the people who were running this family situation almost from the very beginning of the nation of Israel. Samuel’s prophetic ministry to Israel, recorded in the first book of Israelite history, begins with the corrupt sons of the priest Eli. **1 Samuel 2:12-17** records:

**12 Now the sons of Eli [the priest] were corrupt; they did not know the LORD.**

**13 And the priests’ custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest’s servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling.**

**14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there.**

**15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest’s servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, “Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw.”**

**16 And if the man said to him, “They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires,” he would then answer him, “No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force.”**

**17 Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred [meaning hated] the offering of the LORD.**

As you can see, men in the service of God are not always devoted to God. Children are devoted to God because their parents raise them correctly, disciplining and not indulging them. These sons of Eli were indulged because they were to be the high priests, and since they were not sufficiently corrected for



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being selfish as children, when they became men they did real damage to the house of the Lord. But God sent the unnamed man of God, who may have been the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, to tell Eli that his undisciplined sons were in trouble with God, as **1 Samuel 2:27-36** records:

**27 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father [Aaron] when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh’s house?’**

**28 Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire?**

**29 Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?’**

**30 Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: ‘I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.’ But now the LORD says: ‘Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.**

**31 Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.**

**32 And you will see an enemy in My dwelling place, despite all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever.**

**33 But any of your men whom I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age.**

**34 Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them.**

**35 Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever.**

**36 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, “Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread.” ’ ’ ”**

This event happened a thousand years before the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is repeating this speech in our lesson today. **Matthew 23:1-4** records:

**1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,**

**2 saying: “**The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.****

**3 Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.**”





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**4 For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.**

Religious leaders are supposed to live under God's laws just as are the common people because religious leaders are simply common people that have a different job. The Levites were not better than any other tribe; pastors and preachers today are not better than any other people. We are all members of the same family; we all have the same flaws. The Apostle Paul tells us in **Romans 3:22-23**:

**22 For there is no difference;**

**23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

Jesus goes on to talk about the arrogance of the religious leaders, and then warns His disciples against adopting this arrogance in **Matthew 23:6-12**:

**6 They [the priests and Levites] love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,**

**7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'**

**8 But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.**

**9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.**

**10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.**

**11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.**

**12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.**

My job here is to teach from the Scripture because my opinion actually means nothing. Opinions are like behinds; everybody has one. My job is not to tell you what to do; my job is to tell you that which God says that you should do, because Christ is our teacher and God is our father. I am simply a humble servant. Before Moses commanded the Israelites, the Bible says: "**Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying.**" Moses gave the law to the people because God gave the Law to Moses. Moses was simply a spokesperson. The Church does not rest on the pastor; the Church rests permanently on the resurrected and living Jesus Christ; pastors come and go.

The first requirement for any good servant of God is that they must humbly recognize that they are serving God because of God's grace; any of us can be replaced by God at a moment's notice.

The second requirement for a good servant of God is that they faithfully give the actual Word of God to the people, and do their best to model the life that they preach about. Jesus continued talking about the sinfulness of the religious leaders, in **Matthew 23:13-14**:

**13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do**



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you allow those who are entering to go in.

**14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.**

The sons of Eli took advantage of those who came to offer sacrifice, and then put on the garments of the priest to minister in God's Tabernacle. Jesus said that those who do so will be condemned. Everyone that is to be condemned will not be going from the tavern; some will be going from the pulpit. Our devotion to God is not to be superficial, but actual, as Jesus continues to teach, in

**Matthew 23:23-28:**

**23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.**

**25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.**

**26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.**

**27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.**

**28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

Many religious leaders put on a good show, but a good show is not sufficient. **1Samuel 16:7** tells us:

**7 For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."**

Jesus completes his condemnation of the religious leaders, in **Matthew 23:33-39:**

**33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?**

**34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,**

**35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.**

**36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.**

**37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not**



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**willing!**

**38 See! Your house is left to you desolate;**

**39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' ”**

It is interesting that prophets are generally sent, not to the common people, but to the religious leaders, to get them back on track. Since the religious leaders themselves do not want to get back on track, they hate and kill the prophets.

The Nation of Israel forsook the worship of God, not because the people were corrupt, but because the people were led, by their religious leaders, into corruption. Jesus was not crucified because of the vote of the crowd, because the crowd loved Jesus. Jesus fed the multitudes and healed those with diseases. Jesus ministered to the needs of fishermen and tax collectors, and healed the children of religious leaders and Roman soldiers. The crowd loved Jesus, but the religious leaders hated both God and Jesus because Jesus pointed out their hypocrisy and corruption. And so they killed Jesus. But, God used their corruption for our gain, as **John 3:16-17** tells us:

**16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

**17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

God sent His Son because the sacrificial system designed to bring us to Him had been corrupted, and the only one that God could trust to fix the problem was Jesus Christ, who was one with God and could not be corrupted by the things of the world.

The devil is tempting us to lust after the things of the world and hate the worship of God. Jesus came that we might recognize that the things of the world are only temporary and do not lead to everlasting life, and that we should not hate the worship of God to gain the things of the world. Jesus calls us to not let our enjoyment of life turn us from our goal of everlasting life with God, who does not command us to deprive ourselves of the things of this life; but says, in **1 Timothy 6:17**:

**17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.**

God does not command us to be kosher and to deprive ourselves; we can enjoy everything in this world that is enjoyable; we can go where we want and do that which we want, but we are called to develop the ability to choose to participate in those things of which God approves in the way that God approves them without participating in the things of which God does not approve. And while we are enjoying our feasts, we must do so while always remembering that God is our source and our supply; He makes it possible for us to enjoy ourselves;



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He plans for worship to be a joyful and pleasant meal, and that He loves us so much that He sent His son Jesus Christ to reclaim us from the tyranny of those that would enslave us for their own profit. As we worship God, we should enjoy life, remain humble, and not hate, but love one another, as Jesus commands, in

**John 13:34-35:**

**34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.**

**35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

Pastor Darryl R. Curtis  
Family Life Baptist Church