

Pharisees: Ante/Anti-Christ & Anti-Christian

by David L. Burris

Ante-Christ: Dreams Bridge Between Testaments

Statue (Dan. 2)	Four Beasts (Dan. 7)	Ram & Goat (Dan. 8)	The Kingdoms (Dates kingdom occupied Judah)
Head of fine gold	Lion with eagle's wings		Babylonia: King Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar (605–539 BC)
Chest and arms of silver	Bear raised on one side; three ribs in its mouth	Ram with two horns, one higher than the other	Medo-Persia: King Cyrus to Darius III (539–332 BC)
Belly and thighs of bronze	Leopard with four wings and four heads	Goat with one horn that became broken; four horns took its place.	Greece: Alexander the Great and the four divisions (332–63 BC)
Legs of iron and feet of iron and clay	Beast with iron teeth, ten horns, small horn with eyes and mouth		Divided Kingdom: Many scholars believe this to be Rome (63 BC – time of Jesus)
Stone cut out, not by human hands	Son of Man (Jesus Christ)		The everlasting kingdom of God



The Book of Daniel & God's Kingdom

(The Church)

ANCIENT EMPIRES OF MESOPOTAMIA
AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

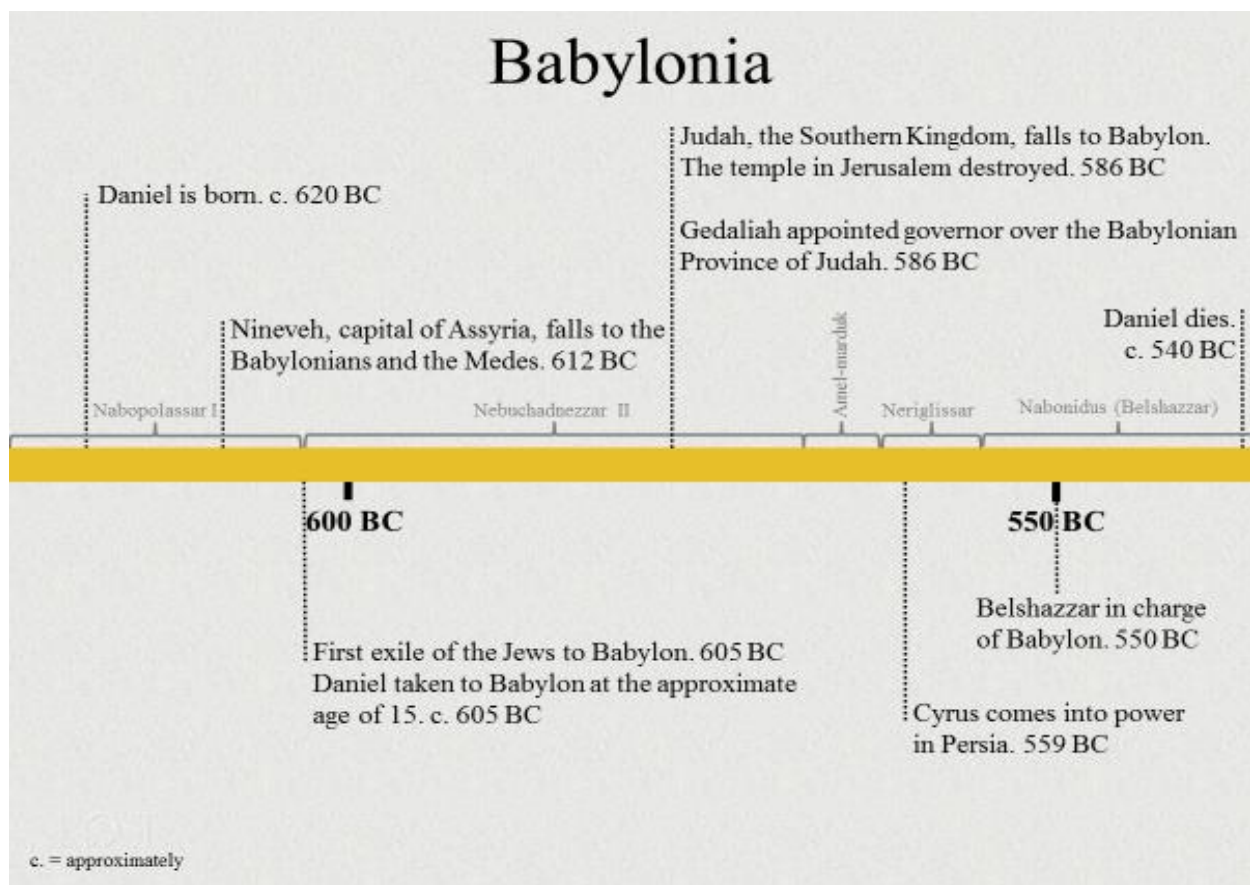
DANIEL'S PROPHECY & INTERPRETATION

GOLD	Babylonian (625 B.C. - 539 B.C.)	"This image's head was of fine gold... The God of heaven has given you a kingdom...you [Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon] are this head of gold" (Daniel 2:32, 37, 38; cf. 1:1).
SILVER	Medo-Persian (539 B.C. - 331 B.C.)	"Its chest and arms of silver... after you [Nebuchadnezzar] shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours" (Daniel 2:32, 39; cf. 8:20).
BRONZE	Greek (331 B.C. - 63 B.C.)	"Its belly and thighs of bronze... then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth" (Daniel 2:32, 39; cf. 8:21).
IRON & CLAY	Roman (146 B.C. - A.D. 476)	"Its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay...and the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, ...that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others" (Daniel 2:33, 40, 42, 43).

Kingdom of God Established (approx. A.D. 33)

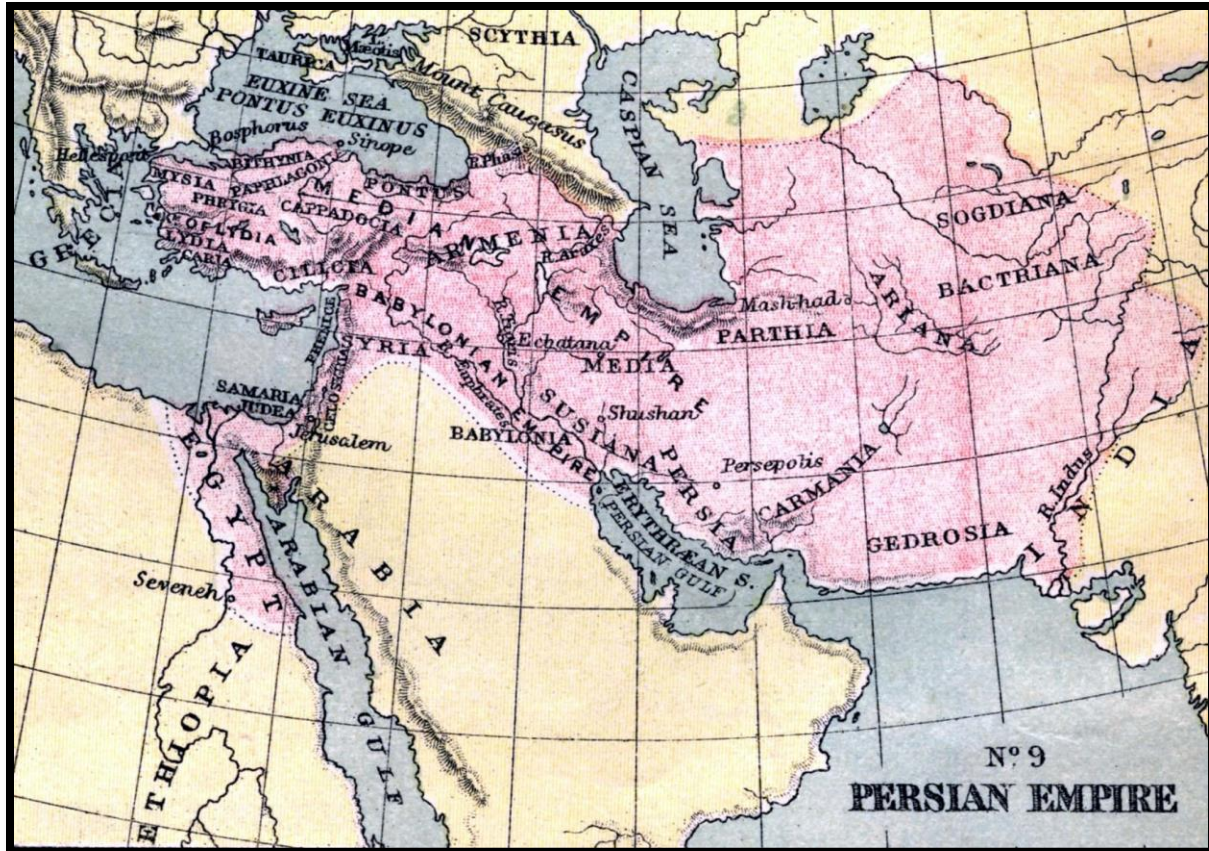
"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever"
(Daniel 2:44).

The New Testament reveals that Jesus and John the Baptist preached the establishment of God's kingdom by saying it was "at hand" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17, 23). Since the church and the kingdom are one and the same (Matthew 16:18-19; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:3; 2:38, 47; 8:12; Colossians 1:13), and the church was established in the first century during the days of the Roman empire, it follows that the kingdom of God was established in the first century following the earthly ministry of Jesus. The church/kingdom is comprised of people from all nations (Isaiah 2:1-2) and thus consumes "all these kingdoms" (Daniel 2:44) and is spoken of in the New Testament as having been in existence during the first century A.D. (Colossians 1:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Revelation 1:9). This kingdom still exists today, and all penitent sinners can choose to become a part of it by being immersed into Christ. Jesus, as the head of His church and the King of all kings (Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:15), is now reigning over His kingdom—His people (Acts 2:36; Luke 17:21).



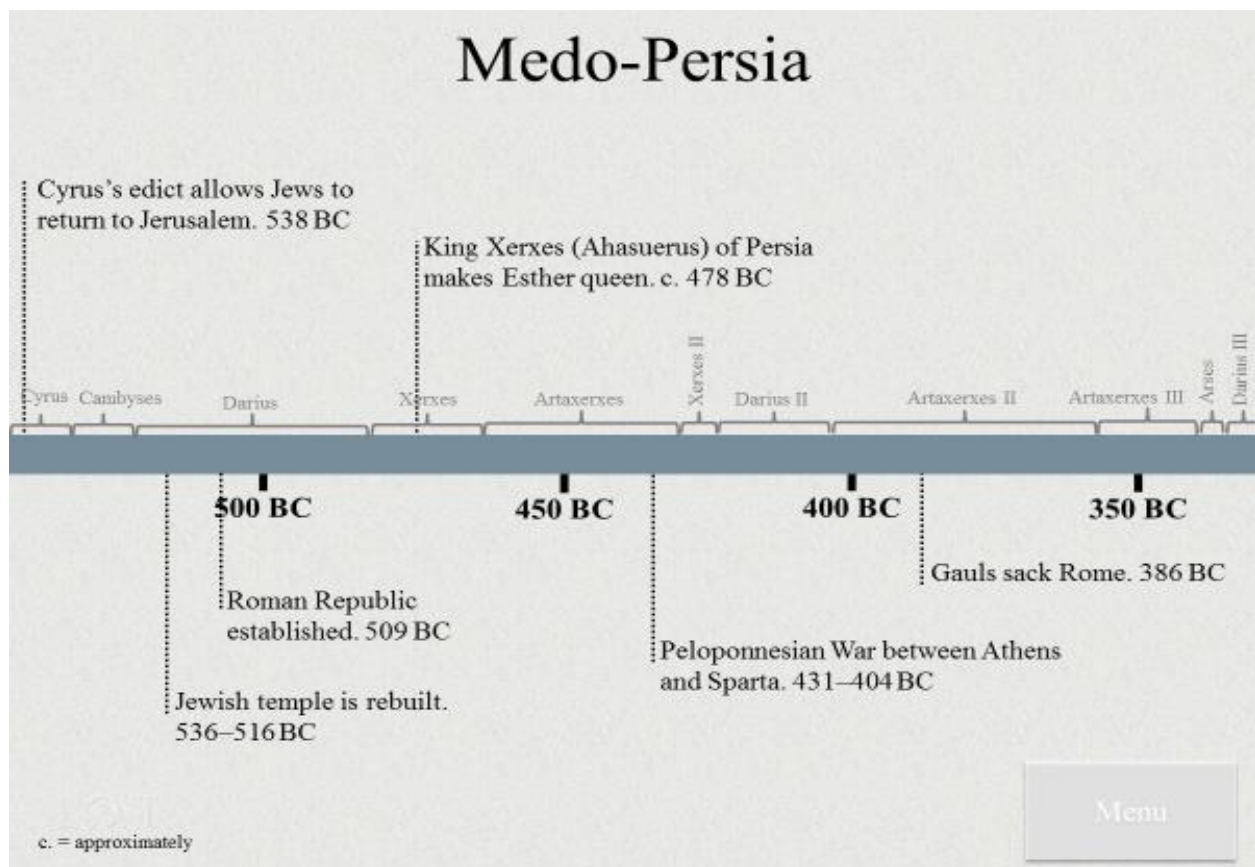
Nebuchadnezzar

- **Made Babylon the chief city & *Wonder of the Ancient World***
 - Covered 200 square miles
 - Walls surrounded the city
 - *Some were wide enough for horse-drawn chariots to overpass on top*
 - Babylonians were not considered as cruel as Assyrian Conquerors
 - *Tended to leave all people exactly where they found them as long as they accepted Babylonian rule*
 - Nabonidus was the last actual king
 - *Left Belshazzar in charge in Babylon on the night God's handwriting on the wall that pronounced mighty Babylon's soon to come doom*



- Persia Babylonians take Judah **586 BC**
- Medes' Cyrus subdues Babylon **539 BC**
- He lets Jews return to Jerusalem **536 BC**

“Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."” “Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held — To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut:” (Isaiah 44:28-45:1)



Timeline:

• Second Temple period in Jewish history

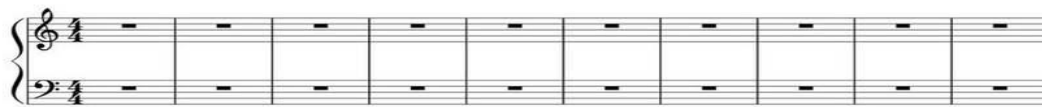
Pre-Hellenistic period	Hellenistic and Roman periods	Maccabean Revolt	The Hasmonean dynasty	Roman general Pompey captures Jerusalem	Jewish-Roman wars
597-537 BC	332 BC	167-165 BC	2nd Century BC	63 BC	70 AD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jewish traditions change, and the monarchy ceases to exist. Destruction of the Kingdom of Judea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The region becomes Hellenized. Judaism becomes threatened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-independence of Judea and new sects are born within Judaism. Hasmonean dynasty begins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They succeed the Chasidim and become an important religious and political sect with Judaism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rome takes over Judea and sacks Jerusalem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second Temple is destroyed. All sects, except for the Pharisees disappear. They keep Jewish tradition alive through the Rabbis.

- ✓ Cyrus, the first king wanted a foothold in Europe
- ✓ Darius, the third king actually attempted an invasion
He Took Thrace and Macedon, but the Greeks held out

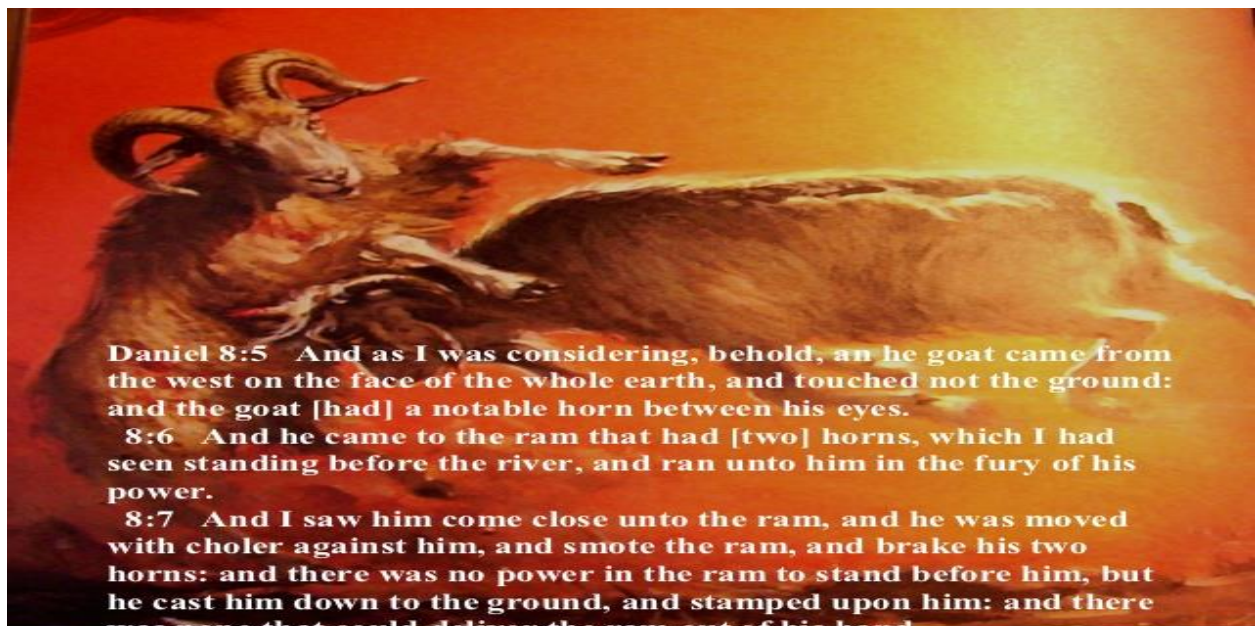


Inspired Old Testament Ends & 400 Years of God's Silence Begins

The Sound of Silence



 musicnotes



Daniel 8:5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat [had] a notable horn between his eyes.

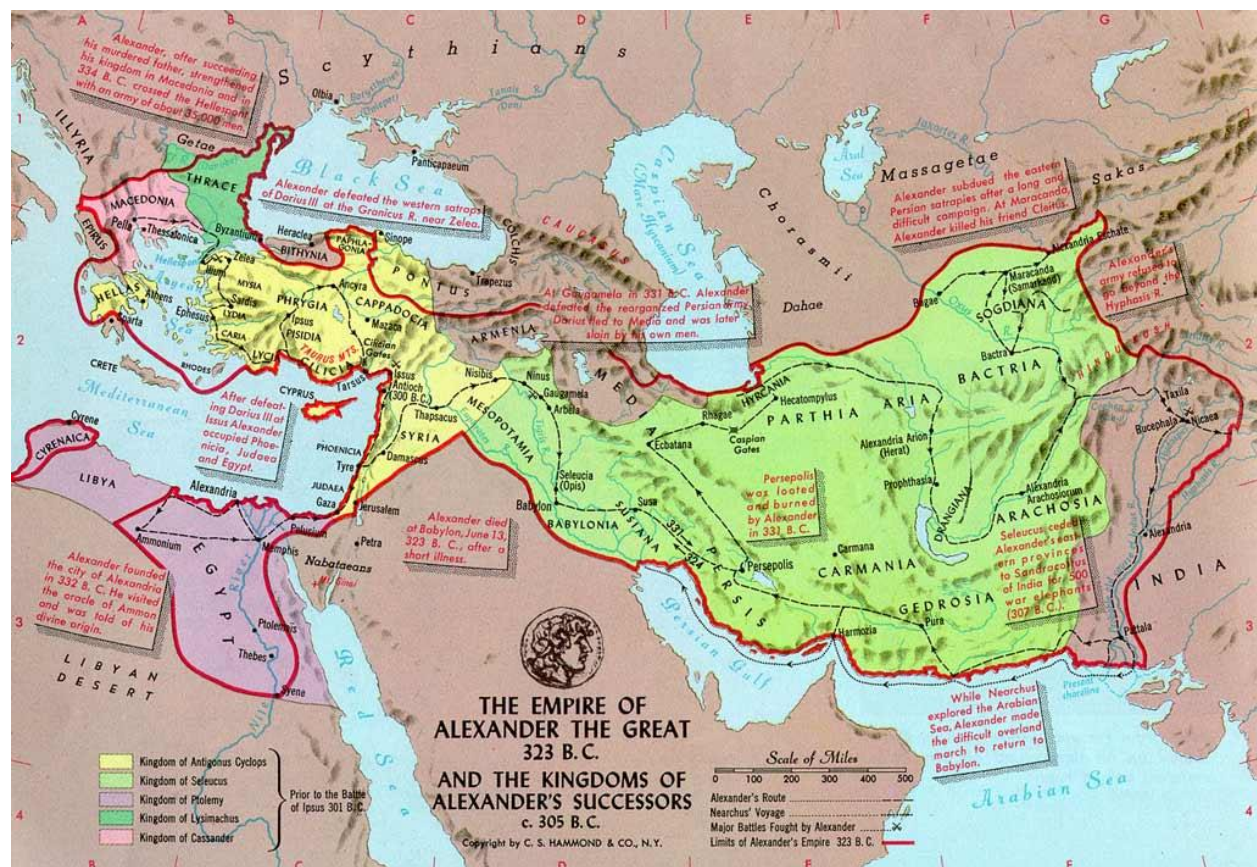
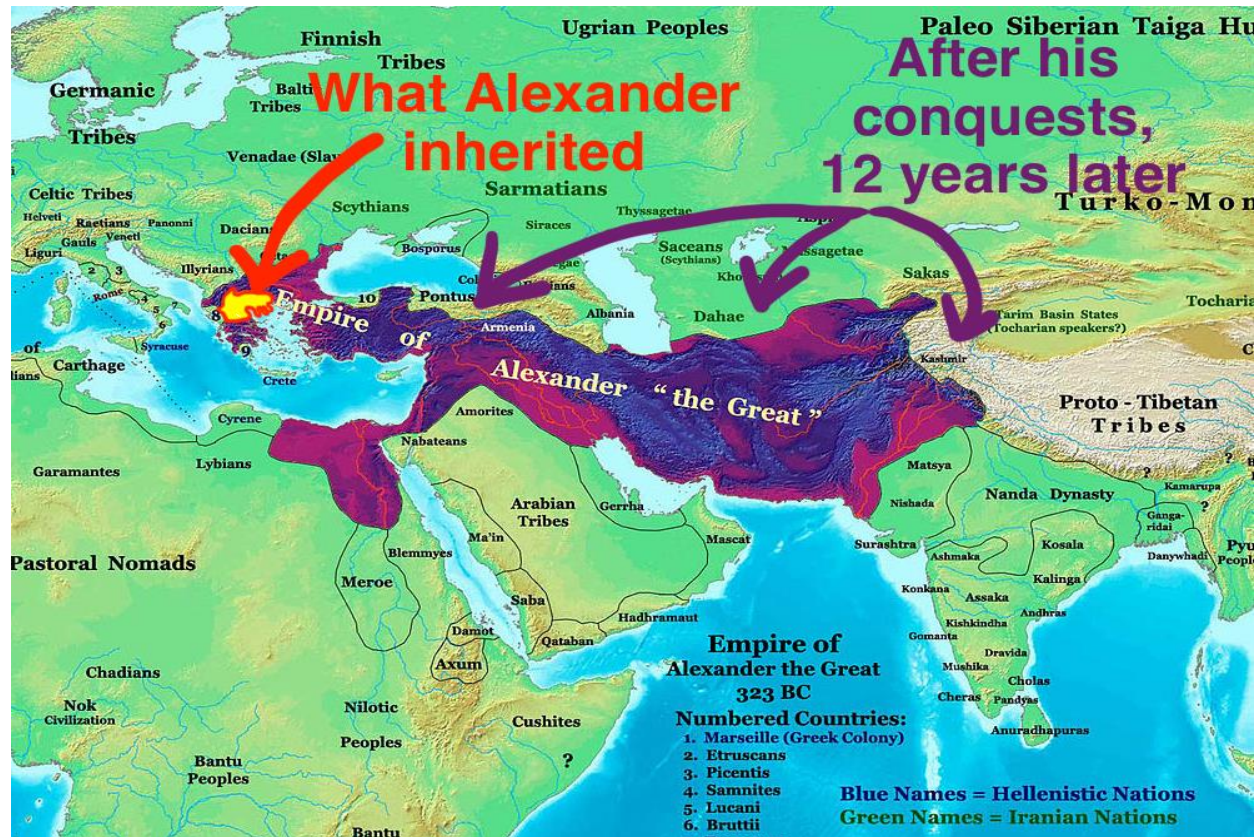
8:6 And he came to the ram that had [two] horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.

8:7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

- ◆ **The Greeks began to grow in strength**
 - ✓ Philip rose to power in Macedon in 359 BC
 - *He was able to unite the Greek states under his control over the next 20 years*
 - *Elected commander of the allied Greeks*
 - *Set out to take vengeance on Persia*
 - ✓ Appointed his son Alexander regent of Greece when he was only 16 years old
 - *Four years later his father was assassinated and he became an experienced ruler*
- ◆ **Alexander's army continued toward Persia**
 - ✓ Met at Issus & Darius III was defeated there
- ◆ **Alexander's army turned southward**
 - ✓ Took Damascus, Gaza, Jerusalem & others
 - *Some peacefully and others with battles*
 - ✓ Island-fortress of Tyre also fell before him
 - *Egypt welcomed the Greeks as liberators from the hated Persians*




- ◆ Alexander's army pushed eastward to complete the conquest of Persia
 - ✓ Carried him as far as the Indus River
- ◆ Returned as far as Babylon in 323 BC
 - ✓ Died there of a fever at only 32 years of age
 - For the first time in all the centuries, we have an empire with its source far removed from the Mesopotamia Valley
- ◆ Alexander's tutor was the famous Aristotle
 - ✓ Thought the Greek or “Hellenistic” culture was the greatest the world had ever before seen
 - As a result he established model Greek cities on-going as he conquered every region



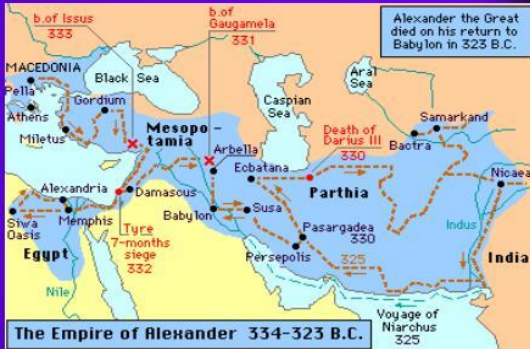
The Goat is Greece! Alexander the Broken Horn!
Daniel 8:21,22

♦ 21 "And the male goat is the kingdom of **Greece**. The large horn that is between its eyes is the **first king**."


♦ 22 "As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power."



The angel says that the Goat is Greece and the horns--as we learn from History --are Alexander's & his 4 generals' lesser kingdoms. Very simple!



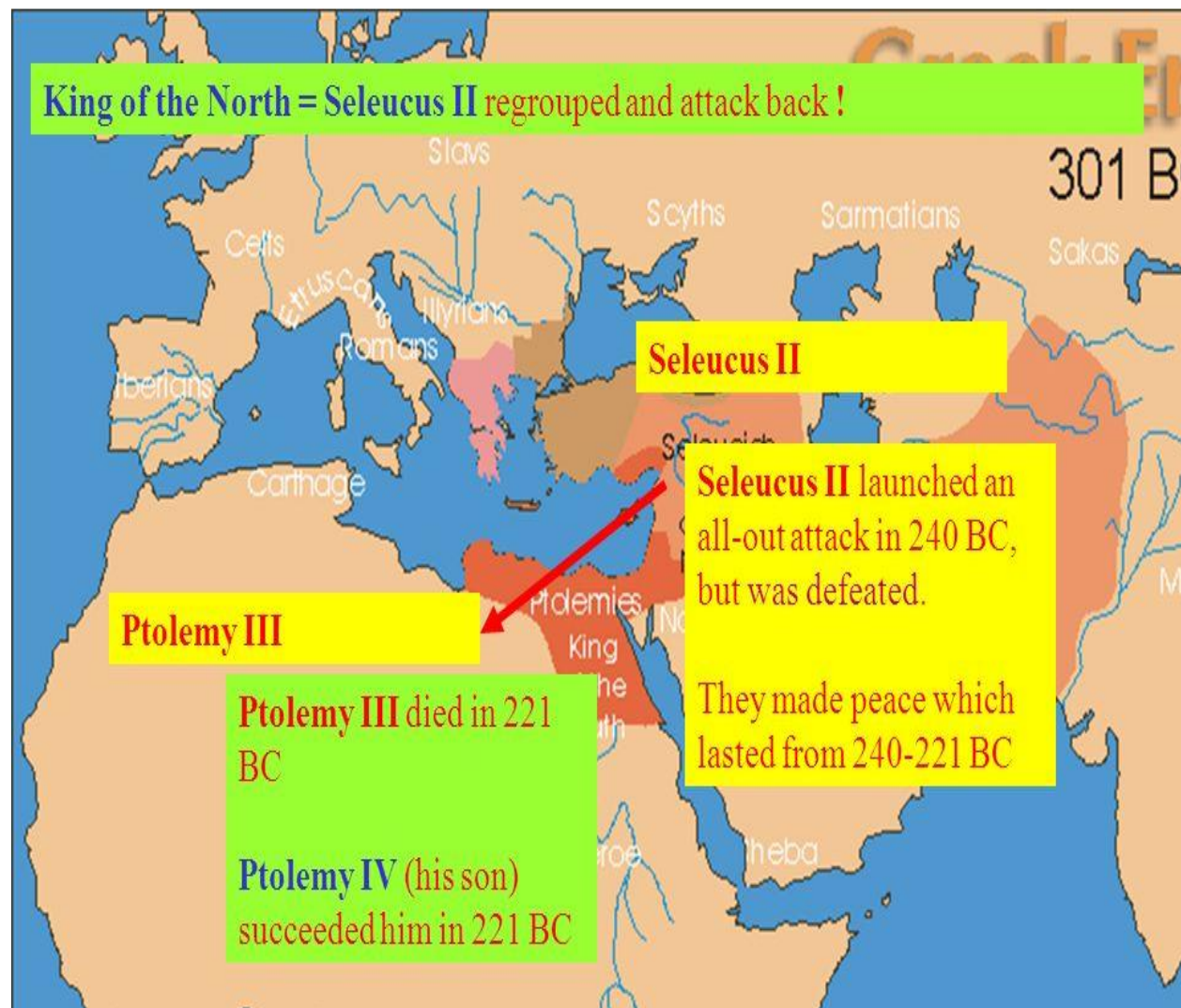
Alexander the Great died on his return to Babylon in 323 B.C.



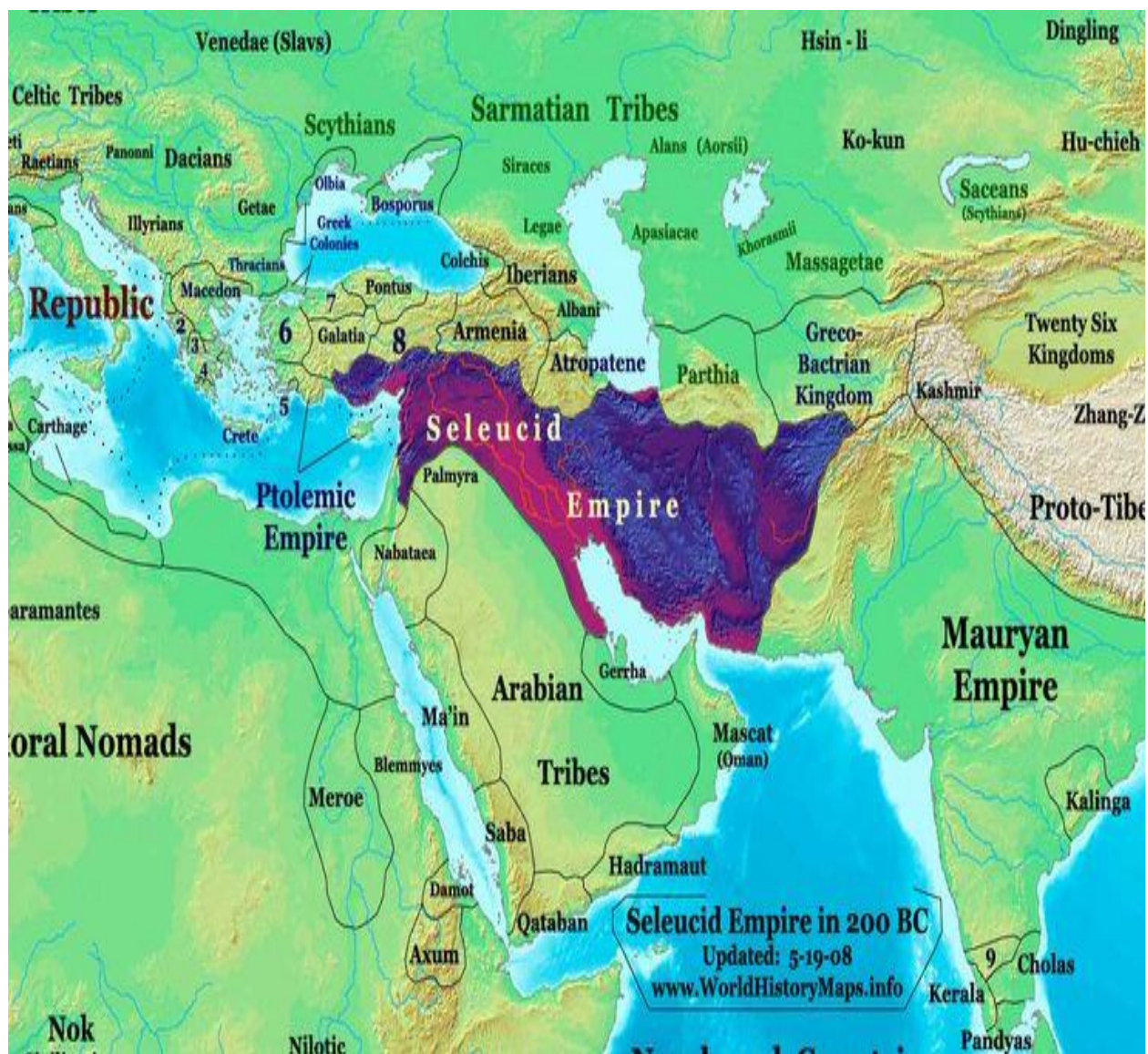
HELLENISTIC WORLD, 300 B.C.

King of the North - Lysimachus
King of the West - Cassander
King of the East - Seleucus
King of the South - Ptolemy

11:9 Then the **king of the North** will invade the realm of the king of the South but **will retreat** to his own country.



- ✓ He didn't live long enough to carry out his plans
 - *His kingdom fell into the hands of generals*
 - *Various men struggled for dominance*
 - ***The territory of Palestine changed hands five times in the first 20 years after Alexander's death***

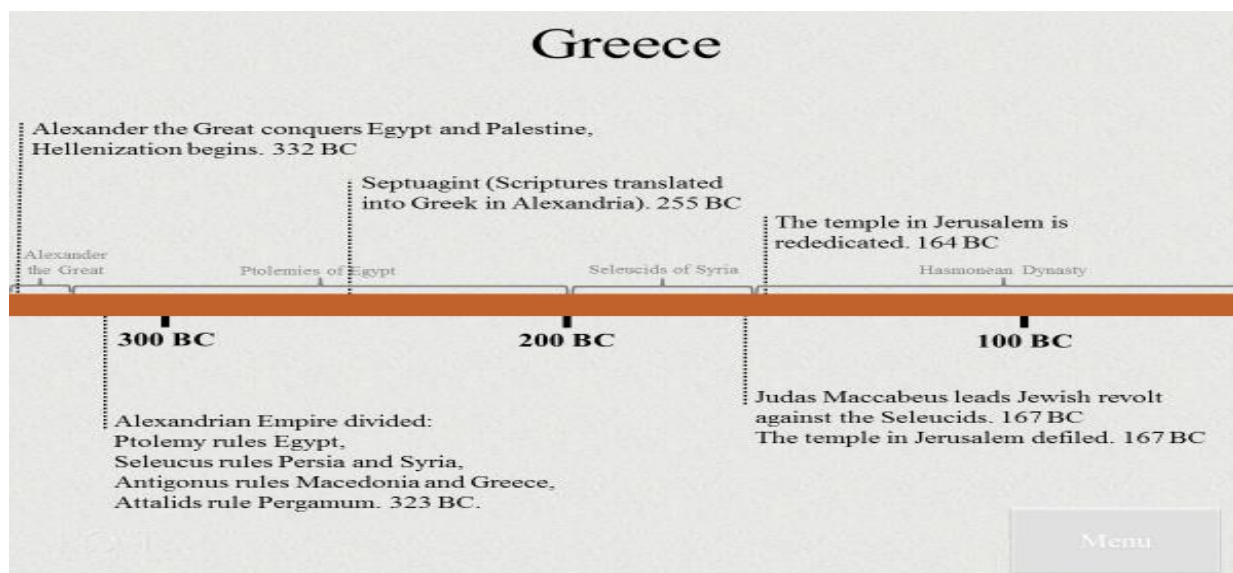


Alexander The Great conquered Medo-Persia— The third world empire represented in Daniel's vision by the middle body and thighs of brass.

Division of Alexander The Great's Empire was as Daniel predicted - the empire of Alexander would separate into 4 parts, that the great horn would be broken and in its place would arise 4 horns. Following Alexander's death his empire was divided between his four generals.

The Grecian Civilization

Gave the world a universal language resulting in the Old Testament scriptures being translated and accessible to all. The Jews were treated favorably and encouraged to settle in various centers throughout the empire. Away from Jerusalem, from the sacrificial part of their worship, greater attention was given to the Law and the Prophets, and the result was that in the dispersion the expectation of the coming Messiah widely spread.





Then The Syrian Kingdom Arose & The Jews Persecuted

In the conflicts between Syria and Egypt Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, seized Palestine and bitterly persecuted the Jews. It was reported that Antiochus Epiphanes died in Egypt which caused the Jews to rejoice. But, it was a false report, and when he returned in 168 B.C. he slew 40,000 Jews and profaned the Temple by offering a sow on the altar. The Jews were forbidden to worship in the Temple and compelled to eat the flesh of swine. The cruelties of Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, brought about a revolt of the Maccabees under the leadership of Matthias. The Maccabees aroused the patriotism of the Jews who rebelled. A name given to a Jewish family that had the courage to “hammer” their enemy. Matthias, the father, was a priest. He had five soon to be famous sons.

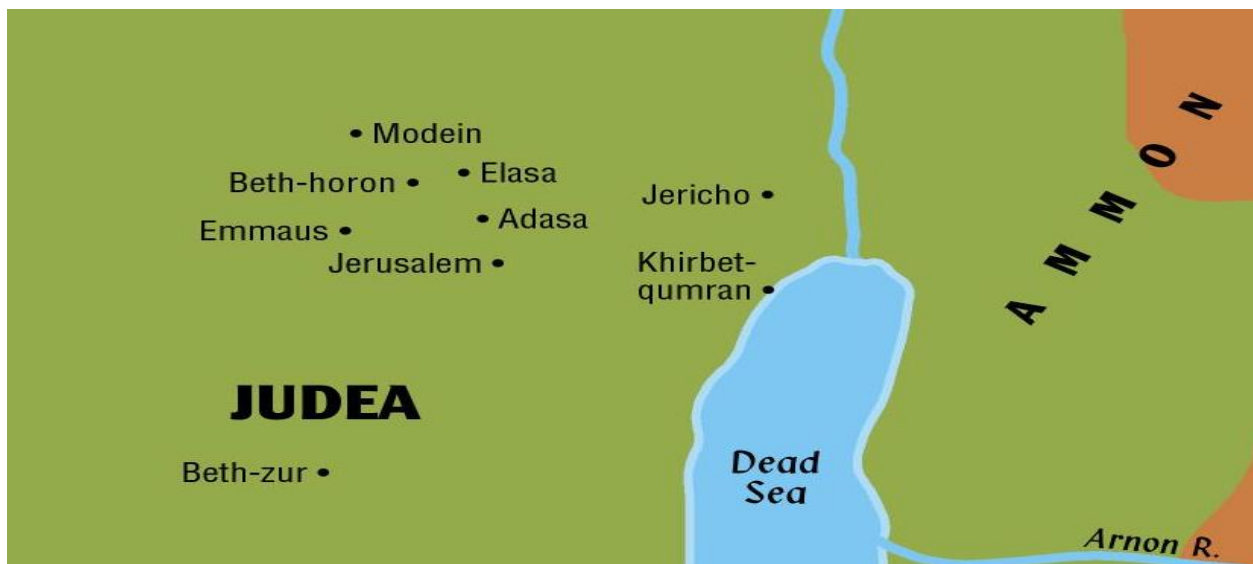
○ Antiochus IV

- Declared himself as the human manifestation of Zeus, the chief god of the Greeks
- Tried to force everyone to accept the Greek way of life and to worship him as the Greek god
- His actions brought him in conflict with the Jews
 - *To submit to his actions would mean apostasy from Jehovah*
- Succeeded in forcing the Samaritans to renounce their religion – then headed toward Jerusalem
 - *Set up a high priest favorable to the Hellenistic way*
 - *Defiled the altar of burnt offering*
 - *Outlawed all Jewish ceremonies such as circumcision*
 - *Forbade the observance of the Sabbath or feast days*
 - *Burned copies of the law*
 - *Set up a cult to worship Zeus in the temple*

**Idols of Zeus were set up in all
public places through Judea
167 BC**

**All who would not obey the king's decrees
and display allegiance to the idol were
publicly whipped and then killed!**

- **Mattathias Hasmonean**
 - A priest living in Modein, northwest of Jerusalem
 - *First to have the courage to withstand a Syrian official*
 - Refused Syrian's demands and declared to live and die in the religion of his fathers
 - *Killed the king's officer*
- **Fled to Gophna, Ephraim**

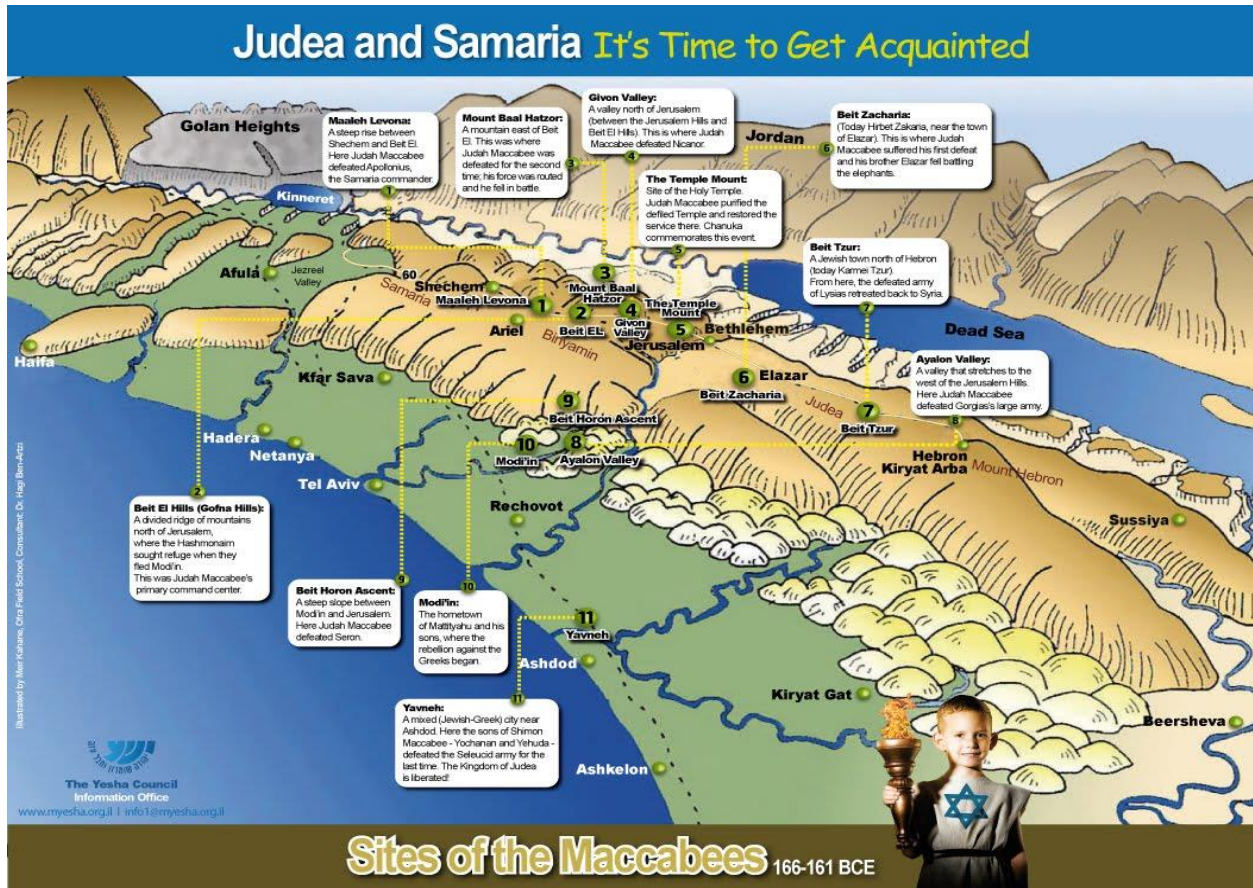


- Faithful from all over rallied around them
- Mattathias, realizing his great age, appointed his son Simon as counselor & head of family
 - *Named Judas as the military leader*
 - *“Maccabee” & “Hammer” were also names by which they were known*

Remembered in history as the ***“Hasmonean Dynasty”***

○ **Judas and his followers**

- Began waging guerrilla type warfare immediately
- Mingled with local villagers during the day and attacked Syrian army outposts at night
- Judas constantly was ambushing some vastly superior force and scattering it
- Outnumbered, he met and defeated the royal forces in a series of victories.



○ **Judas and his followers**

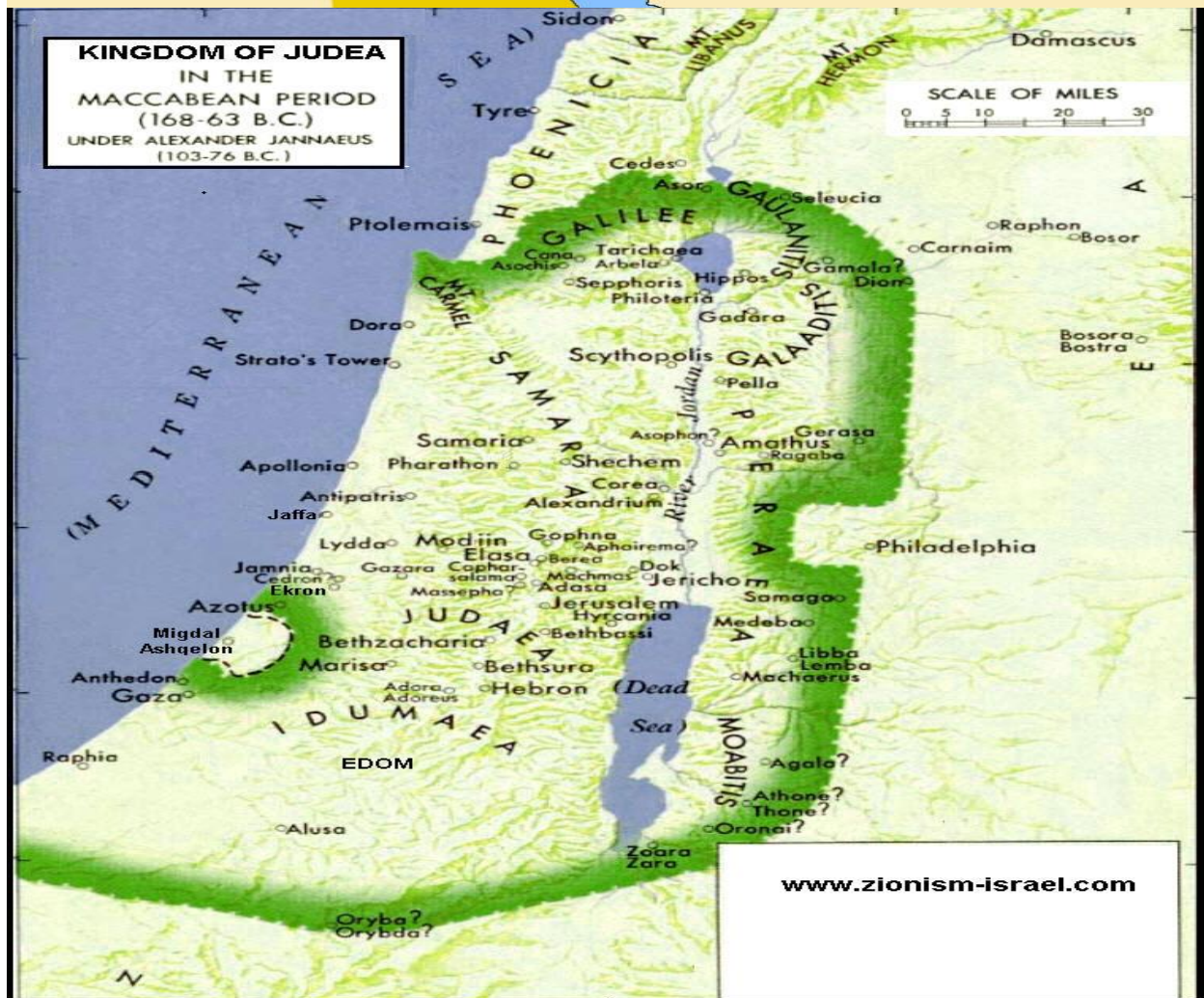
- Defeated a large army at Beth-zur
- It paved the way for re-taking Jerusalem
 - *Retook the city & the Temple Mount 164 BC*
 - *The Temple was recaptured, the sanctuary was cleansed, the temple lamps were re-lit, & sacrifices were resumed. The Maccabees served as both high priests and kings.*

○ **Jews have celebrated the moment ever since with a feast in the New Testament called: The Feast of Dedication**

- Today it is known as “**Hanukkah**”
- Jesus Himself attended the feast as recorded in *John 10:22-23*

○ **Maccabean Accomplishment**

- Subjugation of ancient enemies
- Samaria was conquered
- Mt. Gerizim Temple destroyed



○ RELIGIOUS CHANGES

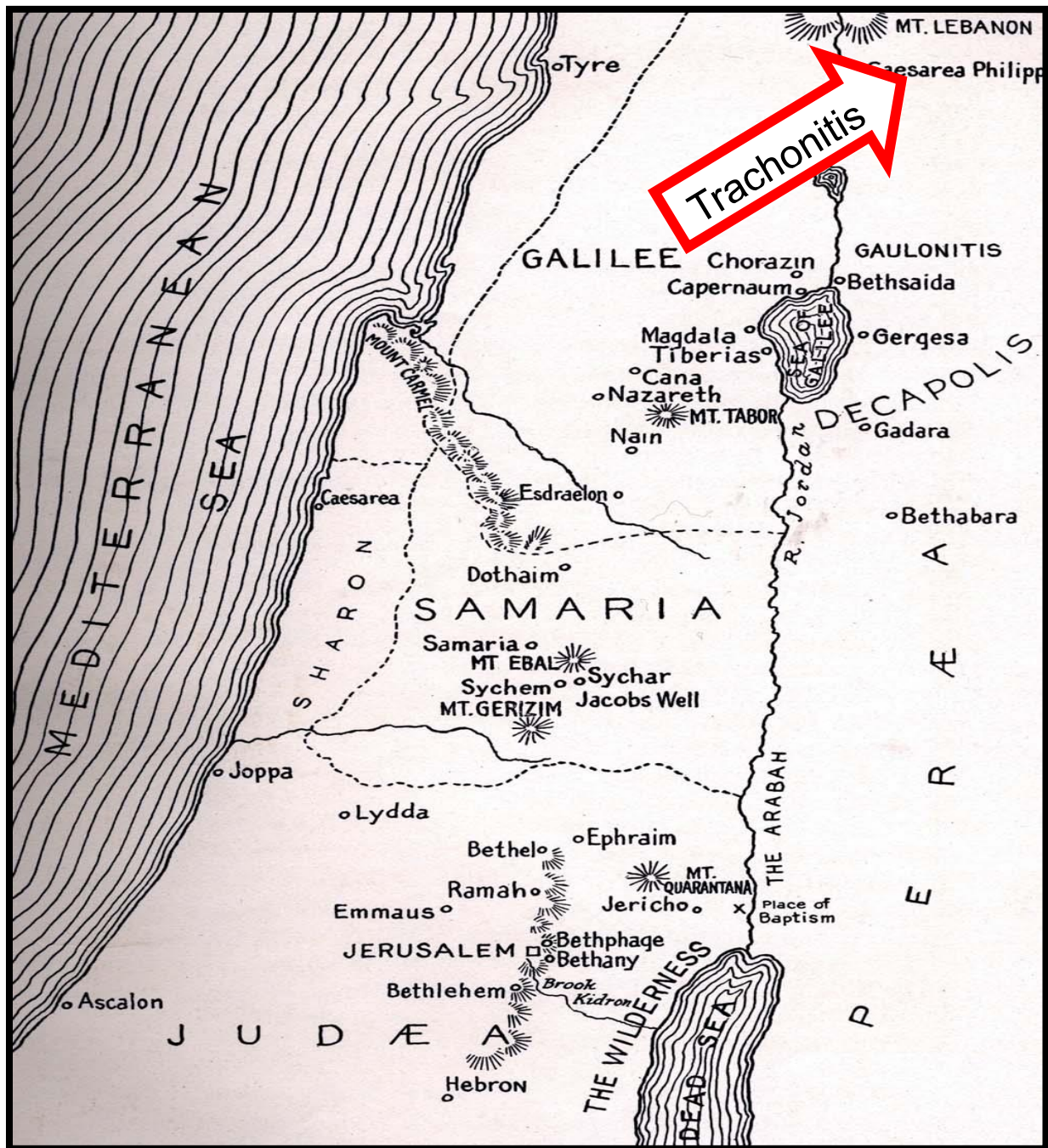
- Traditions, not inspired by God, gradually were given greater honor than scriptures themselves.
 - *Attitudes such as mercy, justice, honesty were abandoned by certain religious sects*
 - *Tried to keep ceremonial rites such as circumcision, the giving of a tenth, and keeping the Sabbath day holy*

○ Vengeance Begets Revenge

- Old Edomites or Idumeans were conquered and forced to formally accept the Jewish religion
 - *This point important later because:*
 - *The Herod's were Edomites who had become forced Jews in religion*
 - **Yet their religion was shallow since they had become such in order to avoid death**

From the time of the Greco-Syrian persecution and going forward the land was divided into Five Provinces with which the Bible Student of the New Testament is familiar:

Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea, and Trachonitis .



- Practical independence was maintained until about **63 BC** when the Roman General Pompey invaded the country and brought it under Roman domination



**Rome was the world power
with Julius Caesar on the
throne.**

**Julius Caesar appointed
governors over the provinces.
Herod the Great was over
Galilee.**

THE HERODS

Rulers of Palestine (47 B.C. to A.D. 93)

The line started with Antipater
who Julius Caesar made Governor of Judea.

Herod the Great, 37-4 B.C.

Herod Antipas, 4 B.C.-A.D. 39

Herod Archelaus, 4 B.C.-A.D. 6

Herod Philip, 4 B.C.-A.D. 39

Herod Agrippa I, A.D. 41-44

Herod of Chalcis, A.D. 48-53

Herod Agrippa II, A.D. 53-93

ADDITIONAL NEW TESTAMENT
VOCABULARY FROM THE
400 YEARS OF BIBLICAL SILENCE

Samaritan
Sanhedrin
Synagogue
Zealots
Herodians
Essenes
Scribes
Sadducees
Pharisees

■ Language

- Aramaic language was the predominant language in the Fertile Crescent from the days of the Assyrian empire
- During the period of Biblical silence, the Greek language became official tongue of both the Syrian and Egyptian empires
- Jews living in Palestine tended to resist the Grecian influence as possible
 - *They continued speaking Aramaic in their daily lives as they had for years*
- Jews had been scattered everywhere
 - *Many migrated to Egypt during the Greek-Egyptian domination*
 - *Alexandria became one of the world centers for Judaism with an estimated million Jews living there*
 - *These Jews began to speak Greek more exclusively and had trouble reading their Hebrew scripture*

- By New Testament days there was a synagogue in every city where there were enough Jews
 - *Ten Jewish men were required to have a synagogue*

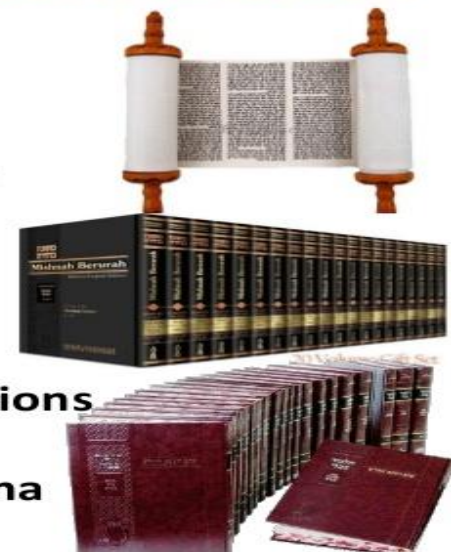
Origin of the Pharisees, Sadducees & Scribes

- The Nation of Israel
- Babylonian exile 586BC
- Reason for exile :
SIN / Disobeying God's Laws
- To avoid being exiled again :
Keep & Obey the Laws of God diligently
- Return from exile 538BC –
Ezra , Nehemiah, Zechariah



Origin of the Pharisees, Sadducees & Scribes

- ↪ Torah – Written Laws
 - 613 Laws
- ↪ Oral Traditions
 - “explanations” of the Torah
- ❖ ‘Great Revolt & Rebellion’
 - about 200BC...
- ↪ TALMUD (*instructions*) :
 - MISHNA (*repetitions*)
Collection of the Oral Traditions
 - GEMARA (*completeness*)
Commentaries on the Mishna



Origin of the Pharisees, Sadducees & Scribes

SCRIBES:

@ Lawyers

- Learned people well versed in the Law
- Copyist, Teachers & Interpreters
 - Explained the meaning of the Law...
 - How it should be kept...
- Highly respected
- Many Pharisees were also Scribes

If the Pharisees are
the Practitioners of the Law
Then the Scribes are
the 'Theologians/Seminarians'



Origin of the Pharisees, Sadducees & Scribes

SADDUCEES :

- Educated aristocratic & priestly class
- Control the Temple & the Sanhedrin
- Generally - accept the Law
but not the Oral Traditions
eg reject resurrection, angels & spirits (Acts 23:8)

** David Pawson's 'mnemonic'

- Pharisees : 'far you see'
- Sadducees : 'sad you see'



	Sadducees	Pharisees	Essenes
Social Class	Priests, aristocrats	Common people	[Unknown]
Authority	Priests	"Disciples of the Wise"	"Teacher of Righteousness"
Practices	Emphasis on priestly obligations	Application of priestly laws to non-priests	"Inspired Exegesis"
Calendar	Luni-solar	Luni-solar	Solar
Attitude Toward:			
Hellenism	For	Selective	Against
Hasmoneans	Opposed usurpation of priesthood by non-Zadokites	Opposed usurpation of monarchy	Personally opposed to Jonathan
Free will	Yes	Mostly	No
Afterlife	None	Resurrection	Spiritual Survival
Bible	Literalist	Sophisticated scholarly interpretations	"Inspired Exegesis"
Oral Torah	No such thing	Equal to Written Torah	"Inspired Exegesis"

References to the Sadducees

	Mt	Mk	Lk	Acts
Sadducees come with Pharisees to be baptized by John	3:7			
Sadducees and Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign	16:1	[8:11] ¹		
Jesus warns of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees	16:6–12	[8:15] ²		
Sadducees question Jesus about the resurrection	22:23	12:18	20:27	
Pharisees learn that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees	22:34			
Sadducees are in the council that tries Peter and John				4:1
Sadducees and the High Priest put apostles in the common prison				5:17
Sadducees are in the divided council that tries Paul				23:6–8

¹Mentions Pharisees only²Mentions Herod instead of the Sadducees

	Pharisees	Sadducees
<i>View of Scripture</i>	Two standards of divine truth, Scripture and Oral tradition	Does not believe in oral tradition. Believes only Scripture is Superior, believes in superiority of the first 5 books
<i>Theological differences</i>	Believes in the resurrection, believes both in freedom and divine will.	Doesn't believe in the resurrection, believes in free will alone
<i>Position in society</i>	Mostly commoners	Aristocrats
<i>Known to be</i>	Separatist stand, ritualistic, legalistic	Compromising stand, free thinker

Origin of the Pharisees, Sadducees & Scribes

PHARISEES :

Meaning - 'separated one' or 'separatist'

↳ Mainly 'lay people'

↳ One year apprenticeship

Aim: strict interpretation & keeping the law on all matters esp **TITHING & RITUAL PURITY**

Goal : keeping the "LETTER" of the Laws

Means : 'religious policing'

Place of influence : the synagogue

Exclusivity ...but Highly Respected

Eg : Paul & Nicodemus



- **“Pious ones” or “Hasidim”**
 - *Early group of religious people strict in observance to the law and firm against anything that would corrupt the Jewish system of religion*
 - *Later known as the **Pharisees***



“Now, for the Pharisees, they live meanly, and despise delicacies in diet; and they follow the conduct of reason; and what that prescribes to them as good for them they do; and they think they ought earnestly to strive to observe reason’s dictates for practice. They also pay a respect to such as are in years; nor are they so bold as to

contradict them in anything which they have introduced; and when they determine that all things are done by fate, they do not take away the freedom from men of acting as they think fit; since their notion is, that it hath pleased God to make a temperament, whereby what he wills is done, but so that the will of man can act virtuously or viciously. They also believe that souls have an immortal rigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but that the former shall have power to revive and live again; on account of which doctrines they are able greatly to persuade the body of the people; and whatsoever they do about Divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform them according to their direction; insomuch that the cities give great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.” - F. Josephus

Source: “Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society”

Place of the Pharisees in Jewish Society

The Pharisee



Essenes on Pharisees.

“The metaphoric designation ‘seekers after smooth things’ (flattery & falsehood) suggests that the Qumran community found their opponents too accommodating to changes in Jewish society, either because they twisted the

meaning of the law (Isaiah 30: 10 & Daniel 11: 32) or allied themselves too closely with non-Jewish authorities and non-Jewish practices.”

Revival or Reform. “The Pharisees’ association probably functioned as a *social movement organization* seeking to

change society. The Hasmoneans & the governing class changed Israel into a small, militarily active Hellenistic kingdom and took control of political and economic resources in order to control society. The Pharisees probably sought a new, communal commitment to a strict Jewish life based on adherence to the covenant.”

Social Relations Network. “The Pharisees’ position in society was part of a complex network of relationships and depended heavily on circumstances, on strong patrons and loyal clients and the cultivation of influence and alliances in society. Possibly the Pharisees, most of whom did not have hereditary ties to positions of power, stressed internal and external relations to build up their own group and win it favor and influence with others. Their social status was not stable like that of hereditary or traditional leaders (priests, village elders, etc.) so they had constantly to recruit new members and compete for influence with those in power.”

Social Roles. “Though some Pharisees were part of the governing class, most Pharisees were subordinate officials, bureaucrats, judges, and educators. They are best understood as retainers who were literate servants of the governing class and had a program for Jewish society and influence with the people and their patrons.

When the opportunity arose, they sought power over society. This means that their organization cannot be viewed as a monastic like community or withdrawn sect which demands privacy and total commitment from every member. It is most likely that Pharisees were bound together by certain beliefs and practices and by endeavors to influence social change.”

Table Fellowship or Religious Sect. “Jacob Neusner has most often argued that the legal agenda of the Pharisees, centered around food laws and festivals, bespeaks a sectarian table fellowship which was not part of the political struggle of first century Palestine. Though the traditions which stem from the early first century mostly concern ritual purity, agricultural tithes and sabbath observance, they do not prove that the Pharisees at that period were turned inward. Sects throughout history have been politically and socially involved with change in society and protest against the status quo as often as they have been withdrawn from society. The classic distinction between sect and cult should be maintained in which sects have greater (negative) social involvement and cults much more tenuous social relations both within the group and with society at large.

If the Pharisees are a sect according to Bryan Wilson's categories, they best fit the *reformist* type which is a group which seeks gradual, divinely revealed alterations in the world. Wilson characterizes reformist sects as 'objectivist' because they seek change in the world, not just in individuals or in a person's relations with the world. A reformist sect differs from the three other objectivist types of sects, the revolutionist which awaits destruction of the social order by divine forces as with apocalyptic groups, the introversionist which withdraws from the world into a purified community (the Qumran community) and the utopian which seeks to reconstruct the world according to these divine principles without revolution. These three types are not hermetically sealed off from one another. A group may have more than one response to the world at the same time, that is, it may overlap two or three of these categories. Consequently, if the Pharisees are understood as a sect, they may have had introversionist tendencies, manifested in their purity regulations, without losing their involvement or desire for involvement in political society. They may also have had revolutionist sect tendencies connected with their apocalyptic beliefs."

Hellenization and the Rise of the Pharisees

Book: Judaism— Revelation of Moses Or Religion of Men?

“As I am their witness, the Jews have a zeal for God, but not according to right knowledge.”

As subjects of the Persian empire, the Jews enjoyed relative peace and quiet—and complete freedom of religious practice. This, however, was about to change. In 332 BC—just over a hundred years from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah—Alexander the Great acquired Palestine. While he was quite tolerant of the Jews' religion, Alexander was committed to the creation of a world united by Greek language and culture—*Hellenism*. As history records, Alexander himself posed little threat to Judea; his successors, however, would aggressively promote his Hellenistic policy. As we will see, it was the *corrupting influence* of Hellenism on the Aaronic priesthood that led to their loss of favor among the People of the Land and the subsequent rise of the *Hasidim*, the progenitors of the Pharisees. With the aid of their scribal cohorts, the outcome would ultimately be Judaism.

Already centuries old and rife with paganism, the underlying philosophy behind Hellenism was *freedom of the individual*—that every man had the “right to think for himself.” Ernest Martin writes that “this philosophy—freedom of thought or individualism—which is seemingly altruistic in principle, resulted in myriads of confusing and contradictory beliefs among the Greeks in every phase of life. Every man was allowed his own ideas about the sciences, the arts, laws, and about religion. So varied were the opinions among the Greek scholars in the various fields of study that individuals took pride in contending with one another over who could present the greatest ‘wisdom’ and ‘knowledge’ on any particular subject” (*Is Judaism the Religion of Moses?*, p. 37).

The *pervasive influence* of Hellenism on Jewish culture and religion must not be underestimated. Within a generation of Alexander's conquest of Palestine, the entire ancient East throbbed with new life—new ideas, new names for old gods, new methods of administration, a new language, and new markets for trade—all of which led to the awakening of the East from the quiet lethargy of easygoing Persian rule. Importantly, Solomon Grayzel notes that Hellenism—as compared to the effects of exile in Babylon—was “more persistent and more subtle in its efforts to lure the Jews from their [Scripture based] way of life” (*A History of the Jews*, pp. 41-42). Martin brings out that the Jews found it impossible to escape the omnipresence of Hellenistic thought. And Greek quickly became the language of commerce and social intercourse, making it necessary to acquire fluency in Greek (p. 77). In *Story Without End*, Solomon Landman writes that the Jews were “*charmed* by the customs and manners, by the very spirit of the Greeks” (p. 73). But as we will see, nowhere was this effect more pronounced than, ironically, among the leaders of the Jews—the chief priests.

Alexander's rule was short lived. No sooner had he been put to rest than his generals began to contend for control of the empire. A long and complicated series of wars followed between the dynasties formed by two particularly important generals, Ptolemy and Seleucus—with Palestine often caught in the middle. Judea first passed under the rule of the Ptolemies of Egypt; later, the Seleucids of Syria would control Palestine. Both Greek kingdoms were strict proponents of Hellenism.

One of the key changes of this period—probably under the rule of the Ptolemies—was the dismantling of the Great Assembly. Of this, Martin writes: “Within a score of years after the coming of the Greeks, the Great Assembly disappears from history as an organized body having religious control over the Jewish people. It is not known how the Greeks dismissed this authoritative religious body from its official capacity as teachers of the Law, but it is obvious that the authority of the Great Assembly was eroded and the Greek leaders forbade them to teach” (“Between The Testaments,” from *Tomorrow's World*, p. 21).

Without the guidance of the Great Assembly, many Jews began to adopt Greek customs. Almost everything the Greeks brought to the Jews was antagonistic to the laws of God; the rule of Scripture was rapidly being replaced by Hellenistic ideas. Martin adds that the *Sopherim* were divested of all authority: “So thorough was the dissolution of the *Sopherim as a corporate body* [i.e., the Great Assembly] that we hear nothing more of any of its members outside of Simon the Just, the High Priest who died in 270 BC” (p. 44; emphasis added). But the highly-respected “doctors of the law” had by no means become extinct. As we will see, they continued quietly, exerting their influence wherever possible; in generations to come, they would find a new venue from which to teach their lofty doctrines—the *Pharisees*.

According to Martin, the period of Ptolemaic rule—roughly 100 years in duration—was an era of religious disarray during which Hellenism made its greatest inroads. Quoting the historian Jacob Lauterbach, Martin writes: “There prevailed a state of religious anarchy, wherein the practical life of the people was [no longer] controlled by the law of the fathers as interpreted by the religious authorities, nor were the activities of the teachers [scribes] carried on in an official way by an authoritative body. This chaotic state of affairs lasted for a period of about eighty years.... [During this time] many new practices [were] gradually adopted by the people” (pp. 45-46; from *Rabbinic Essays*, pp. 200, 206). During this period of Ptolemaic rule, Greek ideas, customs and morality were rapidly absorbed by the Jews. According to Martin, “what had been started by Alexander the Great was **brought to its greatest degree of perfection among the Jews during this one-hundred-year period**.... [The] Jews during this period of Egyptian control, by the sheer force of environment and circumstance, **surrendered themselves to Hellenistic ideas and ways of life**” (*Is Judaism the Religion of Moses?*, p. 39; emphasis added).

The Scribes Discover Greek Logic

Without question, Hellenization had a dramatic impact on the Jews *as a whole*, leaving no area of life untouched. However, the effects of Greek culture on the Jews' religion were most significant—in three specific areas. First, as amazing as it sounds, the priesthood's response to Hellenism was *outright acceptance*—and, as we will see, not without considerable consequences. Second, Hellenization led to the rise of a *new* religious element—the *Hasidim*, a grassroots movement of pious Jews who stood for the “old time” religion of Moses and the prophets.

Third, in the case of the scribes, the effects of Greek culture were *subtle*, yet equally profound. Though no longer functioning as an organized body (such as through the Great Assembly) the *sopherim* continued to be held in high regard. They continued in their study of the Scriptures, passing on their esoteric knowledge to eager students. For the most part, the scribes resisted the liberal ideas of Hellenism, finding them contrary to Scripture. But then, there was Greek *logic*—utterly irresistible to the scholarly mind of the scribe. Of this time, John Phillips writes that while many Jews, such as those of the Aaronic priesthood, “became outright Hellenists and openly embraced the liberal ideas of the day,” the Jewish scholars “added new ideas to their approach to biblical truth. They **replaced the old and approved allegorical approach with a new, exciting logical approach**.” It would not be long, he adds, “before a **lush new tangle of exegetical undergrowth** began to emerge to add to the already spreading” oral tradition (*Exploring the World of the Jew*, pp. 34-35; emphasis added).

Further tracing the development of the oral law to the time of Greek influence, Phillips makes this telling statement: “It was in the [oral commentaries of the] *Midrash*”—which first appeared following the time of Ezra— “that the seeds of [what would become] the Talmud were sown. In the conquests of Alexander the Great and the subsequent Hellenizing of the world, the Jews faced a tremendous survival challenge.... The naive and artless interpretations of the [written] Torah, offered by

the *Midrash*, would no longer suffice in an age of intellectual vigor [*liberal thinking*]. The rabbis [scribes] **began to add Greek reasoning to biblical revelation. The result was the *Mishnah*, the work of a new set of Jewish scholars** known as the *Tannas*" (pp. 58-59; emphasis added; see Appendix One). *Mishnah* means "teachings." It is derived from the Hebrew root *shanah*, which originally meant "to repeat"—as in orally passing on a teaching. Composing a major portion of the Talmud, *Mishnah*—as "the oral doctrine from the earliest Midrash of the Sopherim"—is used generally to "designate the law which was transmitted orally" (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Mishnah"). *Tannas* is Aramaic and, not surprisingly, means "repeaters."

Continuing Phillips' quote: "Instead of the allegories and homilies of the Midrash, the Tannas employed logic and reasoning borrowed from the Greeks.... Like the Midrash, [the Mishnah that developed] was a somewhat jumbled exposition of truth, and, like the Midrash, it kept on **diluting the Word of God with liberal quantities of fallible human opinion**" (p. 59; emphasis added). "The *artless* commentaries of the Midrash"—the simple, oral exegesis of Scripture—"were [during the time of Ptolemaic rule of Judah] seen by the Jews as inadequate in an age of Greek enlightenment. Adding Greek logic to their hermeneutics, the rabbis [scribes] **overhauled their views and developed the Mishnah**" (p. 63; emphasis added).

By "artless," Phillips suggests that the scribes' *midrashim* were, as yet, *uncontrived*. They were genuine attempts to explain the Scriptures. But the idea of a so-called "oral law" was *most* contrived. In fact, with religious constraints cast off, *new ideas* found fertile ground among these Jewish scholars. Thus, while *outwardly* supporting the Scriptures and resisting Hellenization, the scribes could *justify virtually any doctrine* by making the claim that it was part of an esoteric oral tradition—hidden all along in the depths of the written Torah.

Rise of the "Pious Ones"

The rise of the *Hasidim* is of particular importance in the development of Judaism. As has already been mentioned, the Hasidim were, in fact, the immediate forerunners of the *Pharisees*. As a grassroots movement of *pious* Jews, their emergence must be understood primarily as a response to the wholesale acceptance of Greek culture by the Aaronic priesthood. The Hasidim were unalterably opposed to the corrupting effects of Hellenism; and, as we will see, it was precisely the indiscriminate adoption of Hellenistic ideals by the priesthood that propelled the Hasidim to the forefront—to "stand in the gap," as it were.

Thus, to understand the role of the Hasidim in Jewish religion, we must first examine the lamentable response of the priesthood to the lure of Hellenism. On this point, Paul Johnson rhetorically asks, "How were the Jews to react to this cultural invasion, which was *opportunity*, *temptation* and *threat* all in one?" (*A History of the Jews*, p. 98). Ironically, those best equipped to resist the temptation of Hellenism proved the most vulnerable. Instead of realizing the humble, *servant nature* of their God-given role, the priesthood clearly identified itself with the nobility, the upper class, the elite of Judah, who were also strongly attracted to Hellenistic culture. Johnson continues: "Many of the better-educated Jews found Greek culture profoundly attractive.... [Many found themselves] torn between new, foreign ideas and inherited piety. It was a destabilizing force spiritually and, above all, it was a secularizing, materialistic force.... In Palestine, as in other Greek conquests, **it was the upper classes, the rich, the senior priests, who were most tempted.**" (p. 99; emphasis added). Similarly, Grayzel writes that Greek culture had its greatest effect on "the upper classes—the nobility, that is, **the chief families among the priests** who lived in Jerusalem." (*A History of the Jews*, p. 49; emphasis added).

Describing the courageous position of the Hasidim, Landman writes: "[It was with a] mounting sense of horror that the pious elders watched the process of [the] Hellenization of the Jews.... The Pious

Ones, or *Hasidim* as they came to be called, wanted the Jews to differentiate themselves sharply from the Greeks and from the Hellenized Jews as well.... The Hasidim were not simply fanatics or killjoys; they were objecting to the watering-down of Jewish life and faith, **particularly because it was the aristocratic priests . who had become** [the most] **Hellenized**" (*Story Without End*, pp. 75-76; emphasis added). Johnson likewise portrays the Hasidim: "Between the isolationists [those who would ultimately form such antisocial fringe groups as the Essenes] on the one hand and the Hellenizers [the wealthy nobility and the priesthood] on the other was a **broad group of pious Jews in the tradition of Josiah, Ezekiel and Ezra**. Many of them did not object to Greek rule in principle, any more than they had objected to the Persians.... They were quite willing to pay the conqueror's taxes provided they were **left to practice their religion in peace**" (p. 100; emphasis added).

In 198 BC, the Seleucid kingdom of Syria forced the Egyptians to give up Palestine. Like the Ptolemies, the Seleucids were of Greek origin and equally Hellenistic in culture and outlook. At the onset, conditions in Judea remained unchanged. In fact, the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus III (the "Great"), was favorably inclined toward the Jews. Conditions changed rapidly, however, with the coming of Antiochus IV (*Epiphanes*) in 175 BC. As we will see, the corruption of the Aaronic priesthood reached its apex during the rule of this iniquitous Seleucid ruler.

Shortly after he ascended the throne, a group of Hellenizing Jewish leaders approached Antiochus with a clever plan to speed up the process of Hellenization. This "reform party" paid Antiochus a large sum of money to remove the current High Priest, Onias III, and appoint his Hellenized brother, Jason, to the coveted office. They had hoped Jason would help promote Hellenistic ideals. By this time the priesthood was well Hellenized, which brought with it a callous disregard for the sanctity of the office. As Martin notes, "the position of High Priest had dwindled to more of an aristocratic political honor. There was little regard paid to the Law of God by these High Priests. Most of them were outright Hellenists" (*Is Judaism the Religion of Moses?*, p. 40).

Of this time of political intrigue, Johnson writes that "any possibility of Greeks and Jews living together in reasonable comfort was destroyed by the rise of a **Jewish reform party who wanted to force the pace of Hellenization**. This reform movement . was strongest among the ruling class of Judah [the priesthood], already half-Hellenized themselves, who wanted to drag the little temple-state into the modern age. Their motives were primarily secular and economic" (p. 100; emphasis added). He adds that "the Jewish reform movement found an enthusiastic but dangerous ally in the new Seleucid monarch, Antiochus Epiphanes. He was anxious to speed up the Hellenization of his dominion as a matter of general policy.... He backed the reformers entirely and replaced the orthodox High Priest Onias III with Jason." (p. 102). As we will see, the damage done by these "reformers" was incalculable: not only would it soon lead to violent rage by Antiochus against the Jews' religion, it would virtually destroy any remaining confidence the people may have had in the already-corrupt priesthood.

According to Grayzel, the Common People—from which came the *Hasidim*—were outraged. "It was the first time since the Jews returned from the Babylonian Exile that a non-Jewish government had interfered in the succession to the high priesthood, treating the sacred office as if it were nothing more than an ordinary governorship.... [The Jewish] Hellenizers had full control of Judea's government.... [The resurgence of] Hellenized life brought with it a looseness in religious observance, as well as a characteristically Greek looseness of morals" (p. 55). Grayzel adds that "the Common People watched these events with growing horror. They ascribed them to the influence of Hellenism and to the **abandonment by the upper classes [the priesthood] of the principles of the [written] Torah** which the scribes had taught" (p. 56; emphasis added). As a reliable historical source, the extra-biblical book of II Maccabees informs us that under Jason's influence "the Hellenizing process reached such a pitch that **the priests ceased to show any interest in the services of the altar; scorning the Temple and neglecting the sacrifices**, they would hurry to take

part in [Greek activities] They disdained all that their ancestors had esteemed, and **set the highest value on Hellenic honors**" (II Macc. 4:13-15; emphasis added).

The rapidly escalating pace of Hellenism and the corresponding corruption of the priesthood ultimately compelled the Hasidim to organize themselves in order to resist Antiochus and the Hellenizing Jews. But the Hasidim were peasants, farmers, artisans—the poor of the land. They were hardly in a position to fight against the Syrians. Moreover, the Hasidim (or anyone else for that matter) could never imagine Antiochus' next move—to entirely *outlaw* the Jews' religion!

Indeed, about three years later, in 171 BC, "Antiochus found it necessary to replace Jason as High Priest with the still more pro-Greek Menelaus [who was *not* of the Aaronic line]. (Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, p. 102). The reaction among the people was further outrage—with many taking sides and resorting to violence. "In 167 the [rapidly escalating] conflict came to a head with the publication of a decree [by Antiochus] which in effect abolished the Mosaic Law.... But both the Greeks and Menelaus himself overestimated his support. His [illicit] activities in the Temple provoked an uproar. The priests were divided. The scribes sided with his orthodox opponents. So did most pious Jews or *Hasidim*" (p. 103).

Antiochus' bold move—which ranged from forbidding circumcision and Sabbath observance to desecrating the Temple itself—did not go unmatched. The *Hasmoneans*—a staunch clan of Jews of priestly descent from an area northwest of Jerusalem—responded with a counteroffensive initiated by the aged Mattathias. Within a year the rebellion fell to his eldest son Judah, surnamed "the Maccabee." Under the banner of the *Maccabees* (as they were later called) the Jews managed to eventually drive the Syrians from Judea. After some three years of fighting, Jerusalem was finally cleansed of Syrians and Hellenizing Jews alike—and the Temple repaired and rededicated in 165 BC. Grayzel writes, "The High Priest Menelaus, the Hellenizing Jews, and the new pagan residents now fled from Jerusalem just as three years previously the pious Jews had fled before them" (*A History of the Jews*, p. 61).

It was a short-lived victory—as the Syrians quickly regrouped and besieged Jerusalem. However, distracted by an imminent threat to their capital, Antioch, the Syrians offered a truce—one that revoked Antiochus' decree against the Jews' religion, but offered no change in the leadership of Judea. Judah the Maccabee refused. As Grayzel notes, the Maccabees realized that "the [Syrian] treaty of peace would restore power to that very group of aristocratic [priestly] Jews who had begun the entire conflict" (p. 64). Judah's leadership, however, was overruled; naively, the Hasidim were intent on accepting the treaty. This, of course, proved disastrous, with the Syrians and Hellenizing Jews once again dominating every area of Jewish life; the old oligarchy was returned to power, including the appointing of non-priests to the office of High Priest. And, once again, Judah and his army came to the rescue—for the time being.

In fact, the Hasidim would find themselves beset again and again by the Syrians (and Hellenizing Jews) over a period of several more years. Sadly, as Grayzel notes, not only did the Maccabees' struggle end in "only partial victory for the Jewish people," it ended in "total defeat for its heroic leaders" (p. 69). Grayzel is here referring to the ill fate of the Hasmonean line. He writes that even in victory "the Jewish people were unable to maintain . the idealism that they had shown in the days of trouble [following Antiochus's decree]. The **later Hasmoneans** [beginning with John Hyrcanus, one of Mattathias' grandsons], **thirsting for power and glory, lost touch with [their] Jewishness**, so that their actions cast dark shadows upon the memory of their ancestors" (p. 69; emphasis added). By some estimates, however, the Hasmoneans' corruption actually began with Judah's successor, his brother Jonathan. After Judah's death in battle, Jonathan eventually succeeded in bringing an unsteady peace to the area—through diplomacy. But, unlike his brother, Jonathan used his position

to acquire power and prestige. By tactful diplomacy—and by taking advantage of the bloody civil war occurring within the Syrian empire—Jonathan managed to become both High Priest and governor of Judea. “It may be said,” writes Grayzel, “that Jonathan turned the policy of the Hasmoneans from religious to secular.” (p. 71). As we will see, the corruption of the Hasmonean leadership would further the Hasidim's antagonism toward the aristocratic priesthood.

After Jonathan's murder, his brother, Simon, became High Priest and ruler. Already advanced in years, Simon was noted for his wisdom. He formed a second “Great Assembly”—but one quite different from Ezra's time. As Grayzel notes, “The aristocracy which had dominated previous assemblies [i.e., minor ruling councils] had in the meantime become identified with the Hellenizing Jews, so that, if they were represented at all, they were outvoted. The leaders of the Hasidic party [the Hasidim] were in the majority” (p. 72). **This assembly—which would later develop into the *Sanhedrin of Jesus' day*—would not always be dominated by the Hasidim; at times the aristocratic priesthood (known later as the party of the Sadducees) would assume control.**

Simon's death marked the end of a long and heroic struggle for religious freedom—from about 170 to 135 BC. Judea was now independent, and would remain so until the Romans began to interfere in 63 BC. It is, however, important to understand that the Maccabean wars were never really about religious freedom as much as they were about defending the Jews' right to self-rule. Martin writes, **“The majority of Jews had not been anxious to depart from their Hellenism. What they wanted primarily was their freedom from the foreign yoke.** The matter of religion was really [only] invoked to get the people united in one common cause—to drive the foreigner from Judea. There was no real desire among the multitudes to get back to the Law of God.... [Religion had] only become a major issue when Antiochus Epiphanes voiced his anti-religious decrees” (*Is Judaism the Religion of Moses?*, p. 42; emphasis added). As Martin suggests, once Jewish independence was firmly reestablished, most Jews went back to simply being Jews—rather *irreligious* Jews, in fact. Thus, the truly devout among the Hasidim were not only by this time relatively *few* in number, they were undergoing a radical transformation into the sect of the *Pharisees*—with an absolute devotion to the teachings of the scribes.

The next 70 or so years would be a period characterized by conflict, corruption and controversy—both political and religious. The effects of Hellenization on the upper class and the priesthood had become permanent; and now a new generation of Hasmoneans was in control, starting with Simon's son, John Hyrcanus. But unlike their predecessors, they were arrogant and hungry for power—and would quarrel even among themselves for control. More significant, however, was the ever-widening rift between the Hasidim and the still-Hellenistic priesthood. In fact, what had evolved over numerous generations as a fundamentally moral conflict between the grassroots Hasidim and the elite priesthood was soon to erupt into virtual war between the Hasidic Pharisees and the aristocratic Sadducees.

The Perils of Internal Conflict

Of the time following Simon's death, Robinson writes, “At some point during the period in which the [later] Hasmonean dynasty ruled Palestine, three distinct groups emerged within the Jewish community”—the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes (*Essential Judaism*, p. 320). Some associate the reign of Hyrcanus (135-105 BC) with the appearance of the Pharisees. According to *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, for example, it was under the rule of Hyrcanus that the Pharisees appeared as a “powerful party opposing the Sadducean proclivities of [Hyrcanus] the king.... The Hasmonean dynasty, with its worldly ambitions and aspirations, met with little support from the Pharisees, whose aim was the maintenance of a religious spirit in accordance with their interpretation of the

Law" ("Pharisees"). In his *Old Testament History*, Charles Pfeiffer notes that the ideals of the Hellenists "were perpetuated in the party of the Sadducees, [just] as the ideals of the Hasidim were perpetuated in the party of the Pharisees. These parties are first mentioned during the lifetime of Hyrcanus" (p. 580). Likewise, Grayzel informs us that "Hyrcanus's reign saw the emergence of two political parties"—the Pharisees and the Sadducees. "The party of the scribes [which, in fact, represented the Hasidim] . became known as the Pharisee party" (*A History of the Jews*, p. 76). Grayzel makes this statement because the scribes were by this time the scholarly leadership behind the Hasidic movement. *Pharisee* comes from a Hebrew root (*parus* or *parash*) which means "to separate"—indicating the sect's proclivity for *separating themselves* ritually and physically from Greeks or Hellenized Jews. Noting the Pharisees' aggrandizing claim to honor, Grayzel adds, "The Pharisees, spiritual descendants of the Hasidim, argued that their religion had saved the Jewish nation." The Sadducees, on the other hand, were "opponents of the Pharisees," and "remained in complete charge of the government" (p. 77).

The controversies of that day were on several fronts, but *two* were central to the development of Judaism. First, a dynastic struggle for the office of King-High Priest would soon erupt between Hyrcanus' offspring— particularly his grandsons, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II. The two would foolishly invite Roman intervention, resulting ultimately in Rome's occupation of Palestine. But it was the fierce rivalry between the Pharisees and the Sadducees that set the character of the day. The controversy was both political and moral: The Pharisees opposed the Hellenized Sadducean leadership on the grounds that they were unfit to lead the nation; moreover, the Pharisees considered the Sadducees to be utterly ignorant because of their rejection of the scribes' oral law. From the Sadducean perspective, the priests held that the Pharisees' oral law was both illicit and dangerous. Landman writes that the upper classes and the aristocratic priesthood "organized themselves [for their own political gain] into the Sadducee party to back the political activities of the Hasmoneans....." (*Story Without End*, p. 82). He continues: "Because the Hasmoneans and their Sadducean backers busied themselves with political matters, the pious among the Jews began to feel that the commonwealth was [once again] becoming just another [Greek] state.... " The Hasidim—for whom spiritual ideals were of paramount importance—"organized themselves in opposition to the Sadducees.... They formed themselves into a brotherhood, or fraternity, which became known as the Pharisees. Their watchword was strict observance of the laws of ritual and moral purity." While the Pharisees did not oppose the Temple or its services, they felt the priesthood had become compromised by their adoption of Hellenistic ideas—and, in particular, because they "disregarded the oral law" of the Hasidim's scribal leaders (p. 83).

Quoting Dr. Jacob Lauterbach, Martin explains the Pharisaic view: "Following the Maccabean victory there were many priests who were ready and willing to resume their ancient, God-given role as teachers and expounders of the Law. But there were also the lay teachers who [as the Hasidim] had . made a notable contribution to the Maccabean cause at a time when many priests were outright Hellenists and supporters of Antiochus Epiphanes. Lauterbach says that the lay teachers 'refused to recognize the authority of the priests as a class, and, inasmuch as many of the priests had proven unfaithful guardians of the Law, they would not entrust to them the regulation of the religious life of the people' (Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays*, p. 209). It was these lay teachers who organized themselves into the party of the Pharisees" ("Between the Testaments," p. 23).

The Pharisees were not alone in their skepticism of the Sadducees. As Grayzel notes: "The Jews [as a whole] still looked upon the High Priest with awe because he was considered the head of the Temple, their most important religious institution. But the buying and selling of the office, the corruption and ignorance of some of the priests who occupied it, and the fact that they were supporters of Rome and under the thumb of the procurators, **made Jews look elsewhere for religious inspiration**" (p. 115). Echoing Grayzel, Martin adds, "During the period of religious anarchy [under Egyptian rule] . a

fundamental change took place in the attitudes of the priests. Many of the priests were outright Hellenists and steeped in the pagan philosophies of that culture. Not only that, many of them had sided with Antiochus Epiphanes against the Common People during the Maccabean Revolt. Such activities caused the Common People to be wary of the priests and their teaching” (*IsJudaism the Religion of Moses?*, p. 51). Again, most Jews were irreligious—but there was a general lack of trust for the Sadducean priesthood. Thus, the Pharisees began to find increasing support among the pious of the Common People.

At the heart of the controversy was the scribes' so-called oral law, having finally, after decades of fermentation, come to life as *the* central doctrine of the Pharisaic party. Of the Sadducean disdain for the oral law, Hertz writes: “The aristocratic and official element of the population—[which became] known as the Sadducees—unhesitatingly **declared every law that was not specifically written in the Torah to be a dangerous and reprehensible innovation.** [However, the] opposition of the Sadducees only gave an additional impetus to the spread of the oral law by the scribes, later known as [rather, later associated with] the Pharisees” (*The Babylonian Talmud*, Foreword, p. 14; emphasis added). Referring to the “greater issues between the Pharisaic and Sadducean parties,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia* brings out that “**while the Sadducean priesthood prided itself upon its aristocracy of blood [Aaronic lineage], the Pharisees created an aristocracy of learning instead,** declaring a bastard who is a student of the Law to be higher in rank than an ignorant high priest (Hor. 13a).... “Concerning the scholarly decisions of their scribal leaders—who consisted “originally of Aaronites, Levites and [even] common Israelites”—**the Pharisees claimed that the scribes possessed a level of biblical authority that even “endowed them with the power to abrogate the [Mosaic] Law at times [going] so far as to say that he who transgressed their words deserved death (Ber. 4a).”** In fact, the Pharisaic scribes' rulings were “claimed to be divine (R. H. 25a).... [Moreover, the Pharisees] took many burdens from the people by claiming for the sage, or scribe, the power of dissolving vows (Hag. i. 8; Tosef.,i.)” (“Pharisees”).

As long as Hyrcanus lived, the conflict between the Hasidic Pharisees and the Sadducean priesthood remained subdued. The rift, however, reached its climax during the days of his son, Alexander Jannaeus. Jannaeus showed extreme contempt for the Pharisees, even using foreign mercenaries to keep them in check. Soon enough, open civil war ensued. Procuring aid from the Syrians, the Pharisees briefly forced Jannaeus and his Sadducean sympathizers into hiding. In the end, however, the Pharisees suffered a massive defeat, with over 800 Pharisees crucified at Jannaeus' order.

Jannaeus was succeeded by his widow, Salome. Being a woman, she could not officiate as High Priest; thus, the office fell to her son, Hyrcanus II. His brother, Aristobulus II, assumed command of the military. Interestingly, Salome's brother, Simeon, was a leading Pharisee. According to Pfeiffer, this fact may have “disposed Salome Alexandra to seek peace between the opposing factions” (*Old Testament History*, p. 583). **Up to this time, the Sanhedrin—which, as a ruling council, was a later development of the Great Assembly formed by Simon of the Maccabees—was composed entirely of Sadducean priests and wealthy aristocrats.** Turning the tables, Grayzel writes that Salome “dismissed the Sadducees from their official positions and appointed Pharisees to their places in the Sanhedrin” (*A History of the Jews*, p. 82). Landman brings out that her son, Hyrcanus II, as High Priest, “appointed many Pharisees to the Sanhedrin which, up to that point, had been controlled by the Sadducees. The Pharisees were now in a position to influence both the religious and civil heads of the commonwealth” (*Story Without End*, p. 84-85). *The Jewish Encyclopedia* adds this: “Under Alexander Jannaeus (104-78) the conflict between the people, siding with the Pharisees, and the king [had become] bitter.... Under his

widow, Salome Alexandra (78-69), the Pharisees, led by Simeon ben Shetah, came to power; they obtained seats in the Sanhedrin, and that time was afterward regarded as the golden age.” (“Pharisees”).

Under Salome—and particularly with her brother as president of the Sanhedrin—the Pharisees made numerous contributions to Jewish life. Of note was the comprehensive system of education the Pharisees established throughout Judea. This education was, of course, primarily in the Scriptures—led by the esteemed scribes. As we will see, this triumph laid the foundation for what would become an expanded rabbinical system of education, which would prove critical to the popularity of the Pharisaic movement, the development of the Mishnah, and the birth of Judaism.

Near the end of Salome's mostly peaceful nine-year reign, the simmering conflict threatened to reignite. Pfeiffer explains: While the Pharisees were relishing their newfound recognition, “the Sadducees were resentful of the fact that they were deprived of power. To make matters worse, the Pharisees used their power to seek revenge for the massacre of their leaders by Alexander Jannaeus. Sadducean blood was spilt, and the makings of another civil war were in the air” (p. 583). Thus, following Salome's death, “the bloody vengeance . [the Pharisees] took upon the Sadducees led to a terrible reaction, and under [Salome's son] Aristobulus (69-63) the Sadducees regained their power” (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, “Pharisees”). A bitter struggle ensued between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, with the Pharisees pulling for Hyrcanus, the rightful heir of the Hasmonean dynasty.

The two brothers appealed to Pompey, Rome's general in Syria, in 63 BC to resolve their dispute over who would rule the Jews. According to Grayzel, the Pharisees—perhaps at the request of the Sanhedrin—also appealed to Pompey to remove both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus so that “Judea might go back to its ancient constitution whereby the High Priest ruled with the advice of a popular council” (p. 87). Pompey, however, sensed a prime opportunity for Rome and decided to annex Palestine. Hyrcanus II remained in office as a Roman figurehead; the Idumean Antipater—a political climber with Rome—ruled Palestine through his sons, Phasael and **Herod**. Grayzel describes the outcome for the rival parties: “**Herod** (from 37 BC) had not the slightest intention of letting the Jews rule themselves. He deprived the Sanhedrin of every vestige of political power. Neither the Pharisees nor the Sadducees any longer exercised political influence. Only their names continued to exist for the purpose of describing two groups which differed on religious matters” (p. 97).

With **Judea now a vassal state of Rome**, the last vestige of Jewish independence was removed. Stripped of its influence and authority, the Sanhedrin was largely impotent, and the office of High Priest would always be subject to the discretion of the Romans. (In fact, from 37 BC to the destruction of the Temple, 28 different men occupied the office of High Priest, which was originally to be held for life.) Moreover, the longstanding corruption of the priesthood had taken its toll. **By Jesus' time, the Sadducees had regained much of their religious authority; but, as *The Jewish Encyclopedia* notes, “they no longer possessed their former power, as the people always sided with the Pharisees” (“Pharisees”).** Indeed, while the Sadducees controlled the Sanhedrin by a narrow margin, the Pharisees' growing influence could not be ignored. According to Joachim Jeremias, high priests “with Sadducean sympathies had to accustom themselves to withholding their views in council, and [were compelled to submit] to carrying out [certain of] the Temple rites according to Pharisaic traditions” (*Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, p. 159). In the end, both the Pharisees and Sadducees were reduced by the Romans to mere religious sects.

The Synagogue as a Pharisaic Institution

A classic example of the Jews' extraordinary ability to adapt to adversity is seen in the development of the *synagogue*. During the period of the Exile, the Jews out of necessity met in small groups for fellowship, prayer and the reading of the Scriptures. Over time, such gatherings became more regular and more organized in nature. As Pfeiffer writes, "Out of this very real need [for fellowship, instruction and worship] the institution known as the synagogue gradually developed. The synagogue [quickly] became the community center for [exilic] Jewish life" (*Old Testament History*, p. 494). The synagogue continued to develop even after many of the Jews returned to Palestine and rebuilt the Temple. "After the return from captivity, when religious life was reorganized, especially under Ezra and his successors, **congregational worship**, consisting [of] prayer and the reading of sections from the [Scriptures], **developed side by side with the revival of the Temple** at Jerusalem, and thus led to the building of synagogues" (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Synagogue"; emphasis added). For Jews who did not return to Judah—and subsequently became established throughout the Persian Empire, Egypt, and later, the Roman Empire—the synagogue continued as the center of Jewish religion. Thus, "from the generations of old [since Babylon], Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him in the synagogues, being read every Sabbath day" (Acts 15:21). Granted, the synagogue developed out of a genuine need for religious stability. And it could well be argued that the very survival of the Jews of the Diaspora has depended on the synagogue. Yet, that system of worship—while certainly not wrong in and of itself—clearly did not represent God's original intent, which was the primacy of the Temple. This point is important because it underscores the longstanding controversy between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The synagogue system actually developed in conjunction with the rise of the Pharisees, and came to be both *dominated* and *misused* under their authority. Moreover, as we will see, the scribes and Pharisees deliberately used the synagogue as a way of competing with the Sadducean priesthood—to draw Jews away from the Temple services.

As the Pharisees gained in popularity and influence during the Hasmonean period, the synagogue began to play an increasingly important role. Paul Johnson writes, "In their battle against Greek education, [the Pharisaic] pious Jews began, from the end of the second century BC, to develop a national system of education. To the old scribal schools were gradually added a network of local schools where, in theory at least, all Jewish boys were taught the [written] Torah. This development was of great importance in the **spread and consolidation of the synagogue** [and] in the birth of Pharisaism as **a movement rooted in popular education.**" (*A History of the Jews*, p. 106; emphasis added). The Pharisees' emphasis on education is well documented. As quoted earlier, "while the Sadducean priesthood prided itself upon its [Aaronic] aristocracy of blood, **the Pharisees created an aristocracy of learning.**" (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, "Pharisees").

The scribes and Pharisees accomplished this not only through their schools, but through the synagogues. As Landman writes, in time the Pharisees "**made the synagogue the dominant institution in Jewish life**, around which the entire life of the community revolved" (*Story Without End*, p. 85). In fact, according to Grayzel, **the synagogue came to play such a critical role in Jewish life that it actually began to replace the Temple. He writes that shortly after the time of Ezra, "certain influences were already at work which eventually made the synagogue even more important than the Temple itself"—and that Jewish religion in the run-up to the first century AD was "undergoing a transformation which was making the Temple a secondary institution."** (*A History of the Jews*, pp. 118-119).

According to Grayzel, it was the Pharisees who influenced the Jews to believe that services at the synagogue were of *greater value* than rituals taking place at the Temple. While the “daily sacrifice” at the Temple was obviously conducted on behalf of every Jew, “those who recognized the leadership of the scribes and Pharisees were not satisfied with such indirect contact with God” (p. 119). **The Pharisees believed that since God was everywhere, He could be worshipped both in and outside the Temple—and that He was not to be invoked by sacrifices alone.** And remember, the Pharisees maintained their view that the still-Hellenized priesthood was corrupt and incompetent to represent God to the people. Thus, they advanced the synagogue as a place of worship, study and prayer—raising it to a place of central importance in the life of the people. **The synagogue rivaled the Temple, clearly antagonizing the Sadducees.**

By the first century AD, there were synagogues in every Jewish community. Jerusalem itself had several synagogues—there was even one inside the Temple complex! By that time, Grayzel writes, “the attitude of the Pharisees had triumphed.... [The] day was gone when [Jewish religion] depended upon priest and sacrifice, indeed, even upon the Temple itself” (p. 120). In fact, the Pharisees' clout was such that they were able to persuade the Jews to admit into the synagogue some of the non-sacrificial ceremonies of the Temple after it was destroyed. Their goal, writes Grayzel, was to “make the synagogue the heir to the Temple” (p. 196). Some of those ceremonies, having since been modified, form part of the synagogue rituals to this day. Indeed, as *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible* brings out, it is “hardly possible to overestimate the influence of the [synagogue] system” which tended to “diminish, and ultimately almost to destroy, the authority of the hereditary [Aaronic] priesthood” (“Synagogue”). Or, as Jeremias puts it, “the hereditary [Aaronic] Jewish aristocracy had to endure competition from an intellectual aristocracy [that of the scribes and Pharisees] and, after the destruction of Jerusalem, finally be overtaken [by their popularity and clout]” (p. 245).

Ideally, the scribes and Pharisees should have used the synagogues to teach the Scriptures *and* point the people to the Temple. But the rivalry between the Pharisees and the Sadducees was simply too deep. And now, the synagogue was poised to play an even greater role in the development of Judaism—for as Robinson writes, the synagogue would become *the* “central institution of Jewish worship life as a response to the tragedy of the destruction of the Temple [in 70 AD].” (*Essential Judaism*, p. 311).

THEOLOGICAL SYNCRETISM: PHARISAISM/HELLENISM

The effect of contact with Greek thought on the figure of Wisdom was twofold. Wisdom became less obviously the personification of the Torah and became far more the divine power immanent in the cosmos, the rational element in man and the ruling power in the life of the wise man. **Philo goes a step farther and substitutes for Wisdom the masculine term Logos.** Now the Logos in Philo can be the divine pattern of which the material world is a copy, the divine power immanent in the cosmos, the divine agent in creation, or the divine purpose in creation, or the Platonic idea of the good. In fact he can be anything that appears in Plato or the Stoics as the power of God acting on the world, or as an intermediary between God and the world, or as the reason of God immanent in the world. Thus the Logos can, at times, be almost an independent personal being, for the divine pattern of the *Timaeus* is itself living and divine: hence Philo can say that it was to the Logos that God said, “Let us* make man in our own image and likeness.”* The treatment has the advantage of saving God from the responsibility of creating man, the only created being which is capable of evil. In the same way the Logos can be used to avoid awkward anthropomorphisms in the Old Testament, or to explain the language of the Bible as to the word of God as the means of creation. Now obviously Philo has merely substituted a new word, Logos, for the old word Wisdom.† There is nothing for Wisdom to do. Yet actually the divine Wisdom survives. It is here that we have clear evidence that Philo is simply incorporating a whole mass of traditional exegesis of the Bible, and the tradition is too tenacious for him.

In any case, the concept of the divine Wisdom or the Logos—for after all a divine word is the agent of creation in Genesis—enabled Judaism to claim that Moses had anticipated Plato and had known by revelation the full truth at which philosophers had only guessed. They could support the claim by venerable scriptures, written in one of those barbarous tongues which the Greek world affected to despise but secretly admired. There was, indeed, much in the history and religion of Israel that was strange and even repulsive. But allegory could explain almost anything, and find an ethical meaning in the most trivial detail.

We must bear in mind that this philosophizing is not due to a desire for philosophy for its own sake; it has a very definite purpose. As you know, **Philo’s work falls into two main divisions; it takes the form of a commentary on the Pentateuch, but the first part is a system of cosmogony and philosophy foisted on to the book of Genesis by an entirely unrestrained use of allegory.** The second half contains lives of Abraham, Joseph and Moses and a summary of the Law. The two sections correspond roughly to the divisions which a modern writer of a *Summa Theologiae* would make between a philosophy of religion on the one hand and dogmatic and sacramental theology on the other. Now the cosmogony which I have tried to outline plays a leading role in the first group of writings; in the second, it is less prominent. **We have an exposition of the religious system of Judaism, which relies mainly on typology in order to prove the ethical nature of Judaism and is quite prepared to read a cosmic symbolism into the ritual of the Tabernacle.** But in this part it becomes clear that it is Judaism as a religion which matters. The function of the philosophy is to prove that Judaism is intellectually respectable, and so convince the Gentile that it has a claim to be heard, and dissuade the *intelligentsia* of Alexandrine Judaism from abandoning the religion of their fathers. For there must have been this danger. Now that, of course, is a mere commonplace of the schools, dragged in to display erudition, rather than as a serious argument. We find other allusions to such apostasy, which suggest that the danger was neither very serious nor entirely negligible.

Apart from this, I doubt whether all this philosophy meant much. It is a grotesque mistake to suppose that when we find that Wisdom is the wife of God and the Logos their child, we have a re-emergence of the Father, Mother and Child triad of Semitic mythology or the divine paternity of the Egyptian kings. How far did this contact affect the Judaism from which the Rabbinical tradition is a development? There is no reason to suppose that little handbooks of potted philosophy were not current in Jerusalem. After all, St Paul was familiar with these ideas, and though he may have picked them up at Antioch and Tarsus after his conversion, it is quite probable that he learnt them **at the feet of Gamaliel**, where he says he was educated. And again, why are there hostile allusions to the philosophy of Epicurus in the Rabbis? Epicureanism was anathema to the theistic philosophers of the Hellenistic world, because it provided an explanation of life and, in some cases at least, a high standard of conduct, while denying the existence of providence. But why should the Rabbis worry about it, unless it was proving attractive? Were some of the **Sadducees well educated enough in the handbooks to use Epicurus as an authority against a belief in the Resurrection?** Even if it is a mere survival of the Stoic commonplace, its preservation in Rabbinical literature seems to prove a fairly close contact. Again, **Hellenistic cosmology of the type considered above has supplied the Rabbis with abundant food for speculation.**

So much for cosmogony. Judaism was no less at home in other branches of philosophy. Naturally the **Jewish belief in the Resurrection is changed to belief in the immortality of the soul, for the material is always evil in the Philonic convention;** the fall of Adam can be explained as the union of the spiritual with the material; so in each of us the body is the tomb of the soul. Balaam is credited with the startling statement that the bodies of the Jews are formed of mortal seed, but the souls of divine.* This is the Orphic view, which was destined to be a cardinal doctrine of the later Gnostic systems. Elsewhere, **the angels of Judaism appear as the δαιμόνια of Plato, some of them possessing bodies, such as the stars, others disembodied, but used by God for the service of man, while the union of soul and body may represent a fall of the individual soul into the material world; spirits embodied in the stars are, of course, embodied in a higher form of the material, if we like, in the ethereal.**

Now Greek thought never understood a religion which worshipped a single personal God. It could accept a monotheistic philosophy and a religion which worshipped the one divine principle manifested in various gods, not in one personal God. Hence Hecataeus' account of Judaism in Diodorus Siculus* tells us that the Jews worship the vault of heaven, by which he means to identify the God of the Jews with the divine principle concentrated in the firmament; Strabo, probably following Posidonius, says the same.²⁴ In other words you identified the one God of the Jews with whatever you regarded as the supreme deity or source of deity. In the case of Josephus we probably have an account by an observer acquainted with the solar monotheism of Syria who identifies the one God of Israel with the sun and assumes that their scrupulous sanitary observances are due to a view diametrically opposed to the commonplace argument that the sun is not defiled because his rays fall on a cesspool.²⁶† The strong Hellenistic colouring appears when Josephus tells us that the Essenes believe that the souls of the righteous dead go to the Islands of the Blest.

On the other hand, outside the canon of the Scriptures, Judaism was quite ready to borrow from the Gentile world an amazing quantity of Midrashic interpretation and enlargement of the Bible story. According to Josephus, the killing of the children of the Hebrews was the result of a prophecy by an Egyptian scribe that Moses would deliver the children of Israel; a similar slaughter of the innocents appears in Suetonius' account of Augustus.³⁵ Eusebius preserves a considerable amount of this literature; an enormous amount has perished. There was even an account of the Exodus in the form of a Greek tragedy by a certain Ezekiel; enough has been preserved to make us thankful that the rest has been lost.³⁶ **The speeches which Josephus puts into the mouth of Moses are typical of the history of the period,** and worthy rivals in dullness to those which Dionysius of Halicarnassus puts into the mouth of the kings and consuls of ancient Rome. Philo's general view is that there is a sympathy between all the parts of nature, as a result of which the whole is held together by the unseen power, which is the goodness of God (this is pure Stoicism of the later type, modelled on the *Timaeus*, but introducing quite a Jewish view of the divine attribute of goodness).*

Other views which Philo incorporates include the belief that the planets are animated bodies; the Cherubim of Gen. 3:24 can symbolize the sphere of the fixed stars and the sphere of the planets respectively, while the flaming sword is the revolution of the vault of heaven. But while the movement of the planets from east to west is determined, their movement from north to south is voluntary, though they adhere to the order appointed by the creator.

There is no such thing as fate in the strict sense; there are chains of cause and effect, but God is above them and orders the course of the world by His government.† Elsewhere the planets and fixed stars are the rulers (archons) of the world and the inhabitants of the sublunar sphere are the subjects; the archons are visible gods, subordinates, who are liable to be called upon to give account of their government of the universe, though owing to their virtue they will not be called upon to do so.* What is the importance of this contact between the Judaism of the Hellenistic age and Greek thought? We may ask the question with reference either to the influence of Judaism on the Gentile world or the influence of the Gentile world on Judaism. In regard to the first issue we have no materials for an adequate answer. We know that there was a widespread tendency towards that kind of religion which we can describe as "ethical monotheism". It is clear from the history of early Christianity that the synagogues of the Dispersion were attracting a considerable number of proselytes or less definite adherents among the Gentiles. It cannot be doubted that Judaism provided a good many Gentiles with a religion that would satisfy their needs. How far the influence of Judaism extended beyond the Synagogue and contributed to the growth of belief in the unity of God and in the development of a higher ethical standard it is scarcely possible to say. The constant preaching of Judaism must have had some effect; but the exclusiveness of Judaism, while it preserved Judaism from absorption into the general religious amalgam of the Hellenistic age, probably limited its power of influencing the general development of Gentile thought outside the limits of the Synagogue.†¹

¹ Knox, W. L. (1937). [Chapter II: Pharisaism and Hellenism](#). In H. Loewe (Ed.), *Judaism and Christianity: The Contact of Pharisaism with Other Cultures* (Vol. II, pp. 59–109). London; New York: The Sheldon Press; The Macmillan Company.

The Seven Varieties of the Pharisees

The Pharisees were not at one with themselves save in opposition to everybody else. There is no logical place to stop in the business of Pharisaic seclusiveness when once it is started. The line was drawn against the Gentiles, against the ‘*am-ha-‘arets*’ among the Jews, against the publicans and sinners, against the Sadducees, and then against some of the Pharisees themselves. *The Talmud itself gives the seven varieties of the Pharisees, and all but the last one are afflicted with hypocrisy, the sin that Jesus so vigorously denounces, and that stirs the modern apologists of Pharisaism to such rage.* Even the Psalms of Solomon are full of denunciations of hypocrisy. Thomson (*Intern. Stand. Bible Encycl.*) argues that hypocrisy was ‘a new sin, a sin only possible in a spiritual religion, a religion in which morality and worship were closely related.’ Certainly, the true Judaism was not hypocrisy, but it is remarkable that the Psalms of Solomon (a Pharisaic book), the New Testament, and Talmud (the Pharisaic Bible), all give hypocrisy as the chief sin of the Pharisees. Herford admits that the Pharisaic theory of the Torah ‘could, and in some cases did, lead to that mere formalism and hypocrisy which have been charged upon the Pharisees as a class.’ He claims that ‘such formalism and hypocrisy were only the perversion of Pharisaism and not inherent in it.’ **Meanwhile the seven types of Pharisees are pictured in the Talmud itself.**

(a) The ‘Shoulder’ Pharisee. This type wears his good deeds on his shoulders, and is very punctilious in his observance of the Torah, traditions and all, from expediency, not from principle. He finds that Pharisaism pays one in the increased reputation for purity. As Jesus said, they did their righteousness ‘to be seen of men’ (πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι), not for the moral and spiritual worth of the act.

(b) The ‘wait-a-little’ Pharisee. He always has an excuse for not doing the good deed just now, like the Spanish proverb ‘*Manaña*’ (‘to-morrow’). One is reminded at once of the man whom Jesus invited to follow him (Luke 9:57–60), but who excused himself on the ground that he must first go and bury his father. We know from Tobit 6:14 (‘They have no other son to bury them’) that the idea of this man (probably a Pharisee) was to go and stay with his father till he was dead and buried, and then to come and follow Jesus. Another man wanted first to bid farewell to those at home (Luke 9:61 f.). Thus the Pharisee preserved his creed at the expense of his conduct.

(c) The ‘bruised’ or ‘bleeding’ Pharisee. This Pharisee is too pious to look at a woman, and so shuts his eyes if he fears one is coming, and stumbles against a wall, and makes the blood flow from his face. He is anxious that the blood shall be seen in order to gain credit for his piety. One is reminded of the beggars to-day who mutilate themselves to arouse pity. In *Sotah*, f. xxi. 2, we read: ‘Foolish saints, crafty villains, sanctimonious women, and self-afflicting Pharisees are the destroyers of the world.’ There were (and are) men who leer at women with lustful eyes (cf. Christ’s denunciation in Matt. 5:28), but these Pharisees looked on women as the personification of evil. The disciples of Jesus were astonished to see him, a teacher (rabbi), talking in public ‘with a woman’ (John 4:27, μετὰ γυναῖκός ἐλάλει).

(d) The ‘pestle’ or ‘mortar’ Pharisee. He walks with his head down in mock humility like a pestle in a mortar. He is also called the ‘hump-backed’ Pharisee, who walked as though his shoulders bore the whole weight of the law, or the ‘tumbling’ Pharisee, who was so humble that he would not lift his feet from the ground, or the ‘painted’ Pharisee, who advertised his holiness by various poses, so that no one should touch and bring defilement to him. These are all caricatures, to be sure, of the true Pharisee, but they were so common that the Talmud pictures them in great variety of detail—‘the dyed ones who do evil deeds and claim godly recompense,’ ‘they who preach beautifully, but do not act beautifully.’ Alexander Jannæus warned his wife against ‘painted Pharisees who do the deeds of Zimri and look for the reward of Phinehas.’ One is reminded of the charge of Jesus: ‘For they say, and do not’ (Matt, 23:3), of the broad phylacteries and the large borders on their garments, of the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the market places, and the wish to be hailed as Rabbi or Doctor (Matt. 23:3–6).

(e) The ‘ever-reckoning’ or ‘compounding’ Pharisee. He is always on the look-out for something ‘extra’ to do to make up for something that he has neglected. He is the ‘reckon-it-up’ Pharisee, trying to counterbalance his evil deeds with his good ones. He is anxious to have his few sins deducted from his many virtues and leave a clean balance-sheet. One is reminded of the Roman Catholic system for buying one out of purgatory and the whole system of indulgences. Pharisaism made a large contribution to Roman Catholic doctrine and life. It is easy to recall what Jesus said about tithing mint, dill, cummin, and about straining out gnats and swallowing camels.

(f) The ‘timid’ or ‘fearing’ Pharisee. His relation to God is that of trembling awe in dread of punishment. They imagine that they can satisfy God with outward performance, and keep the outside of the cup scrupulously clean, but neglect the inside of the cup (Luke 11:39 f). They watch heaven with one eye and keep the other open for the main chance on earth, cross-eyed or cock-eyed instead of focussing both eyes in a single look at the glory of God (Matt. 6:19–23). Hence, though ravening wolves, they will even put on sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15). This type of Pharisaism actually projected a conception of God as a devout Pharisee ‘who repeats the Sh’ma to himself daily; wears phylacteries on the wrists and forehead; occupies Himself three times every day in studying His own law; has disputes with the angels about legal minutiae; and finally summons a Rabbi to settle the difference.’

(g) The ‘God-loving’ or ‘born’ Pharisee. This type is supposed to be like Abraham, and to show the true Pharisaism, of which the other six types are variations or perversions. Certainly, no one would say that all the Pharisees were hypocrites. Nor did Jesus mean that, but simply that hypocrisy had come to be the distinguishing characteristic of Pharisees as a class or party. To this fact the Talmud itself bears clear testimony. The emphasis upon external observances drifted logically and naturally to that result. There were Pharisees who were friends of Jesus, men like Nicodemus, who cautiously felt their way and finally enlisted on his side. There were voluble Pharisees who quickly flocked to Christ, till he exposed their emptiness, when they deserted him (John 8:30 f.).

The Two Schools of Theology

With all this variety among the Pharisees as pictured in the Talmud, it is no wonder that there were two schools of Pharisaism in Jerusalem (the school of Hillel and the school of Shammai) which took opposite positions on many points of theology, some of them trivial enough, as, for instance, whether it was proper to eat an egg laid by a hen on the Sabbath day. One is reminded of the Big Endians and the Little Endians in *Gulliver's Travels*. The Lilliputians split hopelessly on the grave issue as to which end to stand the egg upon. There was 'the plague of Pharisaism' in Palestine, and the Talmud bears its own terrible condemnation of it, in spite of its being the standard exposition of Pharisaic theology. It is urged by Buchler, as we shall see later at more length, that it was the school of Shammai that made the washing of hands binding law about 100 A.D. against the protest of the school of Hillel. 'Up to this time the school of Shammai, and perhaps also some of the more strict Hillelites, may have practised the washing of hands; but it was not yet binding law.' It was, he holds, insistence on strict Levitical purification for priests and teachers of the law that was the occasion of Christ's sharp criticism of the Shammai Pharisees in Mark 7. They championed the most narrow type of ceremonial piety and exclusiveness. Oesterley and Box think that the school of Shammai was in the ascendant in Palestine up to A.D. 70, when the school of Hillel gained the upper hand. If so, this fact partially explains the intensity of Christ's denunciation of these rigorous legalists in such general terms. They were the real leaders of the majority. At the same time one is enabled to understand the friendly intercourse that existed between Christ and the Pharisees of the Hillel school of thought, who on occasion took his part against the school of Shammai. We see this division of sentiment among the Pharisees about Christ in John 8:9, 16; 10:19–21; 12:42. In Luke 5:17–26, the Pharisees are apparently greatly impressed by what Jesus said and did. So Chwolson argues that Christ attacked only the extremists among the Pharisees, but he goes too far in exonerating the Pharisees from any part in the death of Jesus, and seeking to place all the blame on the Sadducees. Elbogen³ reminds us that the Pharisees were the guardians of the Prophets and of the Hagiographa as well as of the Pentateuch.²

² Robertson, A. T. (1920). [*The Pharisees and Jesus: The Stone lectures for 1915-16*](#) (pp. 23–28). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

The School of Shammai. It is difficult for us, in our culture, to comprehend the structure of the theocratic government of Israel in the time of Christ. But the most important group in Israel was the Pharisees who sat under the teachings of a rabbi named Shammai, who founded his school shortly before Jesus was born. The closest example in our world to understanding them would be to equate them with Mullah Omar and the Taliban, for they were ultra-conservative religious fundamentalists with a pathological devotion to obeying hosts of man-made traditions and commandments. Most believed, among other things, that the Hebrew descendants of Abraham were the only people beloved of God, and that no other people were of value in His sight. Salvation was thus only available to Jews--and so, in their early days, the Shammaiites wouldn't even welcome Gentile converts to Judaism.

This attitude caused Pharisees from the school of Shammai to hate all Gentiles, and left them with little regard even for *Jews* who didn't follow them. (In one case, nearly attacking the sage Hillel for bringing a sacrifice to the Temple on a day they disapproved of.) In the days of Shammai, so passionate was their hatred of Gentiles that around 10 AD, Shammai passed 18 edicts specifically meant to force separation between Jews and Gentiles. The specifics of all these edicts have been lost, but among them was a prohibition of entering the house of a Gentile lest a Jew thereby become defiled, and even eating with or purchasing food from a Gentile was forbidden.

Because of Shammai's influence, these edicts became laws of Israel. Thus, when you read, for instance, of Peter being criticized for entering the house of a Gentile and eating with him, this criticism traces itself to the edicts passed by this school, which were apparently being followed by the Christian Jews in the earliest days of the church.

The school of Shammai, which was politically proactive, also had close ties to the infamous *zealots*, a group of fanatics who favored armed revolt against Rome. It's critical for you to note that virtually every time you see Jesus or the apostles in strife against what the Bible labels as "**Pharisees**," it is almost certainly referring to Pharisees or ex-Pharisees from the School of Shammai. Even before he became a

Christian, Paul would have had many differences with his fellow Pharisees from this school, which would be the dominant influence in Judaism until the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. Of lesser influence in Israel was...

The School of Hillel. The school of Hillel was far more liberal, and its founder was renowned for placing people and justice at the heart of Judaism, whereas Shammai stressed strict observance of religious laws. While Hillel's followers acknowledged that the Jews were God's special people, they willingly accepted Gentile converts to Judaism in the belief that the God of Abraham allowed all to worship Him who would turn from idolatry. When you read about Hellenistic Jews--or about Jews with Greek names--this was the school whose rabbis would typically have accepted these Gentiles into the Jewish faith. (This school, however, was not specifically a Hellenistic movement.)

Soon after the time when Jesus, at age 12, was in the Temple astonishing the priests with his wisdom, Hillel (with whom Jesus may have been interacting) died and was eventually succeeded by his grandson Gamaliel, who was Paul's tutor. Modern-day Judaism traces its roots to the teachings promoted by the followers of Hillel who survived the destruction of Jerusalem and began codifying their teachings around 200 AD.

Hillel was so wise that even two sayings we commonly attribute to Jesus were supposedly coined by Hillel before his death, and were being quoted by Jesus in the Gospels. These were the Golden Rule, along with the summary of the Law and the prophets (*Love God with all of your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself*). Whenever you see Jesus interacting positively with the Pharisees (for instance, with Nicodemus or the rich young ruler), he is probably interacting with Pharisees from the school of Hillel.

A good example of the differences between Hillel and Shammai can be seen in the many cases where "**the Pharisees**" watch Jesus to see if He will heal someone on the Sabbath. We can reasonably surmise that these are Shammaiites by the fact that the school of Shammai viewed

attending to a sick person on the Sabbath as work, while the school of Hillel viewed this as a good deed that was permissible on the Sabbath.

Another example of the struggle over Jesus between both schools is seen in John 9:16: **“Therefore said some of the Pharisees** (probably from the school of Shammai) **This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others** (probably from the school of Hillel) **said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.”**

On the one hand, you can see the school of Shammai rejecting Jesus outright while Pharisees from the school of Hillel aren’t sure. This also helps illustrate the philosophical differences between the two schools, with the Shammaiites holding to a legalistic requirement that absolute rest must be observed on the Sabbath, while the Hillelites are open to the idea that healing is a good deed, and thus permissible on the Sabbath.

In another case, Matthew 19:3 clearly shows Pharisees from the school of Hillel **‘testing’** Jesus on the question of divorce, which they allowed for almost any reason. Despite knowing this group is specifically trying to trick Him, Jesus avoids the tongue-lashing He delivers to Shammaiites in chapter 12 (calling those Pharisees a **“generation of vipers”**) and merely answers the question.

The Pharisees also favored the rich over the poor because of the prevailing attitude that poverty was a sign of the curse of God, while prosperity was believed to show the approval of God on one's life. (This, despite the fact that Hillel was himself a relatively poor man.)

The attitude sometimes carried over into the Sanhedrin's legislative abilities, and so the Pharisees were known on occasion to abuse the right given them under the Law of Moses to enact laws clarifying points that the greater Law did not directly address. This had the effect, in some cases, of subverting the principles of the Law to favor those of wealth and power, something Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for. An example is Hillel's institution of the *prosbol*, which overturned the requirement of debts being forgiven or property having to be

returned to its original owner during Sabbath years. Hillel's well-meant intention was to help the less fortunate who were finding that their fellow Jews would not loan money to them as a Sabbath year approached, and the thought was that by exempting certain transactions from being canceled upon arrival of such a year, needy Jews would have a greater chance at receiving help. The foreseeable result, of course, was that some who got into debt never found a way out, and were kept in bondage to the lender, or else their land effectively passed to the creditor, despite the fact that the Torah forbade it. Shammai, meanwhile, went even further in favoring the wealthy, holding the view that only the rich should be taught the Scriptures, saying: "Don't instruct a man unless he is wise, meek, and the son of wealthy parents." (Babylonian Talmud Aboth Supplement)

While Jesus was frustrated over the Pharisees' conscious denial that they were sinners because of their perceived obedience to the commandments, philosophically He and the school of Hillel did have much in common, just as an evangelical Christian might relate in many ways to a conservative politician, although there might still be major differences between them. Paul, it must be remembered, was from the school of Hillel and rabidly anti-Christian. Gamaliel, in contrast, appeared to be somewhat tolerant of the Movement, and the fact that Paul relates that he sought out the High Priest for the authority to persecute Christians rather than his own tutor, who headed the Sanhedrin, may suggest there was disagreement between Paul and Gamaliel on how to handle the followers of Christ. However, since Jesus got on well with some key members of the school of Hillel, coupled with the fact that He twice quotes Hillel, He must have found some good in the school, unlike that of Shammai which He regularly opposed. Despite this, the Gospels show that the school of Hillel as a whole ultimately rejected Christ, although this appears to have been motivated by the fact that He laid too many theological bombshells on them by claiming to be God in the flesh, and so--perhaps reluctantly--the key members of the school of Hillel rejected Him because they just couldn't make the transition in thought from a rabbinic to a Christian understanding of what the Messiah would be. In contrast, the school of Shammai simply rejected Him out of spite and bitterness.

– **What You Never Knew About the Pharisees**

Cradle to Grave

When a boy in a Pharisee family turned two years old, they would take the scroll of the Law, the Torah, put honey on it, and have him lick it so that his earliest memory would be, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste. Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Psalm 119:103). At four years old he would start memorizing the book of Leviticus. By twelve years old, he had memorized Genesis through Deuteronomy. As a teenager, he memorized the Prophets and the Psalms.

If you chose to become a Pharisee, you had to publicly promise to “take the yoke of the Torah” upon you. They vowed to yoke themselves to the Law of God. They kept the hours of prayer wherever they were, whether in the Temple, the marketplace, or the street corner. They would fast twice a week. They didn’t just tithe their money, but tithed on everything they had, even down to their herbs and spices. How can you fault a man for trying so hard to please God? The average person thought God was exactly like a Pharisee, so Jesus had to **deprogram them from the religion they had learned**. He called the Pharisees “sons of hell” (Matt. 23:15) and a “brood of vipers” (Matt. 23:33). He told them that their father was the devil (John 8:44).

“Fence Laws”

The Pharisees counted all the commandments in the Law of Moses and came up with 613 laws. If those 613 Old Testament commands weren’t cumbersome enough, they invented 1,500 additional man-made restrictions called “fence laws” to keep people from sinning. They assumed that the best way to keep

people from breaking God's Law was to build a fence or a protective barrier around that Law, even though the Lord never told them to do this. Because there were hundreds of these rules, the people were burdened down and miserable trying to keep them all. Jesus told the Pharisees, "You weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers." (Luke 11:46). The Pharisees taught you couldn't carry "a burden" on the Sabbath, and they defined a burden as whatever you could carry on your little finger. Jesus made a play on words by saying, "You will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers."

Exodus 20:8-10 says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; you shall not do any work." But what does "work" mean? To keep people from laboring on the Sabbath, the Pharisees felt it necessary to define work. And so they defined **39 types of prohibited work** so that no one would break the fourth commandment.

Here are some of their fence laws:

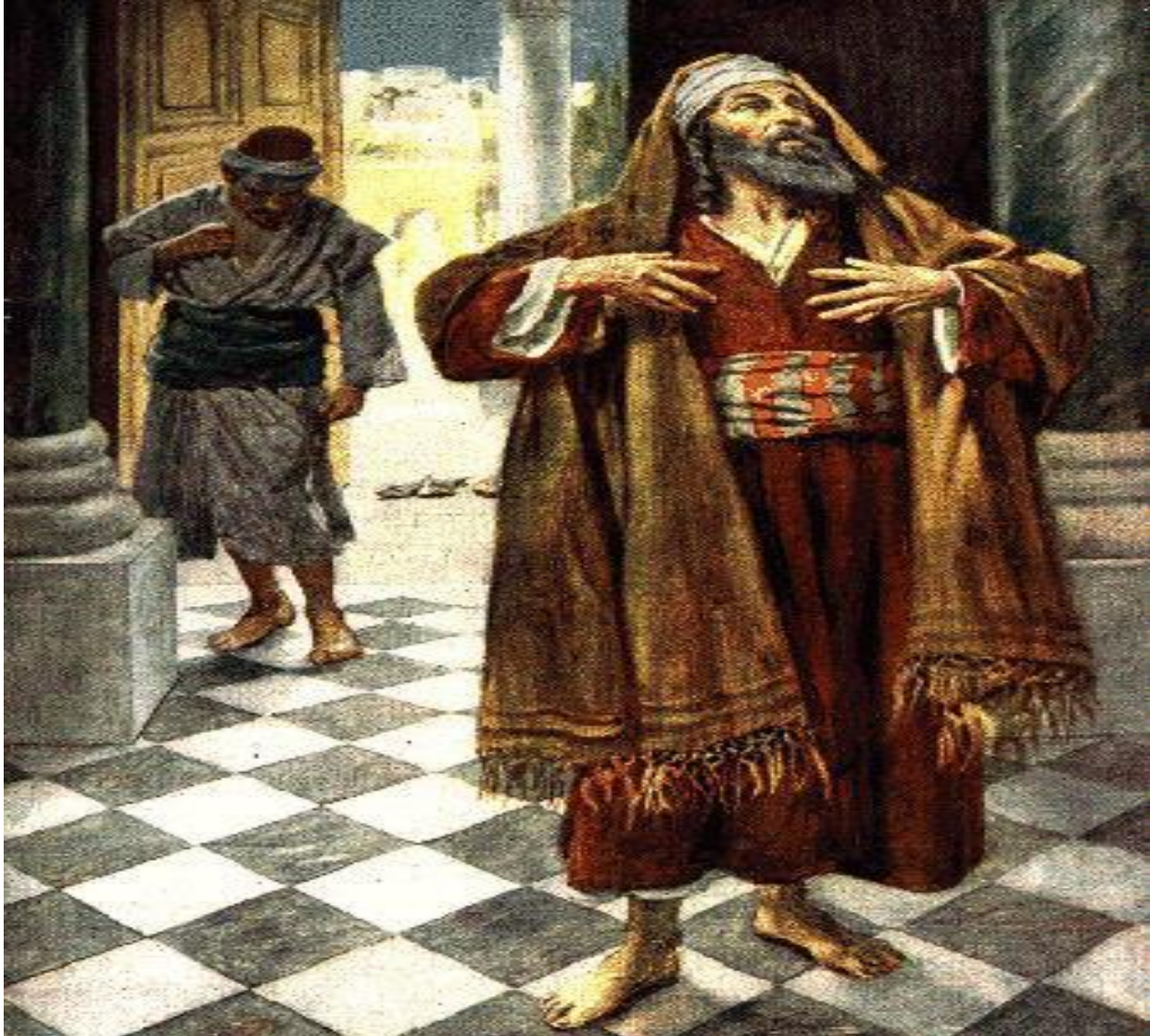
- ☐ You could not spit on the Sabbath because it would disturb the dust on the ground and you would become guilty of plowing.
- ☐ You could not swat a fly on the Sabbath because you would become guilty of hunting.
- ☐ A woman could not look at her reflection because she might see a gray hair and pluck it out, which would be doing work.

They created loopholes to get around some laws.

❑ If your house was burning down on a Sabbath, you could not carry clothes out of it. However, you were permitted to put on several layers of clothes as the house was burning, and you could leave without breaking their law because you were wearing them instead of carrying them!

❑ On the Sabbath day, you could not travel more than 3/5 mile from your house. However, you could leave food 3/5 mile from your home on the night before, which would make permissible to travel twice the distance without breaking the law.

Keeping these man-made fence laws actually became more important to them than keeping God's Word. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees saying, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:3) Jesus deliberately broke their fence laws to demonstrate that these commands did not come from God. It was as if Jesus was trying to create a gigantic chasm between them so that people could see the difference between truth and error. Jesus told them, "You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" (Matt. 23:24). The Pharisees were extremely careful to not eat anything unclean, so they would strain their wine through a piece of cloth, just to make sure that a gnat didn't get in it. They shuddered at the thought of swallowing a gnat. Jesus said that they strained out a gnat, the smallest unclean animal, but didn't seem to notice when they gulped down a camel, which was the largest unclean animal. Clearly their man-made traditions and fence laws were the gnats they had been straining, while not noticing God's Law that they were breaking.



Prayers of the Pharisees

No one prayed as often as the Pharisee. Every morning the Pharisee got out of bed, his first prayer was, “I thank you that I’m not as other men.” When Jesus told the parable in Luke 18:10-14, He was quoting the Pharisees’ prayer. They daily repeated the *Shemoneh ‘esreh*, which means *The Eighteen*. This was a **list of 18 prayers that were repeated three times every day**, once in the morning, once in the afternoon, and once in the evening. The repetition of these prayers became nothing more than superstitious incantation of a spell.

There was hardly an event in life that did not have its own stated formula of prayer. They had a prayer for eating a meal, in connection with the light, fire, lightening, seeing a new moon, comets, rain, at the sight of the sea, lakes, rivers, receiving new furniture, and entering or leaving a city. *Everything* had its prayer. The whole religious system led to formalism & repetition, saying a right prayer at the right time.

The Pharisees prayed for 3 hours every day at 9 am, midday, and 3 pm. Wherever they were at that time, they would stop and pray. Some would purposely go to the Temple or the synagogue to pray, thinking that God was confined to those holy places. Others would **purposely find themselves on busy street corners or in a crowded city square, so that all would observe their devotion to God**. Jesus renounced this practice by saying, “When you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and street corners, in order to be seen by men” (Matt. 6:5).

They offered long prayers, thinking that lengthy prayers were more pleasing to God. They formed a habit of hypnotizing themselves by the endless repetition of a phrase or word so that they could pray longer. Jesus corrected this false idea by saying, “*And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words*” (Matt. 6:7). *He compared their prayers to ways pagans prayed, repeating phrases and formulas over and over.*

- *Who Were the Pharisees?*

The Pharisees Were Liberals, Not Conservatives

Scholars are rather generally agreed that the oral traditions of the Pharisees represent something far different from a “conservative” reaction to the Law. The Oral Law demonstrates that the Pharisees were the progressives, the liberals of that day. Here are some scholarly comments to document this assessment:

The New Jewish Encyclopedia: “The Pharisees were ‘separatists’ in that they emphasized observance of such practices as ritual purity and tithing, which kept them apart from the less observant Jews. They were ‘expounders,’ encouraging a liberal interpretation of the Scriptures and the adaptation of its laws to the changing conditions of life. This contrasts with the Sadducees who adhered strictly to the letter of the Law” (376).
Backgrounds of Early Christianity (Everett Ferguson): “. . . one of two courses could be followed with regard to the law. The traditional code might be expanded to meet new circumstances and be reinterpreted in accord with new beliefs; or these experiences could be left outside the scope of its authority and new ideas be left unrecognized. Those who accepted the first policy became the Pharisees, and those who adopted the second became the Sadducees. . . . Moreover, the Pharisees felt that if the applications of the law were to be binding, they had to have the force of the Torah itself. The means to achieve this was the idea of oral law (“tradition of the elders”; Mark 7:3, 5), equally authoritative with the written law (481, 482). Ferguson concluded by saying “the Pharisees were not ‘Pharisaical’” (483).
Judaism and Christianity:2 This book describes the

Pharisees as “the source of the Law, its legislators. . . . the legal authorities, the lawmakers” (xx). Note these quotations: The latter (Sadducees, mw) believed in the exact letter of the law, the Pharisees held that the spirit should prevail and that the law should be adapted to changed circumstances, not that it should be abolished. Yet the Sadducees represent a type of religious conservatism which it is easy to misrepresent as callous and wooden. They were ready to yield to scriptural warrant, and for this reason the Pharisees were sometimes driven to casuistry, in order to meet their opponents on their own ground and so win their adherence (Herbert Lowe, “Pharisaism,” I:143).

The Pharisee believed in bringing religion into daily life, because he stood for the principle of progressive revelation. By this, he meant that the spirit of the Torah contained the power of inspiring changed circumstances, not that the Torah required supplementing from without. It could expand (Ibid. I:153).

The Pharisees did not hesitate to adapt the law to changed conditions: they employed the principle of legal fiction, in order to safeguard principles while relaxing hard conditions (II:52). . . .

If that were so, then it would follow that the divine revelation was not confined to the written text of the Torah. There must be an unwritten Torah, not as the rival or even the commentary on the text, but as completing it; so that the written and unwritten together made up the Torah as it essentially was. This new idea appeared and began to be acted on somewhere about the year 170 B.C. . . . The immediate result was that it became possible to define a halachah without basing it on some text of the written Torah, or even establishing some

connexion with the text. The halachah, so defined, was vouched for by a tradition, assumed to have come down from the far-off past, and accepted on the authority of the teachers who declared it. And by means of this concept of the Unwritten Torah, these teachers were enabled to give a wider meaning to the precepts of the written Torah, being no longer tied down to the literal sense or the interpretation of it on the former lines. . . One is the famous text of the lex talionis, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” etc. There is a clearly stated order that in certain cases of bodily injury a savage retaliation was to be inflicted. Those who defined the halachah dealing with such cases frankly abolished the written text, and made no attempt to humanize it by any artifice of interpretation. They appointed a different procedure to be followed in such cases, viz. the payment of a money fine, depending on the amount of the injury (R. Travers Herford, “The Law & Pharisaism,” III:102, 103).

Note the statements from these quotations emphasize their liberalism:

- “encouraging a liberal interpretation of the Scriptures and the adaptation of its laws to the changing conditions of life.”
- “that if the applications of the law were to be binding, they had to have the force of the Torah itself.”
- “the spirit should prevail and that the law should be adapted to changed circumstances”
- **“he stood for the principle of progressive revelation”**
- “the divine revelation was not confined to the written Torah text”
- “by means of this concept of the Unwritten Torah, these teachers were enabled to give a wider meaning to the precepts of the written Torah, being no longer tied down to the literal sense or the interpretation of it on the former lines”

These quotations demonstrate the liberalism of the Pharisees. Their liberalism is confirmed by the fact that the Mishnah followed the rulings of the liberal school of Hillel except in nine cases. In three cases it followed the ruling of Shammai and in six cases the ruling of neither school was followed (Rosenthal, II:185 note). Rather than understanding the “fence of the Law” as a conservative defense of the written word, the Pharisees “realized that new conditions created new needs which were not met in the written Torah. They therefore ruled that the needs of the times and the adjustment of human relations justified a modification and called for new regulations & rules not only to maintain but also to raise the ethical standard.”

This appraisal of the Pharisees is confirmed by New Testament evidence. The adherence to oral law was condemned by Jesus as teaching for one’s doctrine the commandments of men (Matthew 15: 8 - 9). He demonstrated how the Pharisees’ adherence to the oral law was used to release men from responsibility to God’s divine law of providing for one’s father and mother (Matthew 15: 4 - 5) as well as imposing as divine law the commandments of men in such areas as the washing of hands (Matthew 15: 1 - 3). Writing new laws and releasing men from responsibility to divine law are the characteristics of liberals, not conservatives. Having witnessed how liberalism undermines Bible authority in every area, we can more easily understand Jesus’ warning about the leavening influence of the Pharisees’ doctrine (Matt. 16:12). – Mike Willis, Truth Magazine

Galatians 2:11-14: What is Table Fellowship?

The issue in the Antioch Incident is table fellowship. But this is not simply Jews and Gentiles “eating together.” Table fellowship in Judaism was more than food. An additional problem with purity laws was the issue of table fellowship. The importance of table fellowship is often underestimated by the modern reader. But in the ancient world, to share the table with another person was making a social statement about yourself and about your guest.

Table Fellowship in Judaism was a complex & important issue for the observant Jew, especially those of the Pharisaical party. Jacob Neusner has studied rabbinical traditions that appear to come from the Pharisees. He notes that of 341 rulings that go back to the Pharisees, 229 are related to table fellowship. For this reason, he says that Pharisees might be considered an “eating club!”

This theme of separation from the unclean is found in the Gospels. The Pharisees are described as confused by Jesus’ association with the “unclean” of their society. He even shared meals with Tax-collectors & other “sinners!” Jesus understood what it meant socially to sit down and eat a meal with someone, therefore when he chose to eat with someone that was a part of the “underclass” he

was crossing a social boundary in order to meet a spiritual need.

If those who insist on Gentile circumcision are related to these “men from James” who insist on separation of Jews and Gentiles at meal time, then it is not implausible that they are Pharisees who would have never shared a meal with a Gentile in the first place.

This shared-meal includes communion, the celebration of the Lord’s table. Imagine the ramifications of a portion of the early church refusing to share in the celebration of the Lord’s death and resurrection with another portion – this would be imply that the excluded group was sub-Christian, not truly followers of Jesus.

Anti-Christ: He Did Not Fit Their Idea of Messiah

Grounds of Pharisaic Dislike of Jesus

(1) Assumption of Messianic Authority (John 2:13–22)

The assertion of authority by Jesus in the temple at once enraged the ecclesiastics. This incident is recorded only by John, and is similar to the cleansing of the temple at the close of the public ministry, as reported by the Synoptic Gospels. Many scholars regard it as the same event, which is out of place in John, but it seems to me more natural to follow John's chronology and to admit a repetition at the close. Only thus can we properly see the growth of hostility toward Jesus in Jerusalem so vividly narrated in John's Gospel. It was inevitable that the soul of Jesus should cry out against this desecration of His Father's house when He first appeared in the temple after entering upon His Messianic ministry. It may be straining the point to insist that the Pharisees are involved in the protest on the part of the Jews. The house of Hanan (Annas) carried on a regular market in the outer court of the temple (τὸ ἱερόν), and Annas was a Sadducee. The priests who had charge of the temple ritual were chiefly Sadducees, while the Pharisees found their chief forte and function in the synagogue. But the Pharisees were strong in the Sanhedrin, and the sacerdotal abuses in the temple worship, where graft of all kinds was notorious, could have been exposed by the Pharisees and stopped by public opinion. Jesus did arraign the leaders, and for the moment cleansed the temple by a supreme act of personal power and Messianic worth. But He received no support from the Pharisees in this onslaught on the corruption of the Sadducees. By 'the Jews' (John 2:18, 20) John's Gospel usually means the hostile Jews, whether Pharisees or Sadducees. At any rate, the ecclesiastics in Jerusalem, probably both Pharisees and Sadducees, resent the interference in the established order of things by an uncouth interloper from Galilee. The demand for a sign implied more than a mere miracle. It reached to the core of the Messianic claim of Jesus, and at once placed Him on the defensive. The defence of Jesus when the demand for His ecclesiastical authority or Divine sanction was made, as there was a technical right for making it, only enraged them all the more, and in a mutilated form it was cherished against Him till His trial, that He had threatened to destroy the temple with the foolish claim that He could rebuild it in three days. This first clash with the Jerusalem authorities revealed to Jesus the hopeless breach between Him and the religious leaders of His day. At once it was apparent that the custodians of the Torah, whether priest or scribe, would oppose real reform, and any effort to set up spiritual life in the empty shell of current Judaism. The very timidity of Nicodemus, a leading Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin (John 3), shows that the Pharisees as a class at once took ground in opposition to the claims of Jesus, in spite of the courteous 'we know' of Nicodemus (John 3:2), probably a mere literary plural. It was intolerable to the Pharisees that a man should by deed or word make Messianic claims without consultation with the scribes, the authorised teachers of the written and oral law. The rabbis had some divergences in their views about the Messiah, but they all agreed on the point of their own importance as interpreters of the subject.

At the very first then Jesus was an ignorant upstart to the Pharisees, who was in revolutionary fashion upsetting all precedents and disturbing the religious order and peace of the people, not to mention His infringement of the vested rights of the merchants and bankers in the temple courts.

The Sanhedrin, Pharisees (scribes) and Sadducees (chief priests), also challenged the authority of Jesus in a formal manner on the last day of Christ's public ministry, the Tuesday of Passion Week. As a matter of fact, Jesus had no ecclesiastical standing from their standpoint, but was a mere layman, as we should say. He had the baptism of John who was sent of God, but Divine sanction was not sufficient before the great Jewish ecclesiastical court. Something more than the approval of God was required. But Jesus in a marvellous way parried their attack by demanding their opinion of the baptism of John. This question was quite to the point, and broke the effect of their demand. They were helpless in the dilemma between fear of Jesus and the fear of the multitude.

But let us return to the situation in Jerusalem and Judea after the collision with the authorities at the first passover, as recorded in John's Gospel. Westcott notes that John's Gospel never mentions the Sadducees or Herodians by name, since the Pharisees are the real representatives of the Jewish nation. So here the Pharisees were jealously watching the rapid growth of the popularity of Jesus, the new Prophet who had followed so close upon the heels of John the Baptist. The tremendous sweep and power of the Baptist's work were all too fresh in their minds. They could still feel the sting of His words as He whipped them in the face before the crowds, and made their cheeks burn with shame as he laid bare their hypocrisy and ceremonial absurdities. But the Pharisees now found satisfaction in the arrest of John by Herod Antipas and his incarceration in Machaerus. It is not clear what the Pharisees did to get John involved with Herod. It is possible that they may have had him invited into the presence of Herod, and then asked John's opinion about divorce, as they tempted Jesus on this subject much later (Matt. 19:3; Mark 10:2), knowing full well that he was too brave to flinch even in the presence of the Tetrarch. At all events, none rejoiced more heartily over the fate of the Baptist than did the Pharisees. They watched the rising tide of the power of Jesus. As John went, so must Jesus go. It is probable that the attitude of the Pharisees was by this time well known to close observers. Jesus promptly saw that the combination of John's imprisonment and his own great popularity with the people made Judea a dangerous place for Him to pursue His work, unless He was ready for the final issue. This Jesus did not wish, for His hour of supreme crisis had not yet come. From now on there is no doubt about Pharisaic opposition to Jesus, though as yet no formal charges are filed against Him, save the general one of the usurpation of the Messianic prerogative without ecclesiastical permission or Divine sanction (John 2:19). The truth is, that already the Pharisees have weighed Jesus and found Him wanting. They had rejoiced for a season in the light of John the Baptist (John 5:35), and even went so far as to send a formal committee from the Sanhedrin, to investigate his claims about himself (John 1:19–26), but the Pharisees seem never to have shown that much consideration for Jesus. John had in truth more points of contact with the Pharisees than had Jesus, as is shown also by the fact that some of the disciples of John joined with the Pharisees in criticism of Jesus (Mark 8:18), and by the fear that the Pharisees had for John's power over the people to the end (Matt. 21:26). And yet the Pharisees in reality hated John with bitterness, and rejected His baptism (Luke 7:30) as an indictment of all Israel, as if they were heathen and had derived no benefit from being descendents of Abraham. The precise counts against Jesus will develop in due order. Herford frankly admits that the Pharisees properly seized the issue between them and Jesus. 'That the Pharisees knew why they feared, distrusted, and finally helped to destroy Jesus is true enough.

And Jesus expressed, in the plainest terms, the ground on which He denounced the Pharisees. But whether on either side the real significance of the struggle was clearly seen, is to my mind doubtful. Jesus may have seen it. I do not think the Pharisees did, or ever have done, from that day to this.' It is certain that Jesus saw at once the issue and how to meet it. The Pharisees also at once saw that they must suppress Jesus or perish, though it was probably vague to them why it was so. As Herford says, the Pharisees are still in the dark on that subject. 'To the Pharisees He appeared as a sort of unregistered practitioner.'³ It was 'inevitable that they should regard Him as a dangerous heretic.' 'Jesus was condemned and executed on a more or less political charge, for which the question of Messiahship provided a useful basis; but was really rejected, so far at all events as the Pharisees were concerned, because He undermined the authority of the Torah, and endangered the religion founded upon it.' Thus Herford² sums up the Pharisaic instinct toward Jesus: 'Torah and Jesus could not remain in harmony. The two were fundamentally incompatible.' The Pharisees felt as if a burglar had invaded their house and was about to set it on fire. So Jesus withdrew from Judea to Galilee. Will the Pharisees leave Him alone in Galilee?

(2) *Downright Blasphemy* (Luke 5:17–26; John 5:18; 10:22–42; Matt. 26:65; Mark 14:64)

Soon Pharisaic inspectors appear in Galilee also. The independence of Jesus quickly set tongues to wagging in Capernaum. 'What is this? a new teaching!' (Mark 1:27). The rabbis had never talked in that fashion free from rabbinical rules and fresh with the dew of heaven. The Pharisees had followed the people when all Judea and Jerusalem went out to hear John the Baptist. So now the 'Pharisees and doctors of the law' came to Capernaum out of every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem' (please note Jerusalem) and 'were sitting by' to see for themselves what would happen. They had not long to wait, for 'the power of the Lord was with him to heal.' In this instance Jesus forgave the man's sins before He healed the poor paralytic. The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason in their hearts, and at once found fault with the assumption of a Divine prerogative on the part of Jesus, the power and authority (ἐξουσία) to forgive sins. Their mood is hostile and Jesus feels it, and finally within themselves some say: 'This man blasphemeth' (Matt. 9:3). Here is a clash of spirit with spirit. This is the real conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. Jesus is the incarnation of the spirit of love, pity, sympathy, help. The Pharisees stand for the regulated order of things as they are, the form and constituted authority even at the expense of life and love. The Pharisees strike at Jesus by blind instinct, and accuse Him of blasphemy, because He exercises the functions of God in forgiving sin and restoring spiritual life and health to the man. The Pharisees did not agree among themselves as to how the atonement for sin was made and remission secured, but the method usually included sacrifice and ritual purification whether repentance was present or not (Oesterley, *Religion and Worship of the Synagogue*, pp. 263–7, 279). At any rate, forgiveness was not a matter to be so lightly handled as Jesus seemed to do. 'Rabbinism stood confessedly silent and groundless, as regarded the forgiveness of sins' (Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i. p. 508). Jesus defies the Pharisees, and accepts their challenge, and makes a virtual claim to deity: 'But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.' The intolerable part of it all was that the man 'straightway took up the bed, and went forth before them all' (Mark 2:12). Now the Pharisees had a definite charge to make against Jesus, and one of which they were themselves witnesses. He was a blasphemer. To be sure, He had embarrassed them greatly by healing the paralytic as proof of His right to forgive sins. But the miracle was another question. That problem must be attacked, but one thing at a time. The enthusiasm of the public on this occasion made it necessary

for the Pharisees to observe the decencies for the present. They could bide their time and would not forget this incident and this item of proof against the new enemy of the Pharisaic order. Against the interpretation of M'Neile (Matt. 9:6) that Jesus merely speaks of Himself as man, and that any man has the right to forgive sins, is to be placed the fact that the Pharisees did not claim the right to forgive sins, but called it a divine function. Jesus accepts their presentation and applies it to Himself as the Son of Man, not as any man. But the point to keep in mind is that the Pharisees are now in Galilee in great numbers. Apparently those from Jerusalem have come in a more or less representative capacity as a result of reports that came to headquarters in Jerusalem concerning the tremendous effect of the work of Jesus in Galilee. The Pharisees see clearly that the withdrawal of Jesus to Galilee has simply changed the scene of His activity and is not the end.

This charge of blasphemy sprang out of the claim of Jesus to work on the Sabbath, as God does, and from the claim that God is His Father in a sense not true of other men. He made this claim in justification of His healing the impotent man on the Sabbath day in Jerusalem. The Pharisees 'sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God' (John 5:18). Jesus thus maintained that He was the Son of God, and proceeded to defend this supreme claim in a powerful apologetic (John 5:19-47). But this charge of blasphemy was repeated. At the feast of dedication about three months before His death, the Jews in the temple flung it at Him in these words: 'For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God' (John 10:33). The Roman emperors were posing as gods and receiving worship. The Pharisees mean to say that Jesus also is assuming the prerogatives of God, and is thus guilty of blasphemy. The reply of Jesus is not a disclaimer of His deity, but a retort in kind (*argumentum ad hominem*), to show that in the Old Testament itself (Psalm 82:6) the term 'god' was applied to those who exercised the functions of God at His command. Thus He cut the ground from under them for the time being. But Jesus knew clearly that His enemies would repeat the charge, and so left Jerusalem for Perea.

The Messianic demonstration (triumphal entry) enraged the Pharisees intensely. They saw in this popular approval the frustration of all their plans for His death. Some in despair went to abusing each other for their common failure (John 12:19). Others sought to make Jesus ashamed of the conduct of the multitude of Christ's disciples, in publicly hailing Him as the Son of David (Messiah), with the implication that He would disavow their enthusiasm (Luke 19:39). But Jesus' hour had now come for His public claim to Messiahship. If need be, the very stones would now cry out in His behalf. Still others (chief priests and scribes) in the temple itself were indignant that Jesus allowed the boys (παῖδες) to desecrate the sacred precincts of the temple (their temple) by crying 'Hosannah to the Son of David.' Even the boys had been led astray by the bad example of the Galilean mob, and were misbehaving in the temple itself (Matt. 21:15 f.) M'Neile (Matt. *in loco*) considers it 'extremely improbable' that boys would be allowed to shout in the temple. But boys do things before they are allowed. Plummer (Matt. *in loco*) rightly notes the horror of the hierarchy at this profanation by the boys, echoing the shouts of the multitude, in contrast with the complacent acquiescence in the profitable traffic in the same courts.

The penalty for blasphemy was death by stoning. The victim was then to be hung on a gibbet and taken down before night (Lev. 24:16; 1 Kings 21:10, 13). It was on the charge of blasphemy that the vote of condemnation was taken in the Sanhedrin. Jesus, after the Sanhedrin had failed to prove any charge against him, confessed on oath, in reply to a direct question from Caiaphas, that He was the Messiah the Son of God (Matt. 26:63 f.; Mark 14:61 f.). It was not blasphemy to

be the Messiah, if it was true. Not all the Pharisees ascribed divine prerogatives to the Messiah. But Jesus evidently claimed that position for Himself by the term 'the Son of God.' The high priest was expected (Plummer on Matt. *in loco*) to rend His clothes when a gross offence against God took place in His presence (Lev. 21:10). It is remarkable that at the trial of Jesus the Sanhedrin make such a pitiful showing after making so many charges against Him during His ministry. The only one that will stand before their own court is this one of blasphemy, which is supplied by Jesus Himself, and is only valid on the assumption that He is not the Messiah, the Son of God. The high priest exulted in the fact that there was fortunately no further need of witnesses: 'For we ourselves have heard from his own mouth' (Luke 22:71). Jesus had said that the Sanhedrin would see Him sitting at the right hand of power (Matt. 26:64). It was not blasphemy in the sense of saying something against God (M'Neile), but only in the Divine claims made for Himself. When finally Pilate surrendered to the Sanhedrin after his repeated protestations of the innocence of Jesus so far as Roman law was concerned, and made his petulant exposure of his own incapacity, saying: 'Take him yourselves, and crucify him, for I find no crime in him' (John 19:6), the Sanhedrin quickly retorted: 'We have a law, and for that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.' They had not told Pilate of their previous condemnation on the charge of blasphemy, and this statement of Jesus' claim made him more afraid than ever. Whatever support Jesus may have had in the Sanhedrin up to this point vanished when He made His great confession (M'Neile on Matt.) There was no proposal to test the claim of Jesus to be divine (Swete on Mark). That was assumed as false. It is probable that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not summoned to the meeting. As Jesus hung on the cross the Pharisees mocked Him for saying 'I am the Son of God' (Matt. 27:43).

(3) *Intolerable Association with Publicans and Sinners* (Matt. 9:10 ff.; Mark 2:15 ff.; Luke 5:29 ff.; 7:29; 15:1–32)

In order to understand the feeling of the Pharisees toward Jesus for His free mingling with publicans and sinners, one has only to recall their assumption of extraordinary sanctity and professions of ceremonial purity, as set forth in the preceding chapter. As shown by their own writings (the Psalms of Solomon, the Talmud, etc.), the Pharisees had a perfect horror of contamination from association with the masses of the people, the untutored '*am-ha-arets*, and regarded the rest of the people as sinners in comparison with themselves (the righteous). Jesus not merely associated with the masses in utter violation of the Pharisaic teaching as to separation and ceremonial cleanness, but He went among the diseased and the immoral in His efforts to heal body and soul. Their scorn was expressed in the phrase 'publicans and sinners,' as the familiar companions of Jesus, with the implication that He was no better than His associates. This high plea for Pharisaic puritanism did not always imply moral cleanness, but did demand religious purity, a very different matter. The Pharisees really reflected the attitude of the Jewish people in their insistence on fidelity to the Torah. Their aim was to make 'the whole people a people of the law' and the law as interpreted by the Pharisees. Schuerer adds: 'The common man was to know what the law commanded, and not only to know, but to do it.' Hence the Pharisaic contempt for 'this multitude which knoweth not the law' (John 7:49). Hence their rage at Jesus for His defiance of their scruples and practices, which involved their whole creed and conduct. The Talmud does speak a deal about repentance, but as 'only another form of work-righteousness,' and 'Rabbinism had no welcome to the sinner' till he had cleansed himself ceremonially before God and man. Indeed, 'the last word of Rabbinism is only a kind of Pessimism' (Edersheim, *Life and Times*, vol. i. p. 513), and the best he could expect was to die before he sinned again (*Ab*.

Zar. 17a). When therefore the Pharisees saw Jesus surrounded by ‘publicans and sinners’ at the feast given in His honour by Levi (Matt.), the converted publican, they were very indignant. M^cNeile thinks that Jesus was the host, rather than Levi, and Himself invited the publicans and sinners, since Levi would hardly have invited such a motley crew to meet Jesus. But Levi probably knew the reputation of Jesus on this very point already, and certainly He had asked Levi to follow Him. The term ‘sinner’ (ἁματωλός) had a wide application as an expression of Jewish scorn, not only to the openly immoral (Luke 7:37), but to Gentiles as a class (Gal. 2:15), to heretics (John 9:16, 31), to publicans (customhouse officers) as a class (Luke 19:7), and even to Jesus himself (John 9:24). In the Psalms of the Pharisees, the term includes Sadducees as well as all non-Pharisees. Hellenising Jews are so called in 1 Macc. 2:44, 48. According to eastern custom it was possible for the Pharisees to enter the house during a reception (meal) without an invitation. The banquet hall stood open, and they could easily slip in if they cared not for the ceremonial pollution. Curiosity to get proof against Jesus may have overcome their scruples in that case. Even Pharisaic Christians were opposed to eating with Gentiles (Acts 11:3), and these Pharisees may have been unwilling to enter the house of a publican like Levi. In that case they either stood on the outside and made remarks to the disciples as they came out or spoke to them later about it. The Pharisees had learnt some caution by this time, and addressed their criticism to the disciples, not to Jesus. But Jesus took it up and answered it, for He was the real point of attack, and the disciples had simply followed His lead in the matter. They had accused Jesus of departing from the moral standard of the Old Testament (Psalm 1). It was a keen criticism and one not easy to answer. Every minister of the Gospel to-day has to face precisely this peril, if he goes among the outcast classes and does not exercise proper prudence in the way in which he carries on his task. The reply of Jesus was quite unexpected and disconcerting, but absolutely crushing. He, for the sake of argument, took the Pharisees at the face value of their claim to be ‘righteous,’ and asserted His mission, as the physician of souls, to the sinful, and therefore precisely to the publicans and sinners. The Pharisees had criticised Him therefore for doing His real work. At once it is clear that Jesus and the Pharisees stand at opposite poles of thought in their attitude towards men and the work of rescue. They were aloof in spirit, and built a hedge around themselves to keep off infection. Jesus plunged into the midst of disease and sin to root both out. He admits the danger and glories in it. Not yet have all Christians come to feel as Jesus did on this subject. Jesus appealed to Hosea 6:6 (‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice’) in proof of the failure of the Pharisees to understand the very Scriptures which they had accused Him of violating. But Jesus came to glory in the taunt flung at Him by the Pharisees (Luke 7:34) as ‘the friend of publicans and sinners,’ though they probably gave a sinister meaning to ‘friend’ (φίλος), as boon-companion and sharer in their vices.

It was inevitable that this charge should be repeated, since Jesus would not change His conduct in so fundamental a matter, and the Pharisees would not alter their attitude, could not, in fact, without a violent intellectual revolution. The next time this accusation is made against Jesus by a Pharisee, it is in a Pharisee’s house, probably in Galilee. Jesus was there at the invitation of this Pharisee, but the host could not brook the conduct of his guest, whom he probably thought he had highly honoured by his courtesy. He may indeed have prided himself on this show of independence (Plummer on Luke 7:36) of the Pharisaic leaders, who were now so hostile to Jesus. The sinful woman had followed oriental custom in entering the Pharisee’s house uninvited. The Pharisee showed no surprise or displeasure at her presence, but only astonishment that Jesus allowed her to wet His feet with her tears, and to wipe them with her hair. The Pharisee Simon knew her general reputation as a sinner, but did not know of her penitence. Here

again the Pharisee, with his insistence on outward form, in his heart assails Jesus, who cares more for the inward change of heart as seen in the woman's great love. Jesus dared to violate the conventional proprieties, and to incur the secret ridicule of His host.

Jesus had taken His stand as the friend of the publicans and sinners, and gradually overcame the timidity of those classes that had been shrinking from the rabbis, who held themselves aloof as from a pestilence. Luke (15:1) pointedly says: 'Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him for to hear him.' It was now a custom (ἦσαν ἐγγίζοντες) on the part of all of both classes when Jesus was around. They were no longer afraid of Him as they were of the other rabbis. Here is a lesson for the modern preacher, to learn how to win the sinful to Jesus without any sacrifice of purity of life and not to drive them away by affectation of much righteousness. Real goodness does rebuke sin, but it is attractive to the sinner. Luke does not locate the incident that called forth the wonderful parables in chap. 15 of his Gospel. It was probably in Perea, but, wherever it was, the Pharisees resented the conduct of Jesus in allowing these despised classes to crowd close around Him, with the result that the Pharisees, in self-defence and for decency's sake, stood off at a distance and gave the publicans and sinners the right of way. The Pharisees had no gospel to the lost. 'They had nothing to say to sinners. They called upon them to "do penitence" and then Divine Mercy, or rather Justice, would have its reward for the penitent.' There is no indication that on this occasion Jesus was eating with publicans and sinners, but He had done so at Levi's reception (Matt. 9:10 f.). They make a double charge here: 'This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them' (οὗτος ἁμαρτωλοὺς προσδέχεται καὶ συνεσθίει αὐτοῖς). Jesus not only allowed them access, but He actually welcomed them. He not only saluted them and talked with them in public as respectable people, but He even ate with them on terms of social equality. The thing was intolerable in the eyes of the Pharisees, who 'murmured 'a great deal, and kept up a buzz of discontent (διεγόγγυζον). The scribes joined with the Pharisees in this protest. It was against both precept and practice and could not be overlooked. They made thus a formal and public challenge of the position of Jesus and His conduct, no longer to the disciples or in the secret thoughts. Jesus did not deny the charge. He admitted it, justified it, and even extended it. He was engaged in the precise business of seeking and saving the lost. If the publicans and sinners did not come to Jesus, He would go after them. The cry of the one lost lamb in the hills would give the shepherd no peace, even though the ninety and nine were safe within the fold. Here again the reply of Jesus completely turns the tables on His enemies, who only grew angrier than ever. Finally 'they scoffed at him' (ἐξεμυκτήριζον αὐτόν, turned the nose up at Him) after Jesus told the parable of the unjust steward.

(4) *Irreligious Neglect of Fasting* (Matt. 9:14–17; Mark 2:18–22; Luke 5:33–9)

The charge about the neglect of fasting follows the feast of Levi, and the charge about eating with publicans and sinners. The regular public fasts of the Jews in the Old Testament are only five, but the Pharisees made a good deal out of private fasting, like the Pharisee in Luke 18:12, who boasted of his piety in this respect. But this private Pharisaic fasting was done in public to be seen of men (Matt. 6:16), and they even disfigured their faces to show that they were fasting. It was said of John the Baptist that he 'came neither eating nor drinking,' and yet the Pharisees rejected John's baptism, and scoffed at his asceticism (Luke 7:30, 33) as though he had a demon, while they reviled Jesus as 'a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners' (7:34). But the ascetic habits of John led his disciples to find an affinity with the Pharisees in the matter of fasting, especially while John was himself in prison. They perhaps

were all the more ready to criticise Jesus if Levi's feast came at the time of one of the fast days. In Mark 2:18 John's disciples and the Pharisees are said to be fasting, and both together came to Jesus, with the query why His disciples do not fast. In Matthew and Luke the disciples of John are the speakers. Perhaps they acted as catspaws for the Pharisees, but it is sad to see this combination of the disciples of John with the enemies of Jesus. The question raised is treated in a serious manner by Jesus, who uses it to illustrate the fundamental difference between the new life of the Kingdom and the old order of rite and ceremony which was to pass away. There is a connection between Christianity and Judaism, but it is the Judaism of the heart, Paul's circumcision of the heart, not of the flesh, the spiritual Israel. This new wine needs new wineskins. This new piece cannot be patched on an old garment. The bridegroom is still with the bride. It will be time enough to fast when He is taken away, as John, alas! has been. Fasting with Jesus is an individual act for a real reason, not a stated function for empty show. But here again professional Pharisaism cannot brook the independence of this revolutionary thinker who is cutting the ground from under their feet, and making their whole system appear ridiculous in the eyes of the people.

(5) *The Devil Incarnate or in league with Beelzebub* (Matt. 9:34; 12:22–37; Mark 3:19–30; Luke 11:14–36)

This bitter charge that Jesus was in league with the devil came early in the Galilean ministry, as a result of the enthusiasm of the multitude who ' marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel' (Matt. 9:34). This itself was a reflection on the Pharisees, and placed the crown on the head of Jesus as the supreme teacher who acted as well as spoke. M'Neile (on Matt. 9:34) treats this verse as 'a scribal insertion due to 12:24; Luke 11:15, 'and Plummer (on Matt. 9:34) rather inclines to the view that we have here a doublet. If so, we only know that the Pharisees are not recorded as giving expression to their venom on the subject quite so early. 'By the prince of the demons casteth he out demons. 'There is no effort to deny the reality of the casting out. The Pharisees are content to find the source of this kind of miracle in the devil himself. In Matt. 12:22–37 the multitudes not only 'were amazed' (ἐξίσταντο, stood out of themselves with astonishment, like the eyes standing out of the head), but they actually dared to ask: 'Is this the Son of David?' They asked it in a form (μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς Δαυεὶδ;) that implied a negative answer, but this may have been due to a desire to avoid controversy rather than to the conviction that it was not true. The Pharisees evidently felt that the very fact of such an inquiry from the astonished crowds showed that the claims and miracles of Jesus had produced such an effect on the people that they were ready to hail Him as the Messiah, the Son of David. This of all things was what the Pharisees did not wish to happen. They saw clearly by this time that the conception of the Kingdom held by Jesus was subversive of Pharisaic theology. Jesus taught that the King-Messiah was non-political, and offered no hope to the Jews of freedom from the Roman yoke, but only a vague spiritual rule of God in the heart, for which the rabbis did not care, without the political hope of place and power. The charge as stated here is: 'This man doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. 'There is probably a slur in the use of 'this man' (οὗτος), and the negative form of the statement discounts it as far as they can. He is only able to do what He does because He has the help of Beelzebub. The demons in reality receive orders from their chief, whose agent Jesus is. This whole subject of demonology is difficult, but there was no doubt on the part of the Pharisees as to the existence of the devil and his demons. The recent war in Europe makes it easier for modern men to see how the devil and demons may still have power over men. But the charge springs out of spite against Jesus, and is meant to ruin

His power with the people by prejudicing their minds against Him in spite of His power to work miracles. The reply of Jesus exposes their blindness, for the devil would not destroy his own work. Satan does not cast out Satan, and is not divided against himself. This retort left the Pharisees without an answer, and the multitude evidently saw the force of the reply of Christ. By and by some of the Pharisees themselves will be so impressed that they will ask: 'Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?' (John 10:21). And yet many of the Pharisees at Jerusalem had become so angered with Jesus, that they had in a rage said the two meanest things that they could think of for the moment: 'Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon (John 8:48)?' That combination to the Pharisee was the acme of shame in this world and the next. Neither epithet was true as applied to Jesus, but the use of them both relieved the feelings of the Pharisees. Many of them repeat the accusation after the allegory of the Good Shepherd, in which the Pharisees are described as thieves and robbers, and say: 'He hath a demon and is mad' (John 8:20). It was charitable to treat Jesus as insane. Some modern German critics have called Jesus a paranoiac. The same charge of demoniacal agency is given by Luke (11:14–38), and belongs to a later Perea ministry if Luke's narrative is not merely a duplicate of that in Matthew and Mark. It is not improbable that the Pharisees should repeat this charge. Indeed, we have seen that the Talmud makes precisely the same explanation of the signs wrought by Jesus. It shows how malignant the Pharisaic leaders have become in their resentment and anger.

(6) *A Regular Sabbath Breaker* (John 5; Matt. 12:1–14; Mark 2:23, 3:6; Luke 6:1–11; John 9; Luke 13:10–21; 14:1–24)

We have only to recall the Pharisaic rules for the observance of the Sabbath to see how sensitive the Pharisees were on this subject. Thomson (*Int. Stand. Bible Encycl.*) thinks that the Pharisees at first hoped to win Jesus over to their side. They would have been only too willing to accept Him as Messiah with all His miracles and popular favour, provided He would conform to the Pharisaic pattern for the Messiah. This involved the acceptance of the teachings of the scribes and the practice of the Pharisees. Thomson interprets the invitations from the Pharisees to dine as an effort to cajole Jesus into compliance with the plans of the Pharisees, 'which was going far upon the part of a Pharisee toward one not a *hābhēr*. Even when He hung on the cross, the taunt with which they greeted Him may have had something of longing, lingering hope in it: "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on Him" (Matt. 27:42).' Some of the Pharisees who demanded signs may have secretly hoped that He would do the spectacular signs which the rabbis had outlined as proof of the Messiah, so that the Pharisees could with better grace hail Him as the Messiah of Pharisaism. But this critical attitude that lingered with some Pharisees was not shared by the leaders, who quickly, as we have seen, became distinctly adverse. The conduct of Jesus on the Sabbath day and His justification of His conduct exasperated the Pharisees exceedingly. The matters of detail were so obvious and so public that there was no escape from a clash if the Pharisees held their ground on this subject. They had to criticise Jesus or stultify themselves in the eyes of the masses. The first instance of healing on the Sabbath created astonishment, but called forth no protest from the Pharisees so far as the records show (Mark 1:21–8; Luke 4:31–7). But this was in Galilee, and the Pharisaic campaign against Jesus had not yet begun in that region. But when Jesus healed the man at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem on the Sabbath, a storm of protest arose when the poor fellow told the Jews that Jesus had made him whole, and had bidden him to carry his bed (pallet, κράββατον, bed of the poor) on the Sabbath. 'For this cause did the Jews persecute Jesus, because He did these things on the Sabbath' (John 5:16). This was the first occasion when the Jews began to

persecute (ἐδίωκον, inchoative imperfect) Jesus, but He already had the habit of doing (ἐποίει) these and like things on the Sabbath. Hence the violence of the explosion of Pharisaic wrath on this occasion. Besides, it was in Jerusalem, near the temple and possibly at a passover. The enmity of the Pharisees was already 'settled' (Westcott *in loco*). The defence of Jesus made it worse, for it was a virtual claim of equality with God and the Son of God in a sense not true of others. He deserved, they held, to be stoned as a common Sabbath-breaker, and all the more so since He made such blasphemous claims about His peculiar right to violate the Pharisaic Sabbatic laws (John 5:17 f.). It is a bit curious to note that the rabbis had been puzzled over the fact that Jesus here cites the continuous activity of God on the Sabbath in spite of the Pharisaic rules on the subject. 'Why does not God keep the Sabbath? May not a man wander through his own house on the Sabbath? The house of God is the whole realm above and the whole realm below.' The pious Israelites told of a Sabbatic River that flowed six days and rested on the seventh.² Josephus makes this river flow only on the Sabbath day. The rabbis even taught that the damned in Gehenna had rest from torture on the Sabbath day.⁴ They drew up a catalogue of thirty-nine principal works with many subdivisions under each, for which the penalty for violation was stoning. The Pharisaic wrath toward Jesus on this score was like a pent-up Utica, and blazed forth like a volcano of fury.

It is not perfectly clear how to relate the two next incidents in the Synoptic Gospels with that in John 5, though they probably follow immediately. If so, it is quite possible that some of the Jerusalem Pharisees followed Jesus back to Galilee in blind rage to see if they cannot find further proof against Him. Either this is true or the Pharisees in Galilee burst into spontaneous indignation against Jesus, perhaps after hearing of the incident in Jerusalem (John 5). The occasion of the complaint about plucking and eating heads of wheat on the Sabbath seems to us too trivial for reality, but the Talmud again reinforces the Gospels on this score, as we have already seen. The Pharisees regarded it as a most serious matter. The plucking of the heads of grain was reaping and rubbing the grain out was threshing, two kinds of labour on the Sabbath, of which the disciples had been guilty in the presence of Jesus and of the Pharisees. On this occasion Jesus took pains to make a prolonged argument on the subject in defence of the disciples and of Himself. He appealed to the example of David in eating the shew-bread (a case of necessity). He cited the conduct of the priests who work in the temple on the Sabbath, a conflict of duties where the higher prevails. He even claimed to be greater than the temple. He showed how Hosea interpreted God as preferring mercy to formal ritualistic sacrifice, a plea for works of mercy. He asserted His lordship as the Son of man over the Sabbath, with the right to make His own rules for its observance as opposed to those of the Pharisees. Jesus maintained that the Sabbath was made for the blessing of man, not for his bondage. Hence the day must be interpreted and observed in view of man's spiritual and physical welfare. This view of Jesus is one of the commonplaces of modern life. Indeed, to many who are used to the absolute license of modern continental Europe, reproduced, alas! in America, the views of Jesus seem needlessly strict, and even narrow, for they wish no restrictions of any kind, but a day of pleasure and revelry without any regard to man's moral and spiritual well-being.

On another Sabbath, possibly the next (these three Sabbaths may even come in succession), Jesus is in a synagogue in Galilee, and this time 'the scribes and Pharisees watched (παρετηροῦντο, descriptive imperfect, with an air of expectancy) him, whether he would heal on the Sabbath: that they might find how to accuse him' (Luke 6:7). There we have the whole story in a nutshell. The Pharisees have now come to look for these Sabbath healings, a number of which Luke records (being a physician). 'Spies,' Plummer (on Luke 6:7) calls them, who are

here ready for any emergency and anxious to make a case against Jesus that will stand. Perhaps they looked sideways (παρά) out of the corner of their eyes. Matthew (12:10) adds that they finally asked: 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?' Thus they made a formal challenge before Jesus healed the man with the withered hand. Jesus accepted the challenge, made the man stand forth before them all, demanded whether it was 'lawful' (their very word) to do good or harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill it (they were at that moment full of murderous thoughts towards Jesus), 'looked round on them with anger' (Mark 3:5) in righteous indignation at their perversity, and then made the man stretch forth his hand healed and whole right before the Pharisees. It was an intolerable affront to their dignity as well as one more violation of their rules. They stalked out of the synagogue in a towering rage ('filled with madness,' Luke 6:11), and straightway conferred with the Herodians, whom they despised, in sheer desperation to find some way to destroy Jesus.

The next scene of this nature is pitched in Jerusalem again (John 9), and is a rich and racy narrative of pith and humour. The Pharisees are unable to untie their own theological knot, quite of a piece with those so finely twisted in the Talmud. If Jesus were of God, He would not have healed the blind man on the Sabbath. And yet the man was healed on the Sabbath. Finally, they are willing to agree that he was healed on the Sabbath, provided the blind man will agree that the glory belongs to God, and that Jesus is a sinner for doing what adds glory to God and makes Jesus a sinner. The blind man has merry sport over the dilemma of the Pharisees, who in a rage turn on him: 'Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.'

In Judea (probably) Luke (13:10–21) describes the pathetic case of the hunch-backed old woman, whom Jesus made a point of healing on the Sabbath in a synagogue. The ruler of the synagogue flew into a passion over this desecration of his synagogue, by such unholy deeds as healing the old woman instead of observing the Pharisaic ritual of worship. It was as undecorous as a soul's conversion would be in some churches under some sermons. The rebuke of the ruler by Jesus is withering in its irony and sarcasm.

Probably in Perea Jesus was invited by a Pharisee to dine (breakfast) and the Pharisees 'were watching him' (ἦσαν παρατηρούμενοι, Luke 14:1), according to custom, even though His host was a Pharisee. But Jesus took the initiative, challenged them for an attack, healed a man of the dropsy, and told them stories in illustration of the attitude of the host and the guests. Jesus was complete master of the occasion. But all these Sabbath controversies rankled in the hearts of the Pharisees.

(7) *Utterly Inadequate Signs* (Matt. 12:38–45; 16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16–32)

Men to-day are troubled by the wealth of miracles attributed to Jesus, not by the paucity of them. Our scientific scruples call for a minimum of the supernatural. But the Pharisees were not content with the splendour of the signs wrought by Jesus. Jesus represents Abraham as saying to Lazarus in the parable: 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rise from the dead' (Luke 16:31). The miracles of Jesus did induce belief in the claims of Jesus, and some of the multitude asked: 'When the Christ shall come, will he do more signs than this man hath done?' (John 7:31). But the Pharisees, when they heard the multitude murmuring these things concerning Jesus, sent officers to take Him. The raising of Lazarus from the dead persuaded many to believe in Jesus, but the scribes and Pharisees simply determined to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death (John 11:45–53; 12:9–11). The Pharisees had preconceived ideas as to how the Messiah was to come with supernatural manifestations from heaven. Satan, as already noted, seems to appeal to this popular Pharisaic theology when he proposed that Jesus

be seen falling from the pinnacle of the temple as if dropping out of heaven (Matt. 4:6; Luke 4:9 f.). We see the Pharisees repeatedly coming to Jesus, and demanding a sign in spite of the multitude wrought by Him. 'Master, we would see a sign from thee' (Matt. 12:38), as if He were a miracle monger. They were too particular in their tastes for signs, and Jesus would give them only the sign of Jonah, His resurrection from the dead. Even after the feeding of the five thousand the Galilean crowd the next day in the synagogue say: 'What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee? What workest thou?' (John 6:30). They even suggested something on the scale of the manna in the days of Moses. They had punctilious ideas even about miracles, and were hard to please, these miracle tasters. Finally the Pharisees demand 'a sign from heaven' (Matt. 16:1; Mark 8:11), 'tempting him.' On this occasion the religious authorities (Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians) combined against Jesus, as they had done against John the Baptist. But they do it under the guise of a friendly inquiry. They make the point (Plummer on Matt.) that the miracles of Jesus were on earth. Assuming that He is the Messiah, He must, according to Pharisaic theology, adduce signs in the heavens and from the heavens, if He wishes to satisfy popular expectation and be hailed as Messiah with proper credentials. It is no wonder that Mark (8:12) adds that 'he sighed deeply in his spirit.' This obstinate stupidity caused a sigh to come up (ἀναστενάξας) from the very depths of His soul. But they were familiar with the Bath Qol (Swete), and even the ministry of Elijah had heavenly attestation (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10 ff.). It is not certain whether the similar request for a sign in Luke 11:16–32 is different from the incident in Matthew and Mark or not. It is not intrinsically improbable that in Perea, as in Galilee, the Pharisees should press this point against Jesus. Indeed, Jesus Himself said that at His second coming for judgment, the eschatological aspect of His reign, they would see 'the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' (Matt. 24:30). But that 'sign' is not to be had as proof of His Messianic mission. When the Pharisees and Sadducees have Jesus on trial before the Sanhedrin, He boldly defied Caiaphas and all the rest and said: 'Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven' (Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62). Then Jesus will be the Judge of the Sanhedrin who are now judging Him. Then they shall have the sign from heaven which they so eagerly clamoured for while on earth.

(8) *Insolent Defiance of Tradition* (Matt. 15:1–30; Mark 7:1–23; Luke 11:37–54)

Perhaps in no single incident do we see the contrast between the Pharisees and Jesus to better advantage than in the first conflict over the necessity of washing the hands before meals. M'Neile (Matt. *in loco*) thinks that the attack was made in Judea 'where the points at issue between the Rabbinic schools would be more likely to be brought up for discussion than in the north.' But Swete (Matt *in loco*) rightly observes that the Pharisees from Jerusalem have already (Mark 3:22) been seen in Galilee, watching the teaching of Jesus. Swete also suggests that the opportunity for the disciples to eat bread with 'defiled' or common and unclean hands arose during the passage through the plain of Gennesaret after returning from the feeding of the five thousand the afternoon before (Mark 6:45–56). The disciples had had a stormy night, and were hungry, and may have eaten of the twelve baskets full which they had preserved (Mark 6:43). The Pharisees would be quick to notice this lapse from ceremonial purity and challenge Jesus with 'their old policy of insidious questioning' (Swete). Other instances of attack by questions are worth noting. This method was pursued by the Pharisees in regard to the failure of the disciples to fast (Mark 2:18). So also by question they challenge His conduct and that of the

disciples in the matter of Sabbath observance (Mark 2:24; Matt. 12:10). It was thus that the Pharisees attacked Jesus with the problem of divorce, ‘tempting him and saying, ‘Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?’ (Matt. 19:3, cf. Mark. 10:2). On this subject also the schools of Hillel and Shammai took opposite views. The hope here was to inveigle Jesus into a position that would injure His popularity, not to obtain a charge against Him. In the series of queries on the last Tuesday of Christ’s ministry a similar course is pursued. First the Sanhedrin (probably representatives) ask for His authority for His conduct in the temple. Then the Pharisees send some of their brightest disciples to ‘catch him in his talk’ (Mark 12:13), and these raise the dilemma about tribute to Cæsar, hoping to entrap Him in treason to Cæsar, or to make Him unpopular with the people. The Sadducees next ask about the resurrection, with one of their stock conundrums on the subject which had discomfited the Pharisees. Then a lawyer in a formal way inquires about the great commandment of the law. This was a favourite method with the rabbis in their academic discussions, as we see abundantly illustrated in the Talmud. But it was more than academic as used by the Pharisees with Jesus, though M’Neile (Matt. 15:12) holds that Jesus is treated as ‘the leader of a Rabbinic “School,”’ who might have a right to his opinion on a detail of “tradition.”’ Probably so as to the form in which the query is raised, but not in the spirit that prompts the ‘tempting’ so often mentioned. Buchler holds that the Pharisees who attack Jesus about His disciples eating with unwashed hands must have been priests who had recently joined the ranks of the Pharisees, because of the strict views advanced about these rules of purification, designed to safeguard levitical purity, since the rabbis expounded these laws, but did not observe them. But these rules for those not priests probably arose from a practice already going on.² It is probable (M’Neile) that we are not to press Mark’s words (7:3) too far: ‘For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the traditions of the elders.’ Certainly the ‘Jews’ who ‘all’ cherish ‘the tradition of the Elders’ are not the masses, but the strict and orthodox minority who supported the Scribes’ (Swete). The mass of the common people probably did not know these details, and yet religious purification was found in religious households (Westcott on John 2:6). Jesus may have been used to it in His own home as Peter had been (Acts 10:14). Jesus does not here resist the custom, but the effort to make it essential (Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, pp. 29 f.). The Pharisees probably endeavoured to force their notions of cleanness upon all who would accept them, and had contempt for the common herd who knew not the law and did not care about these pious punctilios. Twelve treatises in the Mishna are devoted to the complicated amplifications of the rules for ceremonial purity which tradition had added to the law. We have seen already that the rabbis placed tradition (oral law) above the written law, and claimed Divine origin for it. Rabbi Aqibah used to say: ‘Tradition is a fence to Torah.’ In this instance it is *Halachah*, not *Haggadah*, and Mark rightly presents the question of the Pharisees: ‘Why *walk not* (οὐ περιπατοῦσιν like הלךך) thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders?’ It is not a light matter of opinion, but a serious point of conduct that is raised. Montefiore thinks that the practice of washing hands ‘was only instituted by Hillel and Shammai,’ and hence (quoted by M’Neile) argues that there could have been no ‘tradition’ on the subject. But the custom probably antedated the teaching. One instance of the dispute between the schools of Hillel and Shammai on the subject occurs in the Mishna: ‘If any one places vessels under the pipes (which ran into the plunging bath), they make the bath unsuitable (because it then counts as drawn water). According to the school of Shammai, it is all the same, whether they have been placed there or forgotten; according to the school of Hillel, they do not make it unfit, if they were only forgotten.’ The disputes on these rules of ceremonial cleansing added by the elders were only on petty details of a pettifogging nature. But Jesus was not to be caught in

this net of minutiae. He turned upon them with vehemence and keen irony for their whole miserable attitude of subordinating the commandment of God to tradition: 'Full well do ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your tradition.' They would probably have admitted the charge and even gloried in it. When the commandment (ἐντολή) and tradition (παράδοσις) clashed, tradition was supreme (M'Neile), because the written law was originally oral, and this fact gave the oral law precedence (Plummer on Matt.). The meaning of corban we shall leave to the next chapter, the discussion of Christ's indictment of the Pharisees. Jesus here stung the Pharisees with the word 'hypocrites.'

Luke (11:37–54) records the invitation of Jesus to breakfast from a Pharisee (probably in Judea), which was not a plot to get evidence against Him, since he seems to have been taken by surprise that Jesus had not bathed (his hands, at any rate) before the meal (Plummer *in loco*). The Pharisees had evidently expected Jesus to conform to Pharisaic custom, since He was a guest in the Pharisee's house, and had been with the crowds and was unclean from the Pharisee's standpoint. It must be kept in mind that the objection of the Pharisees was not on grounds of hygiene. They were not familiar with the germ theory of disease. Plummer thinks that Jesus, knowing that the Pharisees laid so much stress on the necessity of ceremonial purity in connection with meals, purposely abstained, as a protest against these trivial rules. That is possible, but it is also conceivable that Jesus meant to make no point of the matter at all till the Pharisees manifested such intense amazement at Christ's lack of scrupulosity in the matter. Edersheim gives a picture of the etiquette at a feast as given in the Talmud.² 'As the guests enter, they sit down in chairs, and water is brought to them, with which they wash one hand. After this the cup is taken, when each speaks the blessing over the wine partaken of before dinner. Presently they all lie down at table. Water is again brought them, with which they now wash both hands, preparatory to the meal, when the blessing is spoken over the bread, and then over the cup, by the chief person at the feast, or else by one selected by way of distinction.' Probably at this breakfast the ceremonies had not proceeded very far before the clash came. It is interesting to note what sticklers people are for table manners, which vary in all ages and lands, but which are considered marks of good breeding. The Pharisees bluntly thought Jesus ill-bred, and undoubtedly showed it in a way that brought embarrassment all round. The severe reply of Jesus (to be discussed later) thus had sufficient occasion.

(9) *An Ignorant Impostor* (John 7:14–30; Matt. 27:63 f.)

This attitude toward Jesus is implied in all the charges made, but it comes out with clearness during Christ's visit to the feast of tabernacles six months before His death. It is reflected in the criticism of a portion of the Galilean multitude before Jesus comes to the feast, who said in reply to the defence of those who called Him 'a good man' these blunt words: 'Nay, but He leads the multitude astray' (οὐ, ἀλλὰ πλανᾷ τὸν ὄχλον, John 7:12). In spite of all that the Pharisees had done Jesus was still a popular idol with many in Galilee. The Pharisees 'marvelled at this strange success, while they did not admit His irregular claims' (Westcott on John 7:15). The people who followed the Pharisees rather than Jesus accepted their interpretation of His success. He was merely a 'self-taught enthusiast' without real culture, without credentials, without moral convictions, without spiritual power. The secret of His apparent success lay in the gullibility of the ignorant populace. This is the explanation of the temporary success of many a pretender beyond a doubt. False prophets (Zech. 13:2) had already arisen in plenty. It was common enough for false claimants for the throne to appear. Josephus tells how in the disorders during the rule of Archelaus one man, Athronges, an ignorant man with no claim by descent or culture or power,

‘yet because he was a tall man, and exceeded others in the strength of his hands, he was so bold as to set up for king.’ The Pharisee Gamaliel actually reminded the Sanhedrin of the fate that befell Theudas and Judas of Galilee, in their false claims to be ‘somebody,’ as a reason for patience with the apostles of Jesus. Let God and time deal with them (Acts 5:33–42). Jesus will warn the disciples of ‘false Christs’ (ψευδόχριστοι) who will come and lead astray if possible, even the elect, by saying: ‘I am the Christ,’ or ‘Lo, here is the Christ; or, Lo, there’ (Matt. 24:5, 23 f.; Mark 13:21 f.). It is even probable that some of the leaders of the Zealot revolts had already claimed to be Messiahs. Certainly some ‘persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness, and pretended that they would manifest wonders and signs, that should be performed by the providence of God’ (Jos., *Ant.*, xx viii. 6). H. M. Hughes (*Exp. Times*, Jan. 1916) suggests that Barabbas was one of these Zealots who laid claims to being a political Messiah. There seems proof of Zealot activity from the N. T. itself. Cf. the Galileans slain by Pilate (Luke 13:1), the Egyptian the assassin in Acts 21:38. The Assumption of Moses (7–30 A.D.) is decidedly anti-Zealot. Josephus calls the Zealots ‘robbers.’ False claimants will make use of the name of Jesus. In our own day we have seen two men claim to be the Messiah, and one woman set herself above Jesus as the revealer of God. The masses of the Jews welcomed each hero as he appeared,² John, Jesus, or Bar-Cochba (the son of a star). Curiously enough the great Rabbi Aqiba in his old age, during the reign of Hadrian, threw himself into the camp of the Messianic Pretender, Bar-Cochab (Barcochba), when he appeared before the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin condemned Jesus as a blasphemer for claiming to be the Messiah, and hailed with joy this wild enthusiast because he raised the standard of revolt against Rome. Aqiba said to the listening people: ‘Behold, the Star that is come out of Jacob; the days of redemption are at hand.’ Aqiba died a martyr to this ‘ignoble cause.’ If Jesus had only dared to raise the standard of revolt against Rome, the Pharisees would have hailed Him with joy as Messiah. But they had no patience with a merely spiritual Messiah who left the Jewish nation under the Roman yoke. The Pharisees evince a fine literary scorn for Jesus, in spite of His skill in debate and power as a teacher. ‘How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?’ (John 7:15). He is bound to be ignorant, since he had not studied in either of the two great theological schools in Jerusalem (Hillel and Shammai). The marvellous acumen and clarity of His thought counted as nothing with the Pharisees, for it did not bear their stamp. Since He did not go to their schools, He had simply taught Himself. Therefore His opinions had no scholarly weight. They were supported by no great rabbis of the past. He was not worth listening to. Jesus admits the fact of His lack of Pharisaic training, but denies the conclusion that He originated His ideas. There is a peril in all self-taught men, the danger of conceit and over-emphasis upon their own originality, because of lack of contact with the great minds of all ages. Jesus sees that and claims God as the source of His teaching, and suggests how the Pharisees can put to the test this claim for His teaching. Doing the will of God will qualify one to judge of God’s teaching (John 7:17). It is sound psychology. Those who bring their wills in harmony with God’s will are competent to pass on the character of God’s teaching, and so of Christ’s claims (Westcott *in loco*). Rabban Gamaliel (*Aboth*, ii. 4) is quoted in the Talmud as saying: ‘Do His will as if it were thy will, that He may do thy will as if it were His will.’ The Pharisees made no reply to this defence of Jesus, but they reveal their attitude of scorn when the officers sent to arrest Jesus return without Him: ‘Are ye also led astray?’ (John 7:47). None of the rulers of the Pharisees had believed on the upstart from Galilee.

The accursed ignorant multitude did not count. They could hardly believe that the Roman soldiers had fallen victims to the spell of the deceiver. One of the charges made against Jesus was, that He bore witness of Himself, and hence it was not true (John 8:13). Jesus had recognised

the need of witness outside of Himself and had offered it (John 5:31 ff.). But He contends for His right to testify concerning Himself, and He tells the truth even if these Pharisees refuse to accept it (John 8:14). Nevertheless He appeals to the witness of His Father, whereupon the Pharisees imply that He is a bastard: ‘Where is thy Father?’ (8:19). We have seen that in the Talmud it is repeatedly asserted that Jesus was the son of a paramour of Mary.

Matthew (27:62–6) records the precaution of the chief priests and the Pharisees, to have the Roman seal placed on the tomb of Jesus, and a Roman guard stationed to watch over it. They said to Pilate: ‘Sir, we remember that that deceiver said’ (ἐκεῖνος ὁ πλάνος εἶπεν). They would not call His name to Pilate, but they fear Him though dead, and would like for ‘that deceiver’ to be His epitaph. Their contempt for Jesus was shown to the man born blind (John 9:29) by saying: ‘But as for this man, we know not whence he is,’ an unknown upstart of a nobody. But with all their pride of victory they are afraid that ‘the last error (ἡ ἐσχάτη πλάνη) will be worse than the first’ (Matt. 27:64). The first error (πλάνη) about the deceiver (πλάνος) was to accept Him as Messiah. The second will be to believe in His resurrection. The Pharisees had more ground for their fear than they knew. ‘That deceiver’ did rise from the dead, and ‘the last error’ has revealed the hollow emptiness of the Pharisaism that killed Him, and has become the acme and goal of truth for all the race with Pharisaism as the dead husk. Justin Martyr (Dial. 108) charges the Jews with describing Christianity thus: ‘A certain godless and lawless sect (heresy) has arisen from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver.’

Herford (*Pharisaism*, p. 143) says that it was ‘inevitable that they should regard him as a dangerous heretic.’ They surely did. It is pleasing to note a more kindly temper toward Jesus by the modern liberal Jews, like Montefiore, who gladly acclaim Jesus as one of the greatest of Jewish prophets, and who advocate a study of the New Testament, but this new temper does not alter the historical situation in the first century. W. J. Sparrow-Simpson (‘Liberal Judaism and the Christian Faith,’ *Quarterly Review* for October 1915) calls this new attitude of reformed Jews toward Jesus ‘a revolution of the first magnitude,’ but the problem of the person of Jesus is evaded.

(10) *Plotting to Destroy the Temple* (John 2:19–22; Matt. 26:61; Mark 14:58; Matt. 27:39 f.; Mark 15:29)

When the Pharisees first challenged the authority of Jesus, He gave the sign of His resurrection in symbolic language—‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’ (John 2:19)—that they did not understand nor did the disciples then. It was treasured against Him as a threat against the temple. The Jews had been very suspicious about the work of Herod the Great on the temple, and only allowed him to change it a piece at a time. He began it about B.C. 19, and died B.C. 4, and the temple was not yet finished A.D. 27. It was a fresh ground of distrust when these words were turned against Jesus at His trial. It was a sort of last resort, to be sure, after other lines of attack before the Sanhedrin had failed. The Sanhedrin had brought Jesus before the court without an indictment and with no witnesses. They were to be the judges of His case, and yet ‘the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put Him to death’ (Mark 14:55), ‘false witness’ Matthew (26:59) adds, ‘and they found it not, though many false witnesses came’ (26:60). The Pharisees share with the Sadducees the responsibility for the legal irregularities connected with the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, in spite of modern efforts to blame the Sadducees for the whole proceeding. Montefiore pictures Jesus going to Jerusalem ‘bearding the Sadducean priesthood and the antagonistic high authorities in their very den.’ But the Pharisees cannot escape their leadership from the start, and that finally enlisted the Sadducees against the

common enemy of corrupt Judaism. This is not the place for detailed discussion of the illegalities in the trial of Jesus. They have received ample treatment at the hands of skilled lawyers.² It is pitiful special pleading when Rabbi Drucker endeavours to show that conspiracy of the high priest turned Jesus over to Pilate against the wishes of the Pharisees and the Jewish people who hailed Him as a hero. He argues that the illegalities shown in the Gospels prove that the trial before the Sanhedrin did not take place. He professes to show this 'from Jewish sources,' but it is all *a priori* and unconvincing. The false witnesses, probably suborned as in the charges against Stephen (Acts 6:11), failed to agree and misrepresented what Jesus had said: 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.' The case fell through as it stood, but this charge was hurled in the teeth of Jesus by the wagging crowds who passed along the highway as Jesus hung on the cross: 'Ha! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross' (Mark 15:30). It is hard to stop a slander, once it is started. Hired false witnesses will one day testify against Stephen: 'For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us' (Acts 6:14). Herford (*Pharisaism*, p. 127) says 'That the Pharisees knew why they distrusted, feared, and finally helped to destroy Jesus is plain enough.' The reasons that they gave seem to us wholly inadequate, but at bottom they felt that they had to destroy Jesus or be destroyed by Him. It was a sort of primal instinct which they could not clearly analyse. It comes out in the meeting of the chief priests and the Pharisees after the raising of Lazarus: 'If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation' (John 11:48). This is a remarkable confession for candour in putting 'place' before 'nation,' pocket before patriotism. Westcott (*in loco*) puts it mildly thus: 'They look at the hypothetical catastrophe from its personal side as affecting themselves.' It is pertinent to add that they did kill Jesus, and all the same as a punishment therefor, as Jesus later predicted (Matt. 21:43), the Romans in A.D. 70 came and took away both their place and their nation. The temple whose fate Jesus foresaw, because Jerusalem had rejected Him, was destroyed, but not at the hands of Jesus. The customs of Moses and the traditions of the elders were preserved by the Pharisees, who came to dominate the life of Judaism. But in the struggle between Christianity and Rabbinism in the thought and life of the world Rabbinism has been hopelessly outdistanced by the power of the very Jesus whom they rejected, and thought that they had destroyed.³

³ Robertson, A. T. (1920). [*The Pharisees and Jesus: The Stone lectures for 1915-16*](#) (pp. 66–104). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

- **Four Questions Trigger Jesus**
- ***Matthew 22: 15 - 46***
- SCENARIO SCENE SETUP: **ENTRAPMENT!**
- Three groups sought to entangle the Lord Jesus, and each asked Him a tough question they thought would bring Him down. But His answers left each of them speechless and astonished. Then Christ turns the table posing His own question.
- The Herodians asked a *political* question:
Verses 15 - 17
- Sadducees asked a *doctrinal* question:
Verses 23 - 28
- The Pharisees asked an *ethical* question:
Verses 34 - 36
- Then Jesus asked a *personal* question that then put them on the hot seat:
Verses 41 - 45

Pharisees Receive Greater Damnation

*"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore **ye shall receive the greater damnation.**" ([Matthew 23:14](#))*

Among the eight "woes" in [Matt. 23](#) is this awful condemnation on religious leaders for misusing their office and misleading their followers. What they did was pretty serious, but the emphasis in the passage is on the "greater" result of their impact on many lives. James certainly had this incident in mind when he said, "My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" ([James 3:1](#)).


Paul's second letter to Timothy listed a series of wicked attitudes that would characterize religious leaders in the last days, warning us about the prevalent conditions. They would have a "form of godliness" but would deny "the power thereof." Those of us who love the Lord are told to "turn away" from them, "for of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" ([2Tim.3:5-7](#)).

The overriding principle is this: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" ([Luke 12:48](#)). Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day knew the Scriptures. Therefore, their hypocritical and destructive behavior received His harsh judgment.

Just so, all those who use their platform of leadership to distort truth and seek the praise of men ([John 12:43](#))—whether in religious environs, in positions of political authority (as were the Pharisees & Sadducees), or merely the "masters" of academia—will reap "the righteous judgment of God" ([Romans 2:5](#)).

— Days of Praise

NEXT: JAMES BALES EDITED SHORT STUDY MATTHEW CHAPTER 23: “WOE UNTO YOU’S”

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- ⁴² But woe unto **you**, Pharisees! for **ye** tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought **ye** to have done, and not to leave the other undone.
 - ⁴³ Woe unto **you**, Pharisees! for **ye** love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.
 - ⁴⁴ Woe unto **you**, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for **ye** are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.
 - ⁴⁵ Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.
 - ⁴⁶ And he said, Woe unto **you** also, **ye** lawyers! for **ye** lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and **ye yourselves** touch not the burdens with one of **your** fingers.


WOE UNTO YOU?
PHARISEES
? GUILTY
MOSES' SEAT
HYPOCRITES
PHYLACTERIES
WHITEWASHED TOMBS
Written by RABBI
James D. Bales

“But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye enter not in your selves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter.” (Matt. 23:13). How did the Pharisees

shut up the kingdom of heaven against men? Are some today guilty of the same sin? Is it possible for us to fall into this sin? To these important questions let us turn our attention.

HOW PREVENT ENTRY, IF IT NOT YET ESTABLISHED?

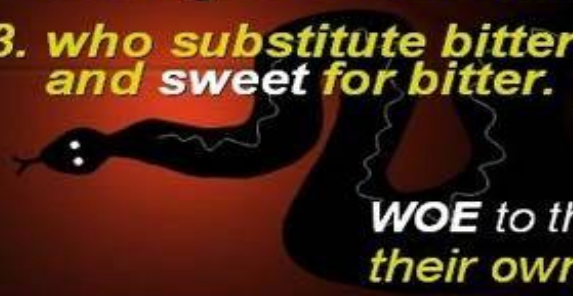
During the personal ministry of Christ, the kingdom was in its preparatory state. Those who were entering it, went only into its preparatory state, for the kingdom was not yet come in its actual sense, and those who entered it in its preparatory form, did not actually ‘go into it’ and so the Savior’s language is very plain. This the key by which to solve all those passages which would appear at first to suggest that possibly the kingdom was set up during Christ’s personal ministry on earth.” They did not actually enter in, since under the influence of the Pharisees multitudes of them were turned against Christ and thus rejected His kingdom when it was established.



WOE to those who Call EVIL GOOD and GOOD EVIL

WOE TO THOSE:

1. *who call evil good and good evil,*
2. *who substitute darkness for light
and light for darkness,*
3. *who substitute bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter.* Isa 5:20 HCSB



WOE to those who are *wise in
their own opinion* and *clever
in their own sight.* Isa 5:21 HCSB

Lops Colonna

ALLVOICES

Lesson 26

Hypocrites Matthew 23



But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:

Zechariah 7:11, 13

HOW THE PHARISEES DID IT:

The scribes and Pharisees shut up the kingdom of heaven by misguiding the people. What key had they taken away? (Lk. 11:52). What is the function of a key? Are too many people today like a young thief who had 115 keys to vending machines, stores and apartments, but lack the key of knowledge of eternal life? Are there many who have useful keys to many things but lack the fundamental key? Since a proper understanding of the Old Testament leads people to realize that Jesus is the Christ, what did Paul tell the Galatians that the law had been? (Gal. 3:25). In what ways does it point to Christ? Are we under the Old Testament today? (Gal. 3:25-29). What did Jesus say about the relationship of the book of Moses to Him? (John 5:45-47). Knowledge was the key, and the Pharisees had made void the word of God through their traditions. (Mk. 7:1-12). Furthermore, they wanted a Messiah who would establish an earthly kingdom, which would overthrow Rome, and place Israel at the head of the nations of the earth. Christ's kingdom was a different kind of kingdom, and thus they rejected Him. In endeavoring to discredit Jesus in the minds of the people, and to prevent them from pressing into the at-hand stage of the kingdom, the Pharisees did many things. We have already noticed them in studying their attacks on Christ. The following questions will refresh the student's mind concerning these actions. (1) Did they challenge His authority? (Matt. 21:23-46). (2) Did they accuse Him of breaking the law? (Matt. 12:1-9). (3) Did they misconstrue His words? (John 2:21; Matt. 26:61). (4) Did they try to make Him "guilty by association"? (Matt. 9:10-13). (5) Is there any type of association which

produced guilt? (6) On at least what two grounds did they accuse Him of blasphemy? (Lk. 5:20; John 10:33-36; Matt. 26:64-66). (7) Whose agent did they accuse Him of being? (Matt. 12:22-37). (8) What sort of spirit did they say He had? (Mk. 3:30) (9) Did they shut up the kingdom by teaching people to trust in their physical relationship to Abraham? (Matt. 3:9-10) What is essential to enter the kingdom? (John 3:3-5). (10) How did they try to intimidate people? (John 9:13, 22, 34; 12:41-42). Excommunication was in its mildest form severe. "The effect of the mildest grade was to render the culprit a heathen and no longer an Israelite during thirty days, depriving him of all intercourse with his family as well as of all privileges of worship." "If he die in his excommunication, the tribunal send and lay a stone upon his coffin to signify that they stone him because he is separated from the congregation. And it is unnecessary to say that he is not to be mourned for, and that his funeral is not to be attended." (11) Their greatest effort to destroy Jesus was to put Him to death. (Matt. 26:66). Did this keep Christ from establishing His kingdom?

THE PRAYING "PREYERS"

Faith in God, which is the well-spring of good works in the life of the true believer, may be but a pretense for some wherewith they clothe their ungodly motives and deceive their victims. Of such Jesus said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense ye make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive greater condemnation." (Matt. 23:14; Mk. 12:40; Lk. 20:47).

LONG PRAYERS FOR PRETENSE

There were some who meditated an hour before prayers, prayed for an hour, and then meditated for another hour. Did Jesus condemn these prayers because of their length? Did Jesus ever spend a long time in prayer? (Matt. 26:36,40). Would a long prayer usually be more appropriate in one's private prayer than in public prayer? Why? Jesus did not prescribe here the length of prayer, but He did deal with the motive. They prayed for pretense. In another place Jesus condemned vain repetition. (Matt. 6:7). What does vain mean? Is all repetition vain? Did Jesus repeat a prayer? (Matt. 26:36-46). Did those who engaged in vain repetition think that the number of words added weight to their prayers? (Matt. 6:7). Is there a difference between this and being so concerned that one agonizes in prayer and thus repeats himself? Would those who made long prayers for a pretense tend to repeat themselves? Does not their use of prayer underscore the fact that something which is good within itself is sometimes used by people for sinful purposes?

RELIGION AS A TOOL OF THE SINFUL SELF

Those pretending prayers preyed on widows. Consider the depth of their degradation in contrast with the height of their profession! The widows were without the protection of their husbands. Usually they were not skilled in business as their husbands may have been. Thus they were easier to take advantage of as a general rule. While appearing to be pious, they were disarming the widows, securing their confidences, and then devouring their houses.

MATTHEW 23

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, saying:



The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses therefore all that they tell you, **DO** and **Observe**, but do not do according to their **deeds**; for they say things and do not do them. They do all their deeds to be noticed by men. v2,3,5



Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like white washed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness v27-28



Jerusalem, Jerusalem... How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling v37



THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD WIDOWS

How contrary to the word of God it is for man to cheat widows? What does James say is the right attitude? (Jas. 1:27). What does the word “visit” mean here? This passage is a solemn rebuke not only to those who rob widows, but also to those who fail to do the good things for them which are included in the word “visit”. Is a person conducting himself as a Christian should just because he does not rob widows’ houses while for a pretense making long prayers? Is Christianity positive as well as negative? (Compare 2 Tim. 2:22) What about those who fail to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, but only argue that is the right way in contrast with the way to care for them? Is it wrong to discuss what the Bible teaches on how it is to be done? Has one done his duty just because he has refuted some way which is wrong, and argued for the ways which are right? What should be our purpose in trying to find what the Bible teaches about how it should be done? Should we rest contented with knowing the “how”, without applying it? What about the person who always opposes doing it the wrong way and yet never does it the right way?

THE GREATER CONDEMNATION

What does the word “condemnation” mean? Does it always refer to the future judgment? (Rom. 14:23; I Cor. 11:29) What does greater mean? If “greater condemnation” is the same as “condemnation”, is not “greater” meaningless? If some receive greater condemnation than others, does not this indicate grades or degrees of punishment? Does not Matt. 23:14 show that some sinners are worse than other sinners, even though they are all in the state of sin? There are other passages which teach that all condemnation is not the same in degree. There are, in other words, degrees of punishment. Although we cannot determine the degree of guilt, God can do so. Let us consider some of the passages which confirm the position that some will receive greater condemnation than others. To whom did the Lord send the twelve in His personal ministry? (Matt. 10:5-6). What were they to preach? (Matt. 10:7). What miracles were they to perform to confirm their word? (Matt. 10:8). What two things were they to do if a house or city would not receive them? (Matt. 10:12-13, 14). Why was the failure to receive them such a serious sin? Who had sent them? (Matt. 10:5). To reject them was to reject whom? (John 13:20). To reject Him was to reject whom? (13:20; 12:48-50). For whom did the Lord say that it would be more tolerable in the day of judgment? (Matt. 10:15). Why? Was it because they had the greater light and thus the greater responsibility? Are the cases of Sodom and Gomorrah used to prove that the wicked will not go unpunished? (2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7). What did Peter use the case of Lot, and of the cities, to prove? (2 Peter 2:7-9). When we remember how sinful it was in Sodom, then we can realize

how terrible was the sin of those mentioned in Matt. 10:15. Does “more tolerable” mean that they would be saved? Did it mean that they would receive the identical judgment of judgment day as did those mentioned in Matt. 10:14? Jesus later came back to this same theme. Why did He upbraid Chorazin and Bethsaida? (Matt. 11:20). To what cities were they unfavorably compared? (Matt. 11:21). With what city was Capernaum compared (11:23-24). Who was to suffer the heavier judgment? What are some of the things which the Old Testament tells us about Tyre? (2 Chron. 2:11-16; Isa. 23; Ezek. 26:4-14, 21). What do we know about Sidon? (Joshua 19:28; Judges 1:31). Jesus showed that heathen cities would have received Him better than did Israel. In connection with this question of degrees of punishment, what is your evaluation of the statements of John A. Broadus. “This declaration of Jesus was no doubt startling to the Jews, accustomed to think themselves safe for eternity because they were Abrahams descendants, and to look down with contempt upon all Gentiles. And to us, in general, there is here brought out the great truth that men’s lot in the world to come will have degrees proportioned to their advantages in this world. (Comp. on 12:41; 23:13, and consult Luke 12:47f.) This truth throws some rays of light athwart the dark, sad question of the fate of the heathen. Men will be judged and punished according to their opportunities of knowing truth and duty. The heathen will not be condemned for rejecting Jesus if they had no opportunity to know of him; but only for disregarding their own conscience (Rom. 2:14-16), the light of external nature (Rom. 1:20ff.) and any true religious ideas which may in whatsoever

way have reached them. On the other hand, those who know of Jesus, and live surrounded by Christian influences, and yet will not repent, incur an unspeakable aggravation of guilt and punishment. But the expression 'more tolerable,' or more endurable, easier to bear, is general and indefinite, and does not warrant any attempt to determine precise degrees of punishment." Matt. 11:20-24 illustrates that general principle that not all men are given the same opportunity in life. Does it show that men are not responsible for the opportunities which they do not have? Are we excused from the responsibility to utilize the opportunity and ability which are ours, just because there is ability and there is opportunity which we do not have?

TWO-FOLD MORE A SON OF HELL

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves." (Matt. 23:15). There is a zeal which is zealous to build partisan followers of the teacher, rather than to lead men to God. There is a zeal which is not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:1-4). On the other hand, there is knowledge without zeal. Why are some so zealous for error? Why do some hold to truth intellectually, yet without zeal? Do we have to choose between zeal without knowledge or knowledge without zeal?

COMPASS SEA AND LAND

Was Judaism under a great commission? Was it God's ultimate purpose to bless the world through Israel? (John 4:22). Was it wrong for them to make proselytes? What was wrong with the

proselyting work of the Pharisee? Did Jesus have reference to all proselytes or only to those of the Pharisees in Matt. 23:15?

In speaking of the making of proselytes, Alfred Edersheim wrote: "It is, indeed, true that, in its pride and exclusiveness, Judaism seemed to denounce proselytism, laid down strict rules to test the sincerity to converts, and spoke of them in general contempt (Horay, 13a) as 'a plague of leprosy.' (Yeb. 47a,b; Midd. 13b). Yet the bitter complaint of classical writers, (*Tacit. Hist*, v.5.; *Seneca in August. De Civit Dei* vi. 11) the statement of Josephus, (*Ant.* xviii. 5:5.: xx.2, 4; *Jewish War* ii. 17, 10 &c, 20, 2; *Life* 23) the frequent allusions in the New Testament and even the admission of the Rabbis, prove their zeal for making proselytes—which, indeed, but for its moral sequences, would neither have deserved nor drawn down the denunciation of a 'woe'. Thus the Midrash, commenting on the words: (Gen. xii. 5) 'the souls that they had gotten in Haran,' refers it to the converts which Abraham had made, adding that every proselyte was to be regarded as if a soul had been created. (*Ber R.* 39, ed. Warsh. p. 72a, and *Vayy. R.*1). To this we may add the pride with which Judaism looked back upon the 150,000 Gibeonite converts said to have been made when David avenged the sin of Saul; (2 Sam. xxi, 1 &c; *Yeban*, 79a) the satisfaction with which it looked forward to the times of Messiah as those of spontaneous conversion to the Synagogue: (*Ab. Zar.* 24a) and the not infrequent instances in which a spirit favorable to proselytism is exhibited in Jewish writings, as, also such a saying as this that when Israel is obedient to the will of God, He brings in as converts to Judaism all the just of the nations, such as Jethro, Rahad, Ruth, &c. (*Midr. on Eccl.* v. 11).

But after all, may the Lord not have referred, not to conversion to Judaism in general, but to proselytism to the sect of the Pharisees, which was undoubtedly sought to the compassing of sea and land?" Emil Schurer pointed out that "In the Hellenistic-Roman period Jewish propagandism seems to have been carried on with great activity. The success with which those efforts were crowned was in any case something very considerable. If we may judge from the numerous hints we come across, it may be assumed that, in the Hellenistic-Roman period, the number of those who allied themselves more or less closely with the Jewish communities, took part in Jewish worship, and observed, the Jewish ordinance with a greater or less degree of strictness, was a very large one. Although not quite equal to that of the worshippers of Isia and Mithras."

PROSELYTES

There were two classes of proselytes. The "proselytes of righteousness: were those who were circumcised and embraced the whole law. The practice of immersing the proselyte grew up, and the proselyte was considered to be a new born child, a new man, and thus a new name was given to him. He also had to offer a sacrifice. These three things being done he was viewed as one who had given himself to God and was considered to be an Israelite; although many Jews considered them to be inferior to those who had been born Jews. He was also called a "proselyte of the covenant." Were any of these present on Pentecost? (Acts 2:10). Were any converted? (Acts 6:5). The other class of proselytes were called "proselytes of the gate". They were not circumcised. They

believed in God, and were to abstain from robbery, blasphemy, idolatry, fornication, homicide, and the flesh of any animal which had died a natural death. Since they were not circumcised they were not considered to be a part of the nation of Israel. How are they designated in the New Testament? (Acts 10: 2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26, 43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7). Was Cornelius a proselyte of the gate or a proselyte of the covenant? Did he worship idols, or God? (Acts 10:2-4, 22, 31). Was he circumcised? (Acts 11:2-3).

PROSELYTES TO WHOM?

Were the proselytes of the Pharisees joined to Jehovah? Who was their father? What is meant by a “child of Hell”? What does this indicate concerning their ancestry, character, and destiny? What are some of the references to hell in the Bible? (Matt. 3:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:33; Mk. 9:43, 45,47; Lk. 12:5 Jas. 3:6). The Pharisees’ proselytes became worse than the Pharisees. Why this was the case, Jesus did not explain. He simply stated the fact. It may be due to the fact that the Pharisees had been brought up in Judaism with its moral principles. Although they had gotten away from the weightier matters of the law, likely in something they had continued to be influenced by the law. Their proselytes, however, had not been brought up in the wholesome environment of Old Testament teaching. Thus they did not have its restraining influence. In with this may be tied the fact that sometimes individuals may copy others only in their weakest or shallowest points. Sometimes a young preacher may admire an old preacher who has been very successful in preaching the gospel.

He may copy his mannerism, which had nothing to do with the person's success, and be the image of that older preacher in mannerism but not in message or in power. He may even imitate the voice of the older preacher. Perhaps these proselytes of the Pharisees were attracted by the outward show, by the self-exaltation, of the Pharisees, and imitated them in this without having any of the restraining influences in which the Pharisee had been reared. John A Broadus suggested that "These proselytes retained the essential faults of the heathen, and took on the faults of the Pharisees... In these proselytes some roots of old convictions – while the hypocrisy was not less deep. Pupils in error and vice, frequently surpass their teachers. Very likely also some became proselytes for the sake of gain." Although the Pharisees were evidently zealous, as indicated by their compassing land and sea to make one proselyte, yet sometimes proselytes are more zealous than are those who converted them. Why? Is this true with reference to good proselytes, as well as bad ones? The seeds of error found fertile soil in the type of people whom the Pharisees, with their show and self-righteousness, attracted. Often one does not see the full fruitage of an error in the life of those who first promulgate it. Certain aspects of their character may have been shaped by the good influences of the faith which they are perverting, but those who accept their perverted message do not have these restraining influences and their character may be more fully formed by the perverted message. As a result, they may be more consistent in their error than are those who taught them. Were the Judaizers like this? (Gal. 6:13).

SWEARING AND TITHING

“Woe unto you, ye blind guides, that say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing: but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. Ye fools and blind: for which is greater, the gold, or the temple that hath sanctified the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, he is a debtor. Ye blind: for which is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? He therefore that sweareth by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And he that sweareth by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that sweareth by the heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.” (Matt. 23:16-22). As blind guides they were misleading the people concerning oaths, as well as in other matters also. Why should we refuse to follow blind guides? (Matt. 15:14).

WHEN IS AN OATH AN OATH?

What was the Old Testament teaching concerning the binding nature of the oath? (Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 23:23; Num. 30:8). How were they avoiding the force of oaths? (Matt. 23:16-18). What is the contrast between “it is nothing”, and “he is a debtor” in Matt. 23:16? Do you think that the Jews in Acts 23:12-13, 21 starved to death? Although we do not know the exact grounds on which they made these distinctions, the *Expositor’s Greek Testament* suggested that: “The principle underlying Rabbinical judgments as to the relative value of oaths seems to have been: The special more binding than the general (form); therefore gold of the temple more than the

temple, sacrifice on altars more than altar, throne of God in Heaven more than heaven. Specializing indicated greater interest.” How did Jesus answer their distinctions? (Matt. 23:17- 22). What is your evaluation of the following explanations? “Jesus answers this question by asserting the opposite principle to that laid down by the Rabbis: The general includes and is more important than the particular ... this is the more logical position but the main point of difference is moral. The tendency of the Rabbis was to enlarge the sphere of insincere, idle, meaningless speech. Christ’s aim was to inculcate absolute sincerity—always mean what you say; let none of your utterances be merely conventional generalities. Be as much in earnest when you say ‘by the temple’ as when you say ‘by the gold of the temple.’ But our Lord turns the casuistry against them, 17, 19. If they are determined to make these distinctions (through distinctions in this matter are out of place, cf. 20-22), surely the house of God and his chosen altar are more sacred than man’s possessions. These last are more sacred than man’s possessions. The last are sacred only when, and because, they become offerings. Even casuistry should have reached a conclusion contradictory to that of the scribes.” What is meant by casuistry? Was Jesus showing that their own brand of logic could be turned against them? Or was He doing more than this? Did the gold have any sanctity of itself? Why was it sanctified? Does this show how foolish it was to think that an oath by the gold was more binding than an oath by the temple? Is the same logic applied to the sacrifice and to swearing by heaven? (Matt. 23:19-22).

What was the gold of the temple? (Heb. 9:4). It may have included the gold plates which covered some of the temple⁴ as well as the golden vessels;⁵ and many think it included the money contributed to the temple. Josephus show that around ten million dollars was taken from the temple by Crassus. What passage describes the altar? (II Chron. 4:1). Jesus showed that these oaths were as binding taken in the name of God, since these things by which they swore were connected with God and had no value apart from God. Who dwelt in the Old Testament temple? (Matt. 23:21-22). In what two temples does God dwell today? (I Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:20-22; I Cor. 6:19-20). How did God manifest His presence in the Old Testament temple? (I Kings 8:10, 11; Psalms 80:1). Was this the reason the Jews were right, and the Samaritans wrong, about the place of worship? (John 4:20-22). John A. Broadus has pointed out that: "The Jews would avoid literally taking in vain any name of Jehovah their God, and when swearing only by things associated with him, as the temple, heaven, etc., they imagined that they would not break the third commandment in violating such an oath. The Mishna on Oaths (Shebuoth, 4, 13) says if one adjures them by a d, representing Jehovah, or by Sabaoth (Jehovah of host), or by any divine attribute or divine name. The Gemara on this passage of the Mishna explains (Wun.) that this is because these terms must mean the divine being, while heaven and earth can be conceived of as mere objects, without reference to the Creator. This is exactly the notion that our Lord here condemns. Heaven and earth, when used in oaths, do suggest the Creator. Did Jesus forbid all oaths (Matt. 5:33-37)? What is meant by "of the evil"? Is reference made to the fact

that if it were not for the presence of evil in the world men would never have felt a need to do more than to make an affirmation or a denial? It must be kept in mind that one passage may show that another passage is limited in its applications. If all oaths are forbidden, how do you explain the following passages where more than a bare statement is made, and where in substance a judicial oath is taken? (Rom. 1:9; 9:1; I Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20).

THE GNAT STRAINERS

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel!” (Matt. 23:23-24). Did the Lord condemn the Pharisees for tithing? Did they tithe to support the Levites (Num. 18:20-24). Were there any additional tithes? (Deut. 14:22-24, 28, 29). Did the law require the tithing of agricultural products? (Lev. 27:30; Deut. 14:22). What were mint, anise and cummin? Edersheim pointed out that “... the Talmud gravely assures us that the donkey of a certain Rabbi had been so well trained as to refuse corn of which the tithes had not been taken!” Were certain creatures unclean to the Jews? Was the camel? (Lev. 11:4). Was the gnat viewed as unclean? Did they literally strain out gnats? Did they literally swallow camels?

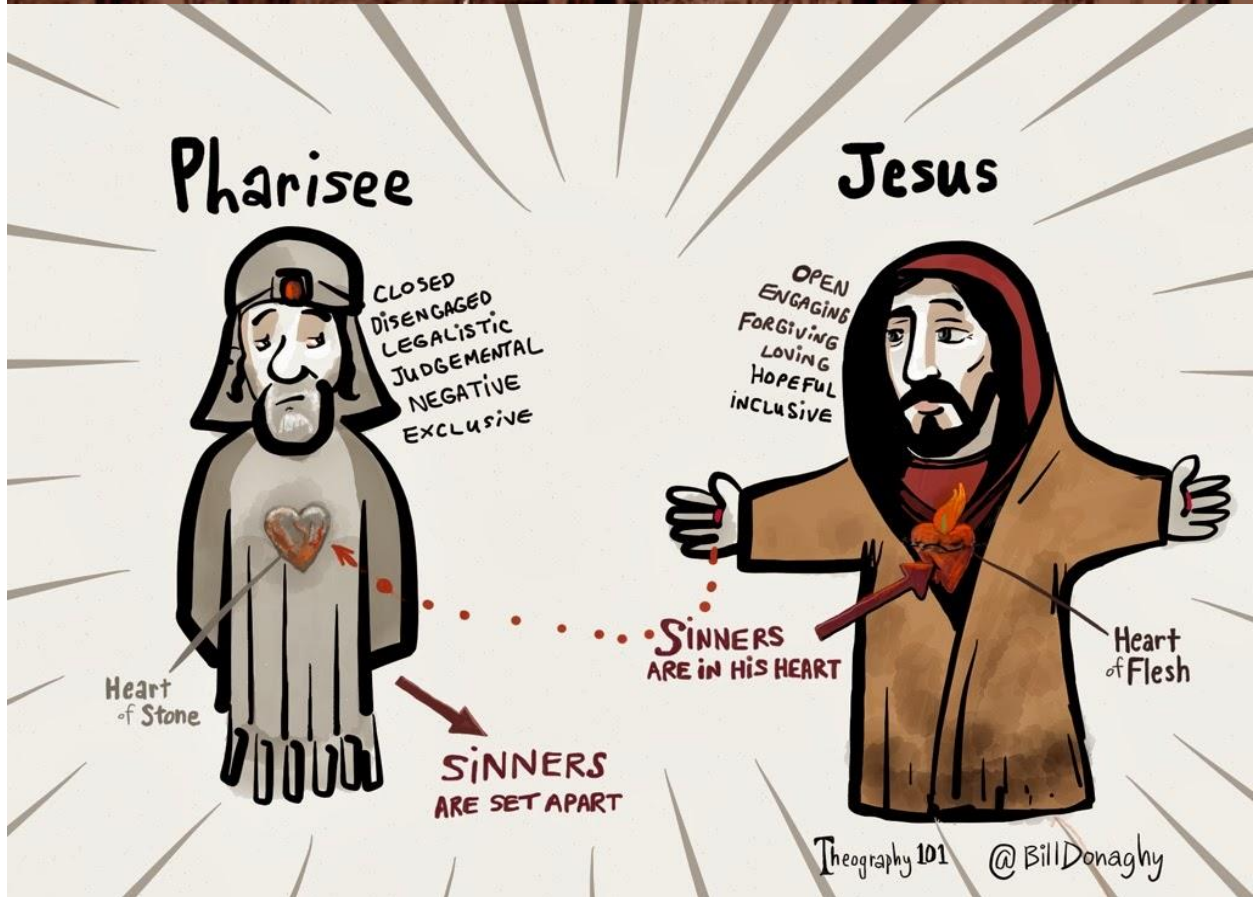
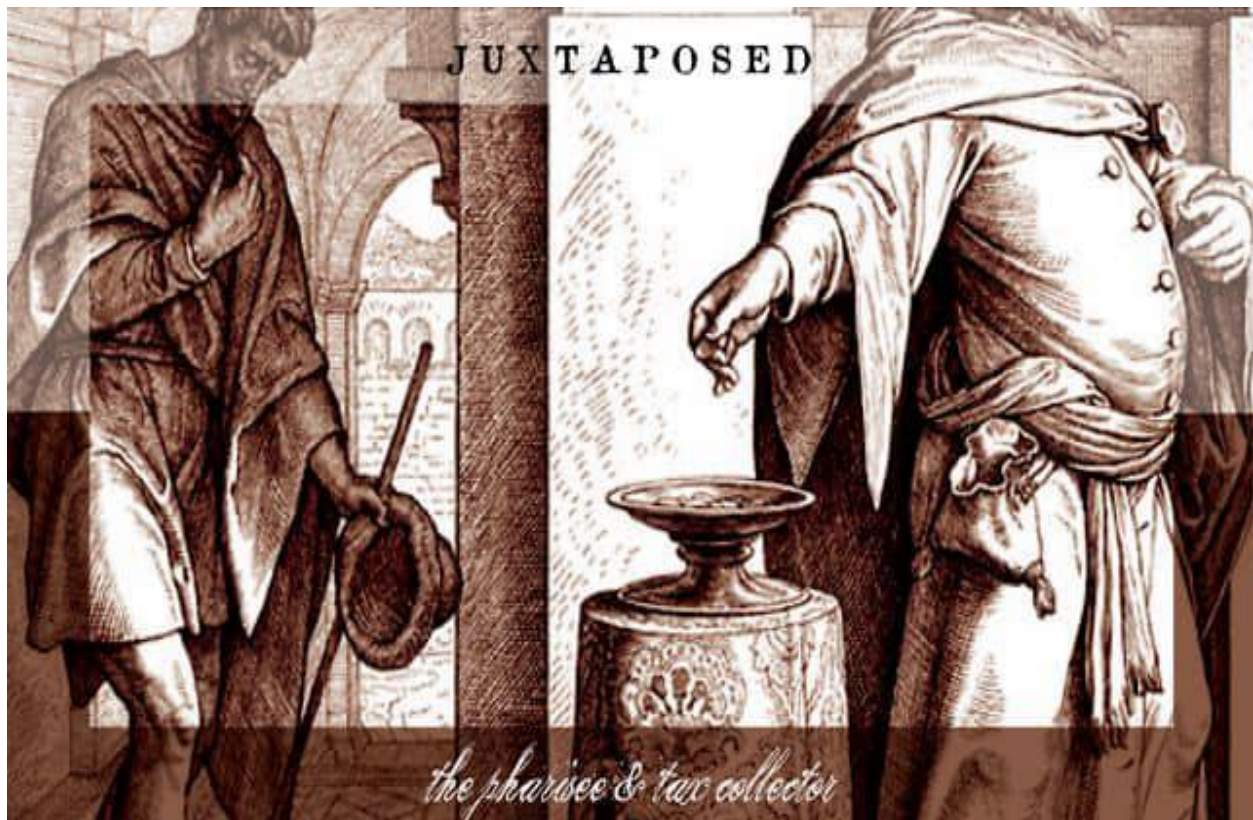
LEGALISTS? There are some who say that the Pharisees were legalists because they were careful to do what God said in even little matters, such as tithing small garden plants. A legalist is one who tries to earn his salvation through the keeping of law; but since all have sinned it is impossible for us to be justified on the basis of doing all that the law says, and doing it all of the time. Thus when judged by the standard of salvation through merit we are condemned (Gal. 3:10). Our salvation rests on the mercy of God, but we must lay hold on that mercy in the way that God ordains. The legalist is self-righteous, since he assumes that he has earned his salvation through his own deeds? Did Christ forbid their tithing? (Matt. 23:23). Christ pointed out that the Pharisees “were strict as to the slightest externals, and left undone the ethical; he says that the ethical duties ought to be done, and the others not to be neglected.”

Do those, who assume that the Pharisees were careful in all things to do what God said, overlook the fact that Matt. 23:23 shows that they were not careful to do what God said? If they had done what God said, what would they have done which they were not doing?

WHAT THEY LEFT UNDONE

Were some things in the law weightier than others? Could one justify omitting the weightier matters by giving careful attention to matters less weighty? Would those with the proper attitude toward God and His law ignore the lesser matters on the ground that these were unnecessary for them since they kept the weightier matters? What was Jesus' attitude on this? (Matt. 5:19). Would this not leave it to the human will as to what part of God's law they were to keep? However, if the demands of mercy and the demands of sacrifice could not be carried out at the same time, which had precedence? (Matt. 12:7). The first of the weightier matters which the Pharisees had left undone was justice. The word is essentially the same as the word for righteousness. Primarily it refers to our conduct in our relationship with others, and often with a specific reference to their rights. In business what did the demands of justice include? (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13; Ezek. 45:9-10). In the course what did this include? (Deut. 16:18-20; Ex. 23:1-9). What two characteristics often go together and lead to injustice? (Lk. 18:2). To deal justly with another, meant to give him what was rightfully due him. Are there occasions when for our own welfare, the welfare of others, and the good even of the person involved, that we should demand justice? When should we require justice of another and when should we show mercy? Can the demand for justice ever be a means of showing mercy to the individual with whom we are dealing?, of showing mercy to others? Is there a difference between dealing justly with another, and always demanding that others do likewise with us? What type of person is it who always demands his dues?

Should he be glad in some instances that he does not get what is coming to him? When should we forego our rights? Is our salvation based on what we are due, or on God's mercy? (Rom. 5:6-11; Eph. 2:1-10). Those who have been shown mercy by God must show mercy to others. How important is this? (Matt. 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-35; Jas. 2:13). Does Mercy ask: What do I owe him? What does it ask? Does Mercy ask: To whom should I be kind, courteous, helpful? Or does it ask: Am I kind, courteous, helpful? Does Mercy ask: Whom is my neighbor? Or, does it ask: Who is neighborly? Am I neighborly? (Lk. 10:29-37) Could the priest have said? It is none of my business? Would it have been sufficient to say: I feel sorry for him, poor fellow? Faith has reference to confidence, trust, reliance on God. Just as justice and mercy regulate us in our dealings with men, so faith is our proper attitude toward God. Albert Barnes commented that: "Faith in God here means that we are to give him what is his due; as mercy and justice mean to do to men, in all circumstances, what is right toward them." Does faith, when it avails, include the obedience of faith? (Gal. 3:26-27; Jas. 2:14-26; Heb. 11). Is our attitude toward our fellow-man rooted in our faith in God? Is our faith in God operative if it does not shape our attitude toward our fellow-man? If there is no God, if man is just an animal, and if there is no moral law, is it reasonable to talk about our duty to deal justly with others, or to show mercy toward others?



Heart Condition. The Son of God could see beyond the outside appearance to the heart of man. (Compare 1st Sam. 16:7). This inspired insight into man's heart we do not have; although by the words & deeds of an individual is finally manifested in his life the condition of his heart. However, we may not have an adequate sample of his conduct, thus we should be extremely careful to labeling someone a hypocrite. What we take for hypocrisy may only be weakness or inconsistency. Fortunately, we do not have to know whether or not a person is a hypocrite in order to evaluate his teaching and his actions in the light of the word of God. The Lord, however, knew that these Pharisees were not pure in heart. He knew that they said & did not, that their works were done to be seen of men that they were inwardly full of hypocrisy & iniquity although outwardly unto men they appeared righteous when measured by certain limited standard. Thus, of them Jesus said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside thereof may become clean also... Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but are inwardly full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

“whited sepulchre” (1:21) (3:45)

**Biblical allusion:
Matthew 23:27-28**

Death inside

²⁷ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.



Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inward ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity... Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should have been partakers with them in the prophets blood. Wherefore ye witness to yourselves, that ye are sons of them that slew the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of

hell? Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. **Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.” (Matthew 23)**



THEIR HYPOCRISY ILLUSTRATED

Christ used two illustrations to convey the depth of their hypocrisy. First, He drew an illustration from eating utensils. Certainly we want our cups and plates to be clean on the outside, but if they are dirty on the inside & clean outside it is a snare and a delusion. The outside we only see but the inside is in contact with your food. If we see the dirty inside will we use the utensil? If you could see the true condition of a hypocrite's heart would they shun him? Are some people concerned only about their reputation and not about their character? Why is a man foolish to be concerned only about what men think and not about what God knows about him? What is meant by the saying that hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue? Does the hypocrite usually try to convince himself, sooner or later, that he is not a hypocrite? Why? If there is no moral law is there anything wrong with hypocrisy? If man is not accountable to God are the only laws about which he needs to be concerned the laws of nature and the laws of man? If we are just animals, and accountable only to man, when he knows enough about us and is powerful enough to make us render an account, the only command which we should be careful not to violate is: Thou shalt not get caught! There is, of course, a truth which people overlook: Thou shalt get caught! Some say that even if there is no God, one needs to keep his self-respect and do right. But without God, and if men are just animals, what is meant by self-respect, and what is meant by right?

Of what were they full? The word of “excess” here means intemperance. John A. Broadus commented that: “The contents of the cup and dish, namely the wine and food, are the product of extortion, and the cup and dish are filled in consequence of desire for excess in eating and drinking. The image seems to change slightly, the full cup and platter being due in one sense to extortion, and in another to excess.” In cleaning up their lives where did Jesus say that they must start? Why? (Matt. 15:10-20; Prov. 23:7). What is the ultimate reward of the clean heart? (Matt. 5:8). The second illustration was of whited sepulchers. *Although sepulchers may have been white washed to make them to look better, it also helped people to avoid contact with them even at night. Why did they want to avoid them? (Num. 5:2; 6:16; 19:16).* What is the contrast between the outside and the inside? What did Jesus say about them in Luke 11:44? There are those who think that sin is a lovely experience, but Jesus shows that it partakes of decay and death. As important and instructive as it may be to see ourselves as others see us, far more important and instructive it is to see all things, including ourselves, as God sees them. What are God’s people supposed to be? (Eph. 2:20-22; I Cor. 6:19-20). If we do not guard our hearts with all diligence, what do we stand in danger of becoming? (Matt. 23:27). Each needs to ask himself: Am I a temple or a tomb?

"Beauty is only skin deep" seems to be the modern secular equivalent of this "woe" in [Matt. 23](#). The corresponding Old Testament statement is probably this: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion" ([Proverbs 11:22](#)). This principle has lasted for millennia simply because it is easily observed in all cultures. Our Lord's application to the scribes & Pharisees was particularly pointed: "Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" ([Matt. 23:28](#)). God is not interested in the "pretty outside" but in what's on the inside. "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" ([1 Samuel 16:7](#)).

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“WE WOULD NOT HAVE DONE IT.”

How did the Pharisees think that they were showing respect for the prophets and for righteous persons? (Matthew 23:29). Did they realize that their fathers had put prophets to death? Did they maintain that their own attitude was such that if they had lived when the prophets lived, they would have honored them? (Matthew 23:30). Is it easier to profess regard for the prophets of God who cannot personally confront us with their message, than to listen to their word in the Bible? Calvin observed that: “It is customary with hypocrites thus to honor after their death good teachers and holy ministers of God, who they cannot endure while they are alive. It is a hypocrisy which costs little to profess a warm regard for those who are now silent.” *There are some who say: I wish that I could have heard Jesus preach. If they are today’s Pharisees, would they really have wanted to hear Him? Some say: How wonderful it would be to hear Peter or Paul preach. How can we know whether or not we are really sincere in such statements? Is our treatment of Christ’s word, the word He revealed through His inspired men, equal to our treatment of Christ? (John 13:20). If we will not listen to their word, would we listen to them if they actually returned in person? (Compare Luke 16:29-31). The test of what we would do if we heard apostles speak is to be found in what we do with reference to their written word. If we are indifferent to it, we would be indifferent to them. If we are antagonistic to it, we would be antagonistic to them.*

What did Jesus say was their true condition, in contrast with what they professed? (Matt. 23:31-34). How did they witness this to themselves? Did Jesus mean that if they listened to their conscience in the light of God's word and their deed that they would learn the truth about themselves? How do you evaluate Broadus comments? "In the very self-excuse of verse 30, they acknowledge themselves the children of those who slew the prophets, and our Lord intimates that here, as is usual, the offspring resemble the parent (5:45; John 8:41, 44), though they pretend the contrary in their case. The rulers are already plotting to murder Jesus (Matt. 21:46). They are minded to do as their fathers did in this very matter, and piously pretending to be altogether different. (Luke 11:48). 'Ye are witnesses and consent unto the works of your fathers.' (Compare above on 21:39ff., and see Acts 7:51 and I Thess. 2:11, 15)." Although they acknowledge, and then condemned, the sin of their fathers, yet they had the same spirit, and thus were rebellious against God and His prophets and were also hypocritical. Professing regard for the prophets, and yet being hypocritical, "the Pharisees showed that they had no true conception of either their own condition, or the crime of their fathers. Possibly attributing such violence to the barbarity of ancient times, they failed to see that these persecutions spring from the same hatred of real righteousness which produced their hypocritical service. A common mistake." What did Jesus mean by Matthew 23:32? Was this irony? A prediction? An invitation to act? Was Christ encouraging wickedness? Broadus thought that it was irony. "The expression is gravely ironical (Winer), a thing natural in so impassioned and pointedly personal a

discourse, which has kept growing in earnestness. This generation ought to turn from their fathers' sins, but instead of that they were adding like sins, and the new divine warnings did not stop them. So with mournful irony he bids them go on and fill the measure full (Genesis 15:16)." Others have thought that it was both a prediction and a judicial consignment of them to their merited fate. "Not irony, but a terrible prediction, and a judicial consignment of them to their own ways. Every merciful means of influence had been used before this was spoken. To leave them now to show their true spirit was an act of mercy to others." Richard Watson has maintained that it was not simply a statement indicating what they would do in the future. He also thought that it was a judicial consignment. "The words express hopeless abandonment: the case of the class of men had become desperate; they had set themselves to resist all conviction; and now, after repeated warnings and calls, they are utterly renounced by Christ, and surrendered to the power of their sins. The force of this expression is most natural, and indicates strong emotion: "Go, since ye are yourselves willfully bent upon it, and since ye reject all counsel, and condemn every effort to bring you to a better mind, fill up the measure of your fathers: ye have rejected me, and I now solemnly and judicially reject you." What is meant by "the measure" (Matt. 23:32). Was it the measure of their guilt? Does it mean the full amount, and thus its completion? Did it mean until the national iniquity was complete? Does Genesis 15:16 throw any light on this? What is your evaluation of Richard Watson's comment? "There is a measure of sins which when filled up never fails to bring down upon nations the special visitations of judgment.



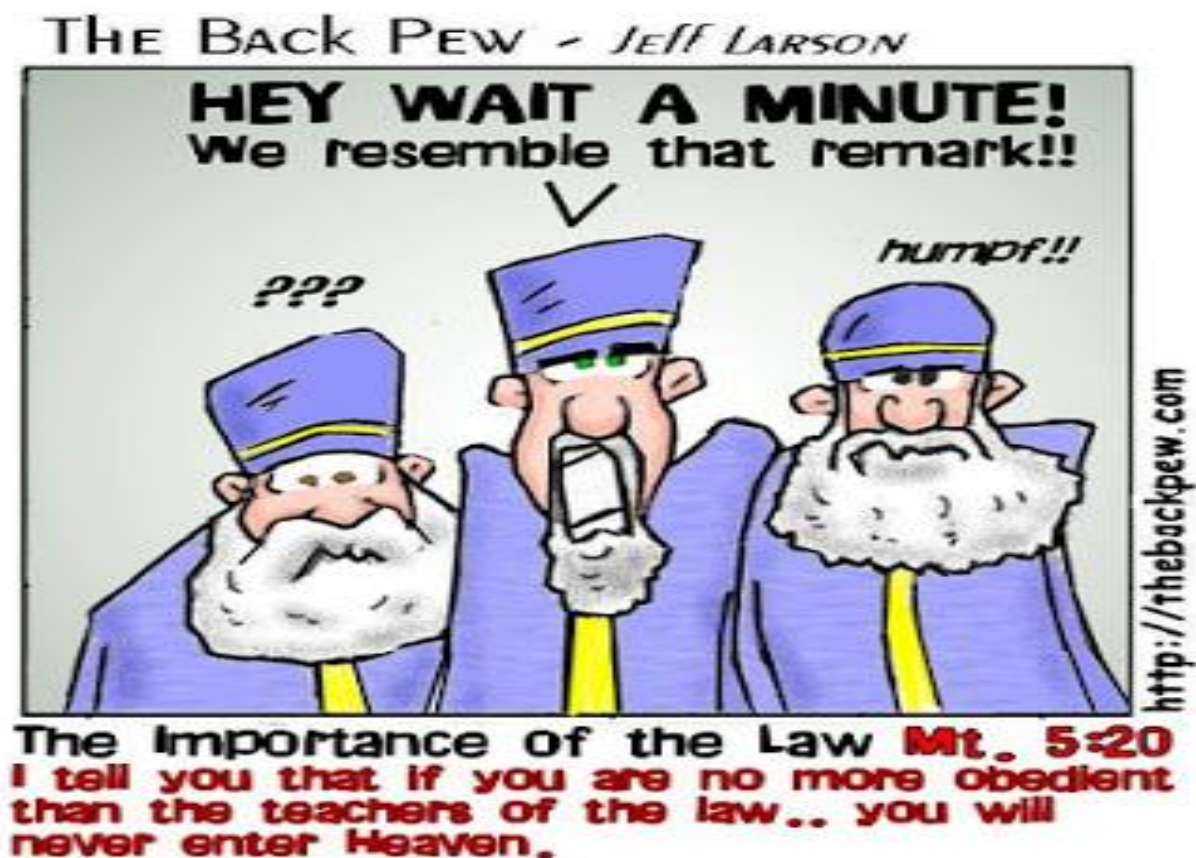


To fill up this measure is seldom the work of any one age. Successive generations adopt the principles, and imitate the practices, of their ancestor, adding 'sin to sin' and iniquity to iniquity,' until either by the natural consequence of such public vices as tend to subvert the strength and security of society, or by the special visitations of divine vengeance, now no longer corrective, but in the strictest sense penal, they receive the full reward of their sins. The punishment of individuals may be deferred to another life; but nations, who are treated under the divine administration as political persons, have no existence but in time, and in this life therefore are rewarded according to their works; subject, however, to this consideration, that they, as well as individuals, are under a mediatorial government, receive greater blessings than they could claim of right, are treated with 'much long-suffering,' and can turn away God's anger by repentance and prayer. But when that point is once reached, beyond which it is inconsistent with the character of a wise and righteous government, though founded in mercy, to extend impunity, the measure is full and the terribleness of the judgments of God proves to all the world that none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. The measure was filled up by the Jews, in rejecting the offers of mercy made them by the publication of the gospel throughout the land by the apostles & disciples of our Lord, after the day of Pentecost. Many indeed were gathered into the Christian church; but the majority still influenced by the increased malignity and the persecuting spirit of their chief men, and ecclesiastical leaders, not only rejected Christianity with contempt, but were enraged to fierce opposition and blasphemies, because of the calling of

the Gentiles.” What did Christ say that He would do? (Matt. 23:34). Who were these prophets, wise men, and scribes? When were they sent? (John 16:7, 13, 14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, etc.). What did they do to Jesus before He sent these prophets? (Matthew 23:37-39). What was to be the treatment which the Pharisees accorded those whom Christ sent? (Matt. 23:34; Acts 5:40; 6:1; 23:19; 26:11). Does this indicate that God’s judgment would not come upon them immediately after they rejected His Son? Did Jesus let them pronounce judgment on themselves? (Matt. 21:40-41). How did Jesus apply their answer? Did He use Old Testament scripture in replying to them? (Matthew 21:42-45). What is the significance of “therefore” in verse 34 relating to what Christ has just said? Do you think Broadus is right in his saying: “Wherefore, or therefore, because they are like their fathers and will treat God’s messengers as their fathers did, he sends them messengers to be persecuted; it will thus become manifestly right that they should be held guilty for their own and their ancestor’s sin. (v. 35). God of course does not wish men to sin, but he tests them, so as to show themselves and others their real character, and vindicate the justice of their punishment.” Or do you agree with Watson that persecutions are referred to as further illustrations of their bad character, and that this is another cause of the scripture idiom, wherein “the undesigned effect is sometimes expressed as though it had been the final cause.” What does he mean by final cause? He cites as an example Matthew 10:34. On this he commented: “... that in the Hebrew idiom one is said to do that which he is the occasion of being done, however undesigned by him, nay, though directly contrary to his intentions. Thus Isaiah is

commanded to ‘make the heart of the people fat, and their ear heavy,’ because the mission on which he was sent would have the effect, through the criminal obstinacy of his hearers; and Jeremiah calls himself ‘a man of strife and contention to the whole land,’ because the delivery of his exhortations and his reproofs had occasioned great strife against himself among the exasperated rulers. Attention to these peculiarities in the style of speaking which obtained among the Hebrews, is absolutely necessary to a right interpretation of many passages; and, for want of it, some very false conclusions have been drawn from the texts in which they occur. To apply this to our Lord’s word, the purpose of Christ’s coming was unquestionably to establish peace on earth; but because of sharp dissensions, and the alienation of friends and families, have often been the result, through the violent enmity of the carnal mind to truth and holiness, he represents himself, according to the oriental mode of speaking, as having sent, not peace, but a sword, and as setting at variance with his father, do.” What is the relationship between “that” in verse 35 and their deeds in verse 34? Does it refer to the purpose of the Jews, or to God’s purpose? Are the consequences of an act ever said to be the purpose of the act, because they are bound up in the act regardless of the personal intentions of the individual? Whose righteous blood was the first blood that was shed? (Matt. 23:35). How does the cry of his blood differ from the cry of Christ’s blood? (Heb. 12:24). How do some of the commentaries identify Zachariah? Did Jesus mean that his generation was guilty of Cain’s sin and of the sins of other slayers of righteous people in all generations past? (Compare Ezek. 18:1-32). Were they guilty of the same

type of sin? Was their sin even greater? Was it against the greater light? Was it against one who was greater than all who had gone before? Can one generation reap the consequences of the sins of another generation, as well as of their own sins, without being made guilty by those sins of that generation preceding? If they imitated the misdeeds of the preceding generation did they become guilty because to their own sins, as the preceding generation had become guilty because of its sins? Did Jesus indicate that some kind of temporal judgment was coming on that generation? (Matthew 23: 36). What judgment did come? (Matthew 24). Did this mean that they would not face, even if the destruction of Jerusalem did not bring them to repentance, any other judgment? (Matt. 23:33).



THE CONDEMNATION OF THE PHARISEES BY JESUS

THE peril of Pharisaism in Christianity is the emphasis on the letter as opposed to the spirit. The letter killeth while the spirit quickeneth. It is sometimes charged that the words of Jesus to the Pharisees are unduly harsh, and not in accord with His own teaching on the subject of captions criticism (Matt. 7:1 f.; Luke 6:37 f.). But is the criticism of Jesus captious? It is plain and pointed beyond a doubt and not without a sting at times. But one must consider the provocation that elicited such words from our Lord, and the prolonged restraint on His part under the severe taunts of His enemies. Those who should have welcomed Jesus and His message were the chief opponents in His path. It became necessary for Jesus to reveal these religious leaders in their true character in order that the people might understand both them and Jesus, and the reason for the conflict between them. Religious controversy is a calamity, but it is often unavoidable, unless one is willing to give error a clear road to victory. Loyalty to truth demands that one speak the truth in love for those in error. It must not be forgotten that Jesus is the one under attack, and that his descriptions of the Pharisees are in the nature of self-defence. I am not seeking to mitigate the severity of the language or to soften it of its true import. The hot hatred of the Pharisees for Jesus did not beget hate in the heart of Jesus. He prayed for them as He died for them. And yet Jesus did not cover up the truth about them. His words about them are a judgment upon them for their spiritual and moral shortcomings. ‘And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil’ (John 3:19). If these are not the words of Jesus, they are at least the Evangelist’s estimate of the reason why the Jerusalem leaders rejected Jesus. At bottom, the reason that men refuse Christ is always the love of sin. The presence of Jesus sharpened the sense of spiritual reality. The issue is drawn and the tug of war is on. Sin pulls hard upon even the respectable religious classes, though often in the guise of piety, selfish religiosity. At any rate, there is nothing to conceal in what Jesus has said to the Pharisees, but much to enlighten us and all who are in like peril with them. One’s very virtues may become vices to deaden spiritual life.

1. *Spiritual Blindness* (John 3:1–14; Matt. 9:13; Luke 5:39; Mark 3:5; Matt. 13:13–17; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 6:44, 64 f.; Matt. 15:12–20; Matt. 16:1–4; Mark 8:11–13; John 9:40 f.; Luke 11:37–54)

It is remarkable that the first formal interview between Jesus and a friendly Pharisee reveals such a gulf between them. The difficulty that Nicodemus had in understanding Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God, argues strongly against the view that Jesus had only the theological outlook of the Pharisees and the apocalyptists of His day. Dr. Kirsopp Lake sees clearly that to hold this view robs Jesus of His place as infallible guide, not to say Lord and Saviour. ‘It is impossible to find its fulfilment in Jesus, if He conditioned His teaching by Jewish apocalypticism, and believed in what was, after all, an illusory expectation of the coming of the kingdom of God.’ Dr. Lake gives up Jesus, because he simply fell in with Jewish apocalypticism. ‘We are driven back to a living religion of communion with God, without the intervention of any other guide claiming to be an infallible substitute for personal effort.’ Dr. Lake, like Dr. Case,² offers by way of consolation the personal religion of Jesus rather than Jesus as religion. Jesus did make use of apocalyptic terminology in some of His teaching in order to be understood, but it is lamentable narrowness of view to see only this aspect of His teaching. Nicodemus is a cultured Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, who is drawn to Jesus by the nobility of His teaching and

by the seal of God in the miracles of Jesus, as ‘a teacher come from God’ (John 3:2). Jesus saw the fundamental trouble at once, and proceeded to explain to Nicodemus how one must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus probably looked for a political kingdom and a political Messiah, who would usher in the kingdom with catastrophic signs from heaven, but he was helpless to grasp the idea of a spiritual birth in a spiritual realm. The repeated effort of Jesus to make it plain to Nicodemus by means of the symbol of water and the necessity affirmed without the symbol, left Nicodemus in a state of scientific and theological scepticism. ‘How can these things be?’ (John 3:9). There was probably no Pharisee in Jerusalem more enlightened than Nicodemus, but he was in the grip of Torah, and felt that there was an incompatibility somewhere, though he could not explain it. ‘Torah and Jesus could not remain in harmony. The two were fundamentally incompatible.’ As a result of this *impasse* with Nicodemus, Jesus exclaimed, ‘Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?’ (John 3:10). The Greek article (ὁ) with teacher is to be noted. Nicodemus was one of the authorised exponents of current Pharisaism, the accepted teacher of religion, one supposed to know by experience (γινώσκεις) the difficult points of theology, and certainly the more elementary. And yet he has shown ignorance of one of the fundamental matters, ‘the earthly’ (τὰ ἐπίγεια, taking place on earth). How can he be trusted to expound ‘the heavenly’ (τὰ ἐπουράνια, belonging to heaven as a sphere) like the plan of God in the Cross (the atonement) and the gift of His Son? There is no further comment by Nicodemus, and the incident apparently closes with Nicodemus unsaved. Later he did find his way to espouse the cause of Jesus, but he had to shake off much of the preconceived Pharisaic theology before he could understand or trust Jesus as the Revealer of God. Nicodemus thus stands as the representative Pharisee who is kindly disposed toward Jesus, and yet is hindered by the wealth of his own theology from finding a place for Him. He is the teacher who is blinded by his own knowledge. The light that is in him is darkness. Nicodemus was a sincere seeker after the truth, and Jesus treated him with consideration, as He does all scholars who make their way to Him. There is to-day many a scholar who has lost his way, and is unable to find God. I often think of Geo. J. Romanes as a modern Nicodemus, who fought his way out of doubt and darkness into light, truth, and peace.

It is probably nearly a year later that in Capernaum, at the feast of Levi, Jesus said to the Pharisees who criticised His affiliation with publicans and sinners: ‘But go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice; for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners’ (Matt. 9:13). Here Jesus charges the rabbis with ignorance of Hosea 6:6, a keen rebuke for the recognised preachers of the day. The ‘go ye and learn’ (πορευθέντες μύθετε) was a common formula with the rabbis (Plummer on Matt. 9:13), and the use of it by Jesus as a rabbi to rabbis has additional force and even sting. The Pharisees had built up this system of ceremonial ritualism, because of ignorance of the inner spiritual teaching of the Old Testament itself. Lake declines to see any irony in Christ’s description of the Pharisees as ‘the righteous,’ but, as we have already seen, Lake limits the horizon of Jesus to His theological environment.

In Luke 5:39 Jesus gives a parable that helps to explain the obscurantism of the Pharisees, and their reluctance to accept the new theology of Jesus: ‘And no man having drunk old wine desireth new: for he saith, The old is good.’ Wetstein curiously misunderstood the parable and took the Pharisaic austerity to be the new wine, and the teaching of Jesus the old wine,³ just the reverse of the fact. As Plummer (*in loco*) clearly shows, it is not here the relative merits of the old wine and the new, but the *taste* for them that is under discussion. From the Pharisaic standpoint theirs is the old wine and the teaching of Jesus is the new wine. They not only prefer the old or ‘good’ (χρηστός, tried and known), but they will not even investigate the merits of the

new, which has no attraction for them at all. Jesus thus clearly understands the Pharisaic attitude toward His revolutionary teaching of a spiritual religion free from the bondage of rite and ceremony. Their minds are closed to His teaching, and they will not even investigate the matter as Nicodemus did. They refuse to consider the proposition that Jesus may be right and the Pharisees wrong. The case is prejudiced and closed to argument.

In Mark 3:5 we have a vivid picture of the emotion of Jesus over the growing hostility of the Pharisees toward Him: 'And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts.' Mark has five instances of this 'quick, searching glance' of Jesus round the circle (περι-) of His friends or His enemies (Swete *in loco*), due probably to Peter's memory of the scenes. One of the looks at Peter cut him to the heart, and he went out and wept bitterly. The countenance of Jesus spoke volumes to those who saw Him. The look of Jesus here was with anger, but it was not vindictive (Gould *in loco*), but anger tempered with grief (Swete). The sorrow (συνλειτουργικός) here is Christ's own misery over the hardness of heart of the Pharisees. 'The look was momentary, the sorrow habitual' (Swete). The Pharisees are now grown callous (πώρωσις. Cf. the state of the heathen in Eph. 4:18) as is shown directly by the plot with the Herodians to kill Him. Jesus did not express His look in words, nor did the Pharisees accept His challenge about the relative value of a man and a sheep. Instead, Jesus made the man stretch forth his withered hand. But the atmosphere of hostility was electric, and the tension was all the greater because no debate came. The Pharisees had looked their hate (παρετηροῦντο, were watching Him, Luke 6:7) and Jesus in return had looked His anger.

One of the severest indictments of the Pharisees for spiritual blindness occurs in the defence of Jesus for the extended use of parables (Matt. 13:13–17; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10). It is after the blasphemous accusations and the disciples question Jesus about it: 'Why speakest thou unto them in parables?' (Matt. 13:10). Jesus says: 'Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.' He had just said that it was given to the believers to understand the mystery of the kingdom (Mark 4:11), but His enemies no longer deserved the plain presentation of the message. The use of parables was for them a just penalty for their intellectual dullness and hardness of heart. In Mark and Luke the use of 'that' (ὅτι) rather than 'because' (ὅτι) has been urged as proof that Jesus purposely concealed the knowledge that He was the Messiah, but the Greek particle (ὅτι) is sometimes used in the Koine for result. Still, the language of Isaiah quoted in Matt. 13:15 is negative purpose, 'lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and understand with their hearts.' At any rate, in Matt. 13:14 Jesus interprets Isaiah 6:9, 10, as fulfilled (ἀναπληροῦται αὐτοῖς, filling up full for them) in the case of the Pharisees. They were undergoing spiritual atrophy, so that they could not hear or see or understand. They were losing connection with the spiritual world. One of the new discoveries in optics is that the eye may function properly enough, but no image may be conveyed to the brain, because the special brain cell which keeps the record of like impressions has suddenly given way. One may be perfectly normal and rational about all else, and yet not be able to read at all, though seeing everything clearly enough except the letters of the alphabet, which are blurred into vacancy. In such cases, one has to begin all over again and learn his alphabet. This is the charge that Jesus here makes against the Pharisees. They have lost the gift of spiritual sight or insight into spiritual things. Jesus speaks to them in an unknown tongue. They have lost the use of the ear, eye and heart. This is the law of nature and of grace. The failure to use an organ leads to the loss of the organ. The proper use of the organ develops the organ and enriches the user. The Pharisees were the heirs of the past, and had the privilege of witnessing the Messianic times which prophets of old (Moses, Isaiah, Micah) had desired to see

(Matt. 13:17). And now, alas! the Pharisees stare at the wondrous sight with wide-open blind eyes, and the message of Jesus the Messiah falls upon ears deadened and dulled to the sweetest of all sounds. Their hearts are tough like the tanned hide of an animal no longer sensitive to life and truth. What a pitiful description! The Psalms of Solomon (a Pharisaic book) had said: 'Blessed are they that shall be born in those days, to behold the blessings of Israel' (17:50). If the words of Jesus sound hard and pitiless, it must be noted that He is speaking as an interpreter of facts. The Pharisees had made their choice, and Jesus must go on with His task.

When Jesus denounced the Pharisees for making void the word of God by their tradition, the disciples, after they had gone into the house (Mark 7:17), said: 'Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended (caused to stumble, ἐσκανδαλίσθησαν) when they heard this saying?' (Matt. 15:12). Evidently the Pharisees winced under the burning words of Jesus, and the disciples felt that Jesus had gone too far on this occasion. But Jesus justified His conduct by saying: 'Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into the pit' (Matt. 15:14). It is probably a proverb (cf. Romans 2:19) and paints the Pharisees in an unforgettable picture. A peasant of Galilee once said to Rabbi Chasda: 'When the Shepherd is angry with the sheep, he blinds their leaders.' It is well known that sheep will follow the leader blindly over the cliff to death.

The Pharisees are pictured by Jesus as blindly leading the blind into the pit. No sadder word can be spoken of those who pose as guides of light and truth. I once met two blind men in Cincinnati. One was a citizen there, and said that he was taking the other one around, to show him the city. It was more sad than humorous. On another occasion Jesus sadly said: 'For judgment came I into this world, that they that see may not see; and that they that see may become blind' (John 9:39). This almost bitter word is recorded after the feast of tabernacles, only six months before the end, when the man born blind, healed by Jesus and cast out of the synagogue by the Pharisees, had his spiritual eyes opened also. 'Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said unto him, 'Are we also blind?' (John 9:40). They saw the point in the piercing words of Jesus, and understood that He meant to portray their spiritual blindness. There is a difference between having eyes and not using them, and having no eyes to use (Westcott *in loco*). The Pharisees were the shining example of wasted spiritual privilege. They had become blind by the non-use of their eyes. Jesus sorrowfully added: 'If ye were blind' (blind to start with, without responsible gifts of mind and heart), 'ye would have no sin, but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth.' The Pharisees claimed to have superior spiritual perceptions, and could not claim immunity on the score of lack of eyes and minds.

The Pharisees asserted the right to dictate to Jesus how He should make good His claim to be the Messiah by giving them a sign from heaven (Matt. 16:1; Mark 8:11). The answer of Jesus is partly ironical, but at bottom very sad, for 'he sighed deeply in his spirit' (Mark 8:12). People usually profess wisdom about the weather in their section of the country. Some of the weather-wise gain respect because of the number of signs for the weather which they have. The one mentioned by Jesus is well-nigh universal and is a true sign, the difference between the redness of the sky in the evening and in the morning. Jesus finds no fault with this knowledge of the weather, but with the dullness of the Pharisees about the Messianic era. 'Ye know how to discern the face of the heaven; but ye cannot *discern* the signs of the times' (Matt. 16:3). The Pharisees failed as interpreters of religion and life. They were helpless to understand what went on before their very eyes because it did not correspond with their preconceptions. To-day the blight of mediævalism rests like mildew upon some ministers' minds, who cannot read the Word of God in the light of the present. On the other hand, some Modernists brush Jesus aside, as Himself out

of touch with reality, and claim to have the vital spark of spiritual truth independent of Christ and the gospel message. It has always been difficult to read the signs of the times. The prophet sees beyond his age, and lashes his age into action to come up to his ideal of the future. His age slays him and the coming age builds him a monument. Jesus is here the prophet, and the Pharisees do not understand His dialect.

In Luke 11:52–54 we have a dramatic picture of the conduct of the lawyers (νομικοί) who took up the cudgels in defence of the Pharisees: ‘Master, in saying this thou reproachest us also’ (καὶ ἡμᾶς ὑβρίζεις, thou insultest even us), for the lawyers were the better instructed among the Pharisees (Plummer *in loco*). The last of the three woes for the lawyers (perfectly impartial as to number) is this: ‘Woe unto you lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves, and those that were entering in ye hindered.’ This is a fearful indictment of the scribes, who were the interpreters of Scripture and of the way of salvation, but who themselves were on the outside of the house of spiritual knowledge, had lost the key to open it, and would not let others find it. The picture of Jesus drawn in the Talmud justifies this charge. Not simply are the scribes blind themselves, but they endeavour to keep others blind also. ‘For ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burden with one of your fingers’ (Luke 2:46). The lawyers had made the ceremonial and moral law far more burdensome than it was intended to be by their ‘intolerably burdensome interpretations’ (Plummer). The record in the Talmud more than proves this indictment. Some modern lawyers are in the employ of men who pay the lawyers to show them how to evade the law. These lawyers were skillful both in addition of burdens for others, and in evasion for themselves. The best instructed of the Pharisees in Jewish legal lore show the utmost density of spiritual insight. So exasperated are this group of scribes and Pharisees, that outside the house they ‘began to press upon him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; laying wait for him (like a wild animal) to catch something out of his mouth’ (Luke 11:54).

2. Formalism (Matt. 5:17–6:18; Luke 11:37–52; 18:1–14)

One of the purposes of the Sermon on the Mount was precisely to show the difference between Christ’s idea of righteousness, and that of the scribes and Pharisees, the religious teachers of the Jews. Many books have been written on this sermon, which has not always been understood. It is not a complete statement of all that Jesus preached, but it does set forth in clear outline the fundamental differences between Jesus and the rabbis. Jesus placed the emphasis on the inward reality; the rabbis on the outward form. With Jesus spirit is the determining factor; with the Pharisees it is the letter of the law, or rather their interpretation of the law, which is more binding than the law itself. Jesus puts God’s kingdom before righteousness (Matt. 6:33); the rabbis place righteousness before the kingdom. The Beatitudes depict the spiritual state of those who with a new heart are endeavouring to live the life of goodness with divine help and with inward joy. The ‘woes’ in Luke 6:24–26 describe the self-satisfied Pharisees who love money and praise and power, the very opposite traits. Both Jesus and the rabbis appeal to the Old Testament, but Jesus seizes the moral content and intent, and lifts the ethical standard higher by going into the purposes of the heart, while the rabbis were busy with innuendoes and petty punctilios of the fringes of morality. Jesus reaffirms the moral force of the law and the prophets as interpreted by Him, but scouts the flimsy peccadillos of the Pharisees: ‘For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Matt. 5:20). Did Jesus prove this daring arraignment? He pointedly states that the Pharisees’ standard of righteousness falls short of that

required for the kingdom of heaven. He does not say that the rabbis taught no true things. This they did, as can be easily seen from the Pharisaic apocalypses and the Talmud and the Midrash. There are grains of wheat in this chaff in varying quantities. The best of the Jewish non-canonical books, The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, was neglected by the Pharisees. If the Pharisaic conception of righteousness can be properly judged by the Talmud, the charge of Jesus is amply proven. Jesus gives the proof Himself in detail as reported by Matthew. I may say at once that I hold to the essential unity of this sermon. The proof given by Jesus applies both to the ideal and the life. Plummer is clearly correct in saying that Jesus is not referring to 'the hypocritical professions of the scribes and Pharisees; nor to their sophistical evasions of the Law.' He is challenging the inadequacy of the best that the Pharisees offered to men, even those who kept closest to the Old Testament itself. For even here they were content with scrupulous observances of the letter of the law. The six illustrations (Matt. 5:21–48) used by Jesus to show the superiority of His ideal over that of the Pharisees all get their point from the fact that Jesus is not satisfied with the mere external obedience to the Old Testament requirement about murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, retaliation, neighbours and enemies. Indeed, the ideal of Jesus on these points is considered too high and even impracticable by some modern reformers. Perhaps in the non-resistance argument Jesus has the Zealots in mind, and is opposing violence toward Rome; but even so one needs clear spiritual conceptions to be able to apply this loftiest of all ethical standards to avoid the absurdities of Tolstoi. The conscience of the world approves what Jesus said, but the world hesitates on the brink of the application, or, alas! flings it all to the wind in the mad whirl of war. But Jesus warned His hearers against the Pharisaic practice, as well as against their teaching about righteousness. Jesus is not ridiculing righteousness (δικαιοσύνη). Far from it. The rather He uses it as the synonym for the highest good (*summum bonum*) of the ancients. The phrase 'do righteousness' is common enough (Ps. 106:3; Isaiah 58:2) and is used by Jesus, in the sense of practical goodness (cf. the Epistle of James). But the Pharisees vitiate the whole matter, not merely by wrong teaching and evasive subtleties, but by doing righteous acts 'to be seen' of men, to have glory of men. They not merely did these things to gain favour with God as *opera operata*, but to increase their reputation for piety with men. Jesus selects alms, prayer and fasting as typical instances of this hollow mockery and formalism. It is a bit curious that far back in Tobit 12:8 we read: 'Prayer is good with fasting and alms and righteousness.' The Pharisees as a class have come to be mere formalists in religious life, as they were sticklers for the letter of the law. The picture here drawn by Jesus is in a way the most severe because it applies to the great mass of the scribes and Pharisees, and is drawn on a large canvas. The insinuation in John 8:32, that the Pharisees are spiritual slaves and need to be set free by the truth that Jesus preaches, angers them very much. They are not merely the slaves of their own rules, but they are in the bondage of sin. Jesus insisted that even the Pharisees, the so-called righteous class, were the bondservants of sin. 'If therefore the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed' (John 8:36).

A long time after this Jesus bluntly said to the Pharisees who 'marveled that he had not washed before dinner': 'Now do ye Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter; but your inward part is full of extortion and wickedness' (Luke 11:39). It is well to have the outside of the cup clean. Certainly a cup dirty outside is not attractive. The language is difficult and is variously interpreted, but the most natural way is to take the second part of the sentence as the direct application of the figure of the cup or platter. The Pharisee cared much that Jesus had not bathed His hands before the breakfast, but he was unconcerned about the condition of his own heart. Proper form and etiquette are not to be despised, but the Pharisees 'pass over

(παρέρχεσθε) judgment and the love of God.’ The anxiety for scrubbing the pot clean on the outside has led to absolute neglect of the inside, where the food is which is eaten and which does the real harm. This food is full of deadly germs (extortion and wickedness). One result of this stickling for the formalities is the immediate vanity that insists on ‘the chief seats in the synagogue, and the salutations in the market-places’ (Luke 11:43), a point in social etiquette which is strong in those anxious to have their place and prestige recognised. At another breakfast with a Pharisee Jesus ‘marked how they chose out the chief seats’ (Luke 14:7). It was so noticeable that Jesus fixed (ἐπέχων) His attention on it, and spoke a parable about the embarrassment of such a custom. If three reclined on a couch, the worthiest had the centre, the next the left, and the third the right (Edersheim, *Life and Times*, vol. ii. pp. 207, 494). This emptiness of reality makes the Pharisees like ‘the tombs which appear not, and the men that walk over them know it not.’ Certainly this ‘woe’ is pronounced with the utmost sadness of heart on the part of Jesus.

At another time ‘The Pharisees who were lovers of money’ ‘scoffed at’ Jesus (ἐξεμυκτήριζον, turned the nose out at, Luke 16:14), because of the parable of the unjust steward. Jesus noticed the scoffing and said: ‘Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your heart: for that, which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God’ (16:15). This justification (δικαιοῦντες; cf. δικαιοσύνη) ‘in the sight of men’ (ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων) is what the Pharisees cared most about. In a word, they prefer reputation to character. They had rather stand well in the eye of men than in the eye of God. But God knows (γινώσκει, as if by experience) the hearts of men, and reads beneath the formalism the facts of the case concerning the inner life. What is ‘high’ (ὕψηλόν) with men may be ‘abomination’ (βδέλυγμα) with God. We know that money counts more than morals with the average man. Even in business men act on the principle that might makes right. Politics is a realm from which preachers and pious people are often excluded. They do not know how to be practical politicians.

The formalism of the Pharisee is graphically presented in the immortal parable of the Pharisee and the publican engaged in prayer in the temple. The Pharisees ‘trusted in themselves that they were righteous’ (Luke 18:9). They were the standard of righteousness in theory and conduct, and even the judges of their own community. This complacency of some Pharisees is commented on in the Talmud, on the part of those ‘who implore you to mention some more duties which they might perform.’ So far as they are aware they have ‘done’ all the performances required by the Pharisaic rules. They stand ready to do more if they can be pointed out. This Pharisee ‘stood and prayed thus with himself’ (πρὸς ἑαυτόν) as Jesus almost facetiously pictures him. He addresses God, to be sure, but his gratitude is not concerning the goodness of God, but concerning his own superiority to ‘the rest of men,’ as, for instance, ‘this publican.’ He not simply had an exorbitant estimate of his own righteousness, but he ‘set at naught’ (ἐξουθενοῦντας τοὺς λοιπούς), treated the rest as nothing. The inevitable result of mere formalism is spiritual pride. The constant effort to reach the low standard of outward observance easily ministers to pride of performance. Hence vanity and conceit, constant demons in the path of preachers, beset the Pharisees with great success. They acquired an ecclesiastical pose, not to say tone, and expected to be greeted with due formality as ‘rabbi’ (Matt. 23:18). And yet it must be said in defence of this rabbi that his claim to be moral was probably correct. Some of the rabbis described in the Talmud were men of unclean life. But, alas! the Christian ministry is not able to throw stones on this subject, when the long centuries are counted. Thackeray in *The Virginians* dares to say: ‘A hundred years ago the Abbé Parson, the clergyman who frequented

the theatre, the tavern, the race course, the world of fashion, was no uncommon character in English society.' The Pharisees at any rate pretended to a holy life, and often attained it in externals. They had their spiritual fashions for phylacteries and for fringes on their garments (Matt. 23:5), and were punctilious to appear at street corners, market-places, synagogues, feasts, and other public places 'to be seen of men.' They found joy in this constant appearance before the public eye. They had no daily papers or press agencies to keep them before the public, but they managed to be their own publicity bureau.

3. *Prejudice* (John 5:40; Matt. 11:16–19; Luke 7:29–35)

The charge of prejudice against Jesus is implied all through the long conflict with the Pharisees. They have prejudiced the case against Him. This attitude of the Pharisees has been specifically proven in the preceding chapter. Here it is only necessary to mention two or three words of Jesus on the subject. In John 5:39, Jesus commends the Pharisees for searching the Scriptures (ἐραυνᾶτε, indicative), but adds: 'and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life' (καὶ οὐ θέλετε ἔλθεῖν πρὸς με). They are not willing to obtain life at the hands of Jesus. He is to the Pharisees *persona non grata* and Jesus knows it. The will is set against Him and His message. It is a closed circuit. One may compare John 7:17: 'If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching.' The Pharisees were prejudiced against both John the Baptist and Jesus. It is not absolutely certain that in Luke 7:29–30 we have the commandment of Jesus rather than a parenthetical note of the Evangelist. Certainly it is very unusual to have such an interpolation right in the midst of the discourse of Jesus. We do have appended notes of the Evangelists added at the close of Christ's addresses. I agree therefore with Plummer, that here we have the contrast of the effect of John's preaching upon the people and upon the hierarchy, the contrast drawn by Jesus Himself. 'All the people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.' They 'admitted the righteousness of God' (Plummer, ἐδικαίωσαν τὸν θεόν) in making this demand upon them, in treating them practically as heathen. The baptism was accepted in this spirit. 'But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him.' They set aside as null and void so far as they were concerned (ἡθέτησαν εἰς ἑαυτούς), as not applying to them, since they were the recognised righteous class in the nation (οἱ δίκαιοι as opposed to οἱ ἁμαρτωλοί). Hence they refused baptism at John's hands, and were denounced by John for coming to his baptism in that spirit (Matt. 3:7). As it was with John, so it is with Jesus, who now draws the parallel between the conduct of the Pharisees toward John and Himself. The point of the parallel is the bitter spirit of the Pharisees and lawyers (scribes) toward both John and Jesus, although these two preachers are so different in the very points of the criticism. The Pharisees found fault with John for being too abstemious. He fasted, it is true, but he was too abnormal about it, and did not conform to the regulated fast days of the Pharisees, though some of his disciples did (Mark 2:18). Hence the Pharisees ascribed John's ascetic mode of life in the desert to the influence of a demon (M'Neile, on Matt. 11:18). John was too peculiar for any use, and did not eat the ordinary food of the Pharisees. But Jesus was not a denizen of the desert. He moved in the common life of the people and ate their food. Therefore Jesus is 'a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners' (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). Jesus is thus too much like folks as John is too unlike them. So to-day the preacher is between the upper and the nether millstone of criticism. He is criticised if he does; he is criticised if he does not. The charge that Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners is true, and Jesus took it as a compliment and justified His conduct in that regard, as we know. The point about being a winebibber and glutton

is a gross exaggeration, and is mentioned by Jesus as showing the spirit of His enemies toward Him. ‘They doubt whether John is a prophet, and they are convinced that Jesus is not the Messiah, because neither conforms to their preconceived ideas’ (Plummer, on Matt. 11:16–19). They are not willing for either John or Jesus to be himself and let his own individuality count for what it is worth. Rather they wish John to play at dancing, and Jesus to play at mourning at a funeral. Like sullen children in a game they pout when they cannot have their way with each detail of the game. Later the Pharisees will charge Jesus with having a demon (John 7:20; 8:48; 10:20). There is nothing quite so hard to overcome as this prejudice due to fixed preconceptions. As the Pharisees saw it, Jesus was weighed in the balances and found wanting. But Jesus rejoices in the fact that wisdom is justified by her works (ἔργα, Matt.) or by her children (τέκνα, Luke). After all, that is what matters, and Jesus shows His independence of Pharisaic criticism, and His determination to pursue His road to the end. He is not deaf to what they say, but He discounts it. They have become like common scolds, and it is impossible to conform to their whims and foibles, which vary with the days. The thing that does not change is their settled antipathy to any doctrine or rule of life that does not square in every petty detail with their own. It is possible for a modern church to fall into this Pharisaic groove in dealing with different pastors. Certainly the minister who sets out to please the world will find the world fickle as a flirt. The picture of the Pharisees as the elder brother (Luke 15:25–32) who is angry at the reception given the returning prodigal is not a caricature. They not only limited the love and the grace of God to the Jews (or proselytes from the Gentiles), but to those among the Jews who followed the narrow path marked out for them by the rabbis in the oral law. This attitude amounts to a ‘legalistic perversion of religion in Judaism’ (Scott, Hastings’ *D.C.G.*). They were jealous and angry at Jesus for preaching to the poor and outcast. They are in a petty pout of prejudice because He does not confine His message to their social and religious castes.

4. *Traditionalism* (Matt. 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23)

This criticism of the Pharisees by Jesus is involved in many of the incidents already discussed under the sections on spiritual blindness and formalism. But on one occasion this specific charge comes to the front in Christ’s reply to the attack of the Pharisees for allowing the disciples to eat with unwashed hands. This attack was discussed in the preceding chapter, but the defence of Jesus takes the turn of a sharp counter attack, and it is just this phase of the matter with which we are here concerned. The Pharisees demand of Jesus: ‘Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders?’ (Mark 7:5). Thus the whole question of the Midrash or oral law is raised for discussion. Jesus does not evade it. On the contrary, He seems to welcome the opportunity to show how the scribes and Pharisees actually set their oral law above the written law of the Old Testament. This is precisely the position of the rabbis in the Talmud, as we have shown. The charge of Jesus therefore is not an exaggeration. ‘Ye leave the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men’ (Mark 7:8). They are tenacious (κρατεῖτε) of tradition and careless of God’s word. Jesus accuses the rabbis of placing the *Halachah* above the *Torah*, as the Talmud plainly does. ‘To be against the word of the scribes is more punishable than to be against the word of the Bible.’ ‘The voice of the rabbi is as the voice of God.’² ‘He who transgresses the word of the scribes throws away his life.’ Swete (on Mark 7:8) doubts if the rabbis made this claim openly in Christ’s time. We have no means of knowing how soon they put this contention into words. Clearly they were guilty of doing the thing in reality, for later it is an accepted doctrine with them. Matthew (15:6) reports Jesus as saying: ‘And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition.’ Some of the MSS. read

‘law’ (νόμος) here rather than ‘word’ (λόγος), but the point is not material, since the antithesis is clearly between the oral teaching and the written law (Torah). The word for ‘make void’ (ἡκυρώσατε) is the usual one for annulling a legal enactment. So we have it in Ps. 118 (119) 126: ‘They annulled thy law.’ The Pharisees are charged with deliberate defiance of the law of God, because they prefer the traditions of men, as Isaiah has well said (καλῶς, a beautiful illustration of what Isaiah prophesied). It is with the keenest irony that Jesus continues: ‘Full well do ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your traditions’ (Mark 7:9). Swete (on Mark *in loco*) makes ‘full well’ (καλῶς) ‘in part ironical.’ To me it is wholly so here. Irony is a dangerous weapon, for the delicate edge is easily turned on a dull surface. Surely even the Pharisees on this occasion felt its keen point. At any rate the illustration of ‘corban’ used by Jesus makes it perfectly plain. This is a Marcan Aramaism. Corban³=gift (δῶρον). It is a consecrated gift. ‘The scribes held that the mere act of declaring any property to be *corban*, alienated it from the service of the person addressed (Swete, *in loco*). It is not perfectly clear whether, in the instance cited by Jesus, the son actually dedicated his property to God in haste, and was not allowed by the scribes to use it for the support of his needy parents, or whether he merely pretended to dedicate it while really keeping it for his own use (a more flagrant act, to be sure). But in either case, the point in the illustration is, that the Pharisees and scribes justified the son in his evasion of responsibility for the support of his parents, because he had taken advantage of one of the technicalities of the oral law. They cared more for the strict observance of their rules about ‘corban’ than they did about the support and welfare of the son’s father and mother. So now the Pharisees had criticised the disciples for eating with unwashed hands. ‘Rigid scrupulosity about things of little moment may be accompanied with utterly unscrupulous conduct in matters that are vital’ (Plummer, Matt. *in loco*). This is merely one illustration. ‘Many such like things ye do’ (Mark 7:13). The tautology is effective. Jesus considered the matter so vital that He called the multitude to Him (Matt. 15:10; Mark 7:14), probably as the Pharisees withdrew in utter defeat and inability to reply to this exposure of the inherent defect in their teaching. Jesus makes an appeal for attention: ‘Hear me all of you and understand’ (Mark 7:14). He announces what seems to us almost a platitude, so used have we become to the conception of Jesus, but to the Pharisees it was absolutely revolutionary. The startling statement is to the effect that defilement is what comes out of the heart, not what goes into the mouth. Jesus means, of course, moral and spiritual defilement, not sanitary rules of health. The Pharisees had made their ceremonial rules of diet a matter of spiritual life and death. The disciples themselves are astounded at this amazing and un-Jewish doctrine from the Master, and question Him about it privately in the house (Matt. 15:12; Mark 7:17). Jesus expresses amazement at their dullness of comprehension, and explains the parable in plain language (Matt. 15:16–19). Peter was impressed by it, but it was not till after his experience on the housetop at Joppa (Acts 10) that he was able to see what Mark adds about what Jesus said: ‘Making all meats clean’ (Mark 7:19). The power of tradition over men is tremendous in all ages. Jesus went up against the most immovable mass of it in human history. We use the terms ‘schoolman’ and ‘medievalism’ for the hair-splitting perversions of Christianity in the Middle Ages. But these men at least had glimpses of the spirit of Christ, a thing that cannot be said of the Pharisaic contention for tradition.

5. *Hypocrisy* (Matt. 6:2–7; 5:15–23; Luke 6:37–42; Matt. 15:7–9; Mark 7:6, 7; Matt. 16:5–12; Mark 8:14–21; Luke 12:1, 2; 13:15–17; Matt. 23:13–39)

There is no dispute as to the hypocrisy of some of the Pharisees. We have already seen that six of the seven varieties of Pharisees portrayed in the Talmud by the rabbis are described as

hypocrites. John the Baptist used the term ‘offspring of vipers’ (Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7) afterwards employed by Jesus also (Matt. 12:34). These severe terms may be subject to some qualifications. In the Talmud the six varieties are caricatures of the true Pharisees. In the Gospels the Pharisees as a class are arraigned as hypocrites, though we are not to understand that Jesus admits no exceptions. There were exceptions beyond a doubt, but we cannot soften down the words of Jesus to mean that only a few Pharisees were hypocrites, and that the great mass of Pharisees were acceptable to God. Jesus cannot be made to say that Pharisaism was the true exponent of the Old Testament or the adequate manifestation of the will of God for holy living. To be sure, the term hypocrite (ὑποκριτής) does not necessarily always carry the worst meaning of the word. Matthew is fondest of the word and has it fifteen times, while in Mark it occurs once, and in Luke four times. It was used originally of an interpreter of riddles or dreams, the reply of the oracle. The Attic usage applied the term to actors on the stage, who merely acted a part and recited the piece. It was but a step from this to one not on the stage, who pretended to be what he was not. The actors sometimes wore masks (cf. Mardi Gras to-day). Demosthenes (*Cor.* 321, 18) uses the verb for ‘pretend’ and Polybius (xxxv. 2) has the same sinister force. In the Septuagint text of Job we have it also (34:30; 36:13). In Ps. of Sol. 4:7, the Sadducees are accused of hypocrisy because of their Hellenising tendencies. It is open to us to say that the Pharisees who are designated hypocrites by Jesus were not always conscious that they were acting a part or were purposely pretending to be what they knew to be untrue about themselves. This distinction would inevitably exist. Jesus apparently applied the word to the Pharisees in both senses. In some instances it was all a hollow mockery, an empty shell; in others, the Pharisees are pointedly pictured as posing for the purpose of creating a false impression about themselves. This is the obvious implication of the words ‘to be seen’ (πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι, purpose, not result) the first time that we meet the charge in the Gospels (Matt. 6:1, 2). The ostentatious piety of the Pharisees about giving alms, prayer, and fasting, is ridiculed by Jesus, with a touch of humour that bites like sarcasm. The picture of the Pharisee blowing a trumpet to attract attention to his gifts may be drawn from life or not. We do not know, though Cyril of Alexandria states that it was a Jewish custom to summon the poor by trumpet to receive alms, much as hogs on the farm are ‘called’ by the farmer to the trough, or children by the housewife. M^cNeile (*in loco*) thinks that the trumpet was used in times of drought for public prayer and fasting. But the whole picture is comical in the extreme when we see the pious rabbi taking a stand at the street corner and praying with long and vain repetitions, so that the passers-by may see him praying. It is positively grotesque when we think of the disfigurement of the face and the assumption of a sad countenance (σκυθρωποί) ‘that they may be seen of men to fast’ (Matt. 6:16). One is entitled to think that Jesus said these words with something of a twinkle in his own eyes, and that the people saw the palpable justice of the humour. To be sure, in a way many people were imposed upon by this procedure, and rated their rabbis high for their pretentious and punctilious piety. ‘They have their reward’ in full here (ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθόν).

In the papyri and ostraca this word (ἀποχή) is used of a receipt in full for a debt. The Pharisees do get glory from men by the exercise of their hypocrisy, but they do not deceive God, who knows the motive in the gift, the prayer, the fasting. Hence Jesus urged secrecy in prayer. We need public gifts, public prayer, and public fasting at times, but these exercises easily become perfunctory and meaningless, and even evil in motive. Plummer (Matt. *in loco*) warns Christians against the easy peril of hypocrisy to-day when the papers and magazines give ready publicity to the gifts of church members, and easily stimulate false pride and love of praise. The

Christian gets his recompense, but not necessarily in public. After all, the chief reward for being good is just goodness and the privilege of becoming better.

Jesus does not apply the term hypocrite to the ‘evil eye’ (πονηρὸς ὀφθαλμός) as opposed to the ‘single eye’ (ἅπλοῦς ὀφθαλμός). Here avarice is the Pharisaic vice that is condemned, but it is entirely possible that this *logion* has a backward look at the treasure laid up on earth (mammon), which is diligently watched with one eye, while the other is piously rolled up to God in heaven. ‘Ye cannot serve God and mammon’ (Matt. 6:25), whether one is cross-eyed or cock-eyed. M’Neile separates these *logia*, but Jesus seems to blend them in Matthew’s report. At any rate, Jesus does say ‘thou hypocrite’ to the captious critic who is quick to see the mote or splinter or speck (τὸ κάρφος) in the eye of his brother while he has a long stick or beam (δοκόν) in his own eye, of which he seems blissfully unconscious (Matt. 7:3–5; Luke 6:41 f.). This oriental hyperbole is meant to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the censorious spirit, whether in Pharisee or in others. The Pharisees had acted toward Jesus in precisely this spirit. The saying is probably a proverb which Jesus has seized and used for his purpose. It is like our ‘People in glass houses ought not to throw stones.’ Rabbi Tarphon is quoted as using this proverb to prove that men of his day (about 100 A.D.) could not take reproof. If one said: ‘Cast the mote out of thine eye,’ the one addressed would answer: ‘Cast the beam out of thine eye’ (*Erach.*, 16 b). But M’Neile (Matt. 7:3) thinks that ‘this was probably an attack on the N. T. words.’

Toward the close of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus warns His hearers against ‘false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves’ (Matt. 7:15). These ‘false prophets’ (ψευδοπροφήται) ‘can hardly refer to anything but scribes and Pharisees’ (Plummer *in loco*), though the saying is true in a much wider application. False Christian prophets did appear at a later time, false teachers (2 Peter), even false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13), and false Christs. There had been false prophets in the Old Testament times (Zech. 13:2). These hypocrites look like sheep and pass as sheep till they turn and rend the sheep, ‘ravening wolves’ (λύκοι ἄρπαγες) as they really are. The use of wolf for the enemy of the flock is common in the Old Testament (Ezek. 22:27; Zeph. 3:3). At a later time in the allegory of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1–21), Jesus will term the Pharisees thieves and robbers, because they steal and kill and destroy and do not defend the sheep against the wolves. The Pharisees winced under these words, and some of them said that He had a demon and was mad.

In the retort of Jesus against the charge of the Pharisees that the disciples had sinned because they ate with unwashed hands, Jesus branded the Pharisees as hypocrites at the very outset: ‘Ye hypocrites’ (Matt. 15:7); ‘you the hypocrites’ (Mark 7:6). Jesus proved the charge of hypocrisy in this instance by applying to the Pharisees the words of Isaiah 29:13: ‘This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as *their* doctrines the precepts of men.’ The tortuous use of corban, already explained, illustrated well the Pharisaic hypocrisy. The scribes and Pharisees were guilty of placing ablutions before love, technicalities before equity, the ceremonial before the moral, law before life.

When Jesus warned the disciples against ‘the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees’ (Matt. 16:6), ‘the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod’ (Mark 8:15), they exhibited a surprising obtuseness of intellectual apprehension. Accustomed as Jesus was to the dullness of these gifted men in spiritual matters because of their difficulty in shaking themselves free from the Pharisaic environment and outlook, he yet expressed repeated amazement that they could not perceive this elementary parabolic turn till he explained that He meant ‘the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees’ (Matt. 16:12). On this occasion the disciples might have been confused by the inclusion of Sadducees and Herod with the Pharisees. For the first, time Jesus warns the

disciples against the Sadducees. Here a political atmosphere (M'Neile) seems apparent. But in truth the puzzle of the disciples was over the simple use of leaven and literal bread. They rose to no metaphor at all. At a much later time Luke (12:1) quotes Jesus as saying to the disciples: 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.' Perhaps Jesus did not mean to say that the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herod was precisely the same kind of leaven. At any rate in Luke 12. He proceeds to show how useless hypocrisy is, for everything that is covered up shall be uncovered and made known. 'Whatsoever ye have said in the darkness shall be heard in the light' (Luke 12:3). Hypocrisy is folly and is unmasked at last (Plummer).

One has little difficulty in sharing the indignation of Jesus against the ruler of the synagogue, who pretended to rebuke the people while in reality censuring Jesus for healing the poor old hunch-backed woman on the Sabbath day in the synagogue (Luke 13:10–17). Under profession of zeal for the law he showed his real animus against Jesus the Healer (Plummer). Jesus turns upon this contemptible ecclesiastical cad who had rather keep his little rules than save the poor old woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound these eighteen years. The Master denounces all who shared the narrow view of the synagogue leader as 'ye hypocrites.' The rebuke was so effective that 'all his adversaries were put to shame' (κακησχύνοντο), hung their heads down for very shame and could not say a word. They had at least a sense of shame left.

There are probably Christians who wish that Jesus had been more temperate in His language about the Pharisees, as He is reported in Matt. 23, or who even hope that the Evangelist has exaggerated, for dramatic reasons, the words of the meek and lowly Nazarene on this occasion. At least they will say that Jesus laboured under undue excitement and is not to be held to strict account for language uttered under such a nervous strain and in response to such severe criticism as He had undergone. We must face the facts of the case as they are. The extent of the discourse makes it impossible to say that we have only a momentary and unexpected outburst. We must seek a deeper justification for the violence and severity of this language if we accept it as a credible report of the words of Jesus. It is true that it is reported only by Matthew, but one suspects that it belonged to Q. At any rate, we have had already various terms used by Jesus about the Pharisees, quite on a par with those employed by Him here. It is rather the cumulative effect of the rolling thunder of Christ's wrath that makes one tremble, as if in the presence of a mighty storm of wind, thunder, and lightning. The storm has burst beyond a doubt. Let us first seek the reasons for its violence as seen in these seven woes upon the Pharisees. The psychology of this denunciation is simply the long strain of the attacks of the Pharisees upon Jesus, probably for three years, culminating in the series of assaults on this last Tuesday in the temple. Jesus had heretofore exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, but after all His indignation was like a pent-up volcano that had to burst at last. The time had come for a full and final arraignment of the Pharisees, who far more than the Sadducees (with all due respect to Montefiore and others who have sought to push the odium upon the Sadducees) are responsible for the tragic culmination in Jerusalem. The Pharisees have hounded Jesus in Judea, Galilee, Perea, and now in Jerusalem. They are the wolves in sheep's clothing who must be exposed once for all. With the Gospel in one's hands, I do not see how it is possible to criticise Jesus for this fierce philippic against Pharisaism. It needed to be said.

We have various woes from Jesus already, as the four woes in connection with the four Beatitudes in Luke 6:20–6; the woes upon Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum (Matt. 11:21–4); the three upon the Pharisees (Luke 11:42–4), and the three likewise upon the lawyers (Luke 11:46–52); and the woe upon the world because of occasions of stumbling (Matt. 18:7). M'Neile is by no means sure that these seven woes in Matt. 23 were spoken on this occasion. Allen notes

that the sayings in Luke 11 'are incorporated in Matt. 23, but without distinction of audience, in a different order, and in different language,' proof, he holds, of a different written source for Matthew and Luke. One may ask if Jesus never repeated His sayings? Is it strange that He should describe Pharisees at different times and places in different language, but with the same substantial idea? Plummer suggests that, since the author of Matthew is so fond of the number seven, he has here made an artificial grouping of the seven woes for dramatic effect, like the sevenfold woe in Isaiah 5. Perhaps so, but one surely will not be considered uncritical if he holds that the discourse in Matt. 23 is too sedate and powerful for mere artificial compilation. Plummer admits: 'These seven woes are like thunder in their unanswerable severity, and like lightning in their unsparing exposure. They go direct to the mark, and they illuminate while they strike. And yet there is an undertone of sorrow, which makes itself heard when the storm is over.' The signs of life are here if anywhere in the Gospel of Matthew. The reporter may, to be sure, have balanced the various parts of the denunciation in literary fashion. Allen terms verses 13–32 'seven illustrations of Pharisaic "saying" and "not doing," under the charge in verse 3: "For they say and do not." ' M'Neile holds that the first three woes deal with the teaching of the scribes (14–22, verse 13 spurious), the second three treat the life of the Pharisees (23–28), while the seventh and last is directed against the nation as a whole (29–33). With this Plummer agrees save that with him the seventh is transitional, treating somewhat both of the Pharisaic teaching and the Pharisaic character. One may note also that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus arraigns the teaching of the scribes in ch. 5. and the conduct of the Pharisees in chs. 6.–7. We have seen what the Pharisaic outlook was on doctrine and life. Here in burning words Jesus lays bare the fatal defects in both.

Let us examine the charge of hypocrisy in each woe. The first woe is the most severe of all, for the scribes and Pharisees are the religious teachers of the people who look to them for light and leading. They are charged with keeping the people out of the kingdom of heaven who are trying to enter in (τοὺς εἰσερχομένους, conative participle). It is like sailors in a lifeboat who club away the drowning passengers in the sea who clamber up the sides of the boat. Only in this instance the scribes and Pharisees are not in the lifeboat, but drag down with them those who are trying to swim to shore. It is the travesty of ecclesiastical obscurantism. Luke (11:52) spoke of the key of knowledge that opened to the kingdom. Here it is the kingdom of heaven that is shut against men. 'A fragment of a Lost Gospel' (Grenfell and Hunt, lines 41–46) has it: 'the key of the kingdom they hid,' and the marginal reading in Luke 11:52 is 'ye hid' (ἐκρύψατε). These so-called religious leaders 'hid' the key in order to keep the people in ignorance and death, the people who had shown a desire to find light and life in their enthusiasm for John the Baptist and for Jesus. The parallel is complete between this attitude and that of ecclesiastics in later ages who seek to keep the Bible away from the people in order to control the people by the priests. But other exponents of the kingdom are in peril of the same sin, when by their misinterpretations they hide the true meaning of the Scriptures from themselves and from the people. It is obscurantism, not illumination. Their light is darkness. The saddest part of it all is that for most people the door that is thus closed is finally shut.

The second woe grows out of the first and carries it a step further, but draws a sharp distinction between the kingdom of heaven and Pharisaism. The Pharisees claimed a monopoly of the kingdom of heaven, but Jesus has already described them as outside with the doors shut by themselves. One must not confuse Pharisaism with Judaism. There were many proselytes to Judaism, but few to Pharisaism. The Gentiles would not be able to respond easily to the refinements of Pharisaism. But the zeal of the Pharisees was 'to make one proselyte' to

Pharisaism, not to Judaism. They had poor success at it, but when they did win a Gentile, the result was lamentable. The zeal of new converts was seen in the double (διπλότερον) emphasis of the new Pharisee on all the externalities of Pharisaism. ‘The more perverted,’ alas! Jesus uses very harsh language here, ‘twofold more a son of hell than yourselves.’ It is Gehenna (υἱὸν γεέννης), not Hades. These preachers with their converts are pictured as heirs of hell, not of heaven.

In the third woe (16–22) we miss the sonorous triplet, ‘scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.’ M‘Neile therefore argues for an independent group of sayings. The ‘blind guides’ (ὁδηγοὶ τυφλοί) reminds us of Matt. 15:14. Plummer sees a more direct assault on the Pharisaic teaching, because of the specific charge of casuistry in the use of oaths (16–19), not legal oaths, but the use of common language in conversation. The Talmud (*Kidd*, 71a) speaks of oaths ‘by the temple’ and (*Taanith*, 24a) ‘by the temple service,’ though this precise hair-splitting oath is not given. But it is of a piece with Pharisaism and is hardly mere caricature, to split a hair between the temple and the gold of the temple. In verses 20–22 the careless use of oaths is condemned. The temple is God’s temple and God’s throne is in heaven.

The fourth woe (23:23 f.) turns to Pharisaic scrupulosity in legal details of which the Talmud gives so many illustrations. The Pharisee had an abnormal sensitiveness about details in everyday life. These verses about legalism in daily (23–28) life correspond closely with the three woes to the Pharisees in Luke 11:39–44. The law of tithing was scriptural and explicit. All ‘the seed of the land’ and ‘the fruit of the tree’ was subject to tithes (Lev. 27:30; Deut. 14:22 f.), in particular the regular staple crops like wheat, wine, and oil. But the rabbis carried it to the minutest item. In the Talmud (*Maaser* i. 1) we read: ‘Everything which is eatable, and is preserved, and has its nourishment from the soil, is liable to be tithed.’ So also (*Maaser* iv. 5): ‘Rabbi Eliezer said, Of dill must one tithe the seed, and the leaves, and the stalks.’ These three herbs (mint, dill, cummin) were used for cooking, for flavouring, and for medicine. In Luke 11:42 Jesus says that the Pharisees tithe ‘every herb.’ But Jesus does not complain at this scrupulosity with herbs. It was literalism, but not necessarily wrong. It is in the contrast that Jesus finds the hypocrisy. Coupled with this anxiety over legal niceties is a laxity about the weightier matters of the law (τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου) like judgment (κρίσις, justice), mercy (ἔλεος) and faith (πίστις, fidelity), a noble triplet to offset the triplet of herbs. It is a common enough peril for lawyers, both civil and ecclesiastical, to cavil over technicalities. It is openly charged that American legal procedure more frequently goes astray here than the British, which cuts to the heart of the matter. Cases with us are sometimes remanded for another trial because the article ‘the’ is omitted. The Pharisees thus have no monopoly in this travesty of justice. These blind guides are ridiculed by Jesus in an oriental hyperbole. Both insects and camels were unclean, and so forbidden as food (Lev. 11:4, 42 f.). No one enjoys swallowing gnats either in his water or alone. It is perfectly proper to strain them out (δυσλίζοντες, used of straining wine in Amos. 6:6, ‘through’ or ‘out,’ not ‘at,’ a misprint in the A. V. for ‘strain out’ of Tyndale, Coverdale, Geneva), but the absurdity appears when these blind hypocrites are seen to gulp down (καταπίνοντες) the camel (hump and all)! To be sure, no one supposes that a Pharisee actually performed this culinary feat, voracious as some of them were. The whole point lies in the grotesqueness of the illustration. Camel is simply used for anything large, as in Matt. 19:4, about the camel going through the eye of a needle. In the Klosterman-Gressman Commentary, it is suggested that we have a play on the word *gamlā* (camel) and *kamlā* for mosquito. But more to the point is the Talmudic saying (Jer. *Shabb*. 107): ‘He that killed a flea on the Sabbath is as guilty as if he killed a camel.’ The camel was the most familiar large animal. Surely the people

would be unable to restrain their laughter at this palpable hit at Pharisaic inconsistencies which were plain to everybody else.

The fifth woe (23:25, 26) is merely another form of the same rebuke, according to M'Neile, viz., that externals are valueless if important internal matters are neglected. But Plummer rightly sees a much more serious charge, since the tithing was legal, while the cleansing of the cups was mere tradition. This matter has been touched upon already, and need detain us only for a moment more. A certain amount of concern for clean cups and plates is certainly praiseworthy, but not if it is accompanied by heedlessness as to the way the contents of the cup and platter were obtained. 'But within they are full from extortion and excess.' The meaning is that they use the immoral methods (Allen) of rapacity (ἀρπαγῆς) and greed (ἀκρασίας). This unrestrained desire for gain on the part of the 'pious' Pharisees is strangely like the ruthless 'will to power' at any cost, so the super-man has his way, attributed to Nietzsche, and curiously illustrated in modern business methods as well as in war. There is tainted food as well as tainted money, and tainted money can taint the food as effectually for the eye of God as the putrefying germs or ceremonial contaminations. It is an amazingly keen criticism of Pharisaic ritualistic legalism that is pertinent for modern men who seek to carry religion into business and politics, not to say war. Jesus advocates a thorough cleansing of the inside of the cup, in order that the outside may be clean also. No doubt such a wholesale washing would be of value in pulpit and pew to-day. But let us learn the lesson of Jesus, that the place to begin is on the inside. We shall care all the more about the outside, but the inside is what matters. This philosophy of life is revolutionary even to-day, with all our boasted progress and civilisation. The shell is still of more value than the kernel in many circles (social, political, commercial, religious). One may note in Edmund's *Buddhistic and Christian Gospels* (p. 84): 'What use to thee is matted hair, O fool? What use the goat-skin garment? Within thee there is ravening; the outside thou makest clean.'

The sixth woe (23:27, 28) is 'against external propriety which conceals internal wickedness' (M'Neile). In Luke 11:44 the peril is from stepping on unseen graves, unconscious contamination. Here it is the whitewashed tombs with which the Pharisees are compared. On the fifteenth of the month Adar the Jews whitewashed the tombs in order that people might not touch them and be defiled (B. *Moed. Qat.* 1a). In either case there is defilement in the graves themselves (the decaying bodies), whether concealed or unconcealed. It is not clear whether in this charge Jesus means to say that the Pharisees are conscious or unconscious hypocrites. But Plummer notes that our use of the term whitewashing moral evil is more like the passage in Matthew than the one in Luke. The phrase 'whited sepulchre' (τάφος κεκονιαμένος) is one of those things that stick like a burr. It is much stronger than Paul's 'thou whited wall' (τοιγχε κεκονιαμένε) applied to the high priest Ananias in Acts 23:3. When Jesus spoke, the whitewashing of the tombs was quite recent (done for the passover) and the illustration would be all the more pertinent.

The seventh and last woe (23:29–33) may be compared with Luke 11:47. Montefiore (*in loco, Comm. on the Synoptic Gospels*) says that this woe is 'ironical, but also rather absurd.' But the absurdity lies rather in the inability of a cultured Jew to see the point of the hypocrisy of these Pharisees, who were at this very moment plotting with the Sadducees for the death of Jesus, the greatest of all Jewish prophets, while posing as superior to their fathers. They professed to be greatly distressed at the narrowness of their fathers who murdered the prophets. To atone for it they built beautiful monuments over their tombs. But by that very act 'you bear witness to the murder-taint in your blood' (Allen). These very Pharisees will soon shout, 'Crucify him,' when Pilate was seeking to release Jesus (Mark 15:13). It is true that the charge of

building the tombs for the prophets slain by their fathers applied to the Jewish people as a nation (M'Neile), but the Pharisees were the religious teachers and instigators of moral ideals, and could justly be held responsible for this hypocrisy. The justice of the charge of Jesus is shown by the conduct of the Pharisees toward Stephen. He pointedly charged them with being betrayers and murderers of Jesus the Righteous One, of whose coming the prophets spoke who were slain by their fathers (Acts 7:52). The proof is complete, for as Stephen spoke these very Pharisees who had clamoured for the blood of Jesus gnashed their teeth and stoned Stephen to death (ἐλιθοβόλουν, repeated action, Acts 7:59). The murder-taint was in the blood of these men who put on airs of superiority to their fathers. There is no doubt of the irony of Jesus, but it is tremendously pertinent and in earnest. 'Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers' (πληρώσατε). One may compare John 13:27: 'That thou doest, do quickly.' 'In spite of all your hypocritical professions, you are sure to prove yourselves worthy descendants of Prophet-slayers' (Plummer). 'Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?' The words cut like a whip and stung like a serpent's bite. Jesus poured out a vial of 'the wrath of the Lamb.' There is a strange likeness to the curse in the Talmud on the house of Annas: 'Woe to the house of Annas! Woe to their serpent-like hissings!' (cf. Edersheim, *Life and Times*, vol. i. p. 263). One draws the veil over this sad and terrible scene, but there is no need to apologise for Jesus. One is reminded of the words of Paul about the cutting off of the Jews and the grafting in of the Gentiles: 'Behold the goodness and the severity of God' (Rom. 11:22). Listen also to the words in Heb. 12:29: 'For our God is a consuming fire.' On this occasion Jesus spoke not merely as a man indignant over affectation, insincerity, and wrong in the guise of goodness, but as a prophet raging with a holy rhapsody of righteousness and jealousy for God, as the Son of God standing in mortal combat with the foes that had crossed His every path since He had left the devil defeated in the wilderness, these veritable angels of the devil, wearing the livery of heaven, and now engaged in the act of crucifying the Son of God under the pretext of defence of God's laws and God's righteousness. The very shock precipitated in this moment of destiny the acid of truth that has eaten its way through hypocrisy through all the ages. The hypocrites flinched and slunk away like maddened serpents before the blasting words of Jesus. But this immortal picture can never be destroyed, and no modern whitewash can cover up the rottenness of this hypocrisy. Jesus stands alone at the end of the controversy, but He has the eternal hatred of all hypocrites, and the undying love of all who love reality and hate sham.

6. *Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 12:31–3; Mark 3:28–30; Luke 12:10)

Luke gives this charge at a later time, but Matthew and Mark give it just before the first great group of parables. Matthew uses 'therefore' and connects the charge with that of the Pharisees. It is almost like the *tu quoque* argument. When the Pharisees accused Jesus of being in league with Beelzebub as the explanation of His miracles, Jesus retorts that they are guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The Pharisees had already accused Jesus of blasphemy in claiming the right to forgive sins (Mark 2:7). Later the Pharisees and Sadducees will condemn Jesus to death, on the charge of blasphemy, because of His Messianic claims. They will not have it that Jesus is the Son of God. The Pharisees place Jesus on the side of the devil. Jesus definitely accuses them of taking their stand with Satan against Him. It is easy to bandy words and charges, and after all the test of time reveals who is right. Jesus is waging war against Satan. Jesus appeals to the facts in the case. It stands to reason that Satan will not tear down his own work as Jesus is doing. The combination of the language in Matthew, Mark, and Luke raises some difficulty. Allen and M'Neile take 'Son of Man' as here a mistranslation for the Aramaic *barnasha*, man, and appeal

to ‘men’ in Matt. and ‘sons of men’ in Mark as proof. It is possible, but by no means necessary in this context, since Mark has ‘all’ ‘sins’ and ‘blasphemy’ except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This will include blasphemy against Jesus in the ‘all.’ We cannot say therefore that the contrast is simply between blasphemy against men and the Holy Spirit. The passage as it stands admits that it was less heinous to blaspheme Jesus than the Holy Spirit. Jesus, though Divine, was also human, and His deity was approached from the human side. Men could repent of carelessness or failure about Jesus, bad as it was. M’Neile notes that in Jewish phraseology many sins were called unpardonable. He mentions deliberate sins (Numb. 15:30 f.), the iniquity of Eli’s house (1 Sam. 3:14). There are also Rabbinic parallels like: ‘There is no forgiveness for him forever’ (Dalman, *Words of Jesus*, p. 147). But these instances do not detract from the solemn majesty of the doom pronounced on the Pharisees by Jesus. Mark puts it in the strongest possible form: ‘But is guilty of an eternal sin’ (ἐνοχός ἐστιν αἰωνίου ἁμαρτήματος). The act reaches into the next age and is final. But it is not the state of hardness usually expressed by ‘sinning away one’s day of grace’ or saying: ‘Evil, be thou my good.’ It is very definitely explained as attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to the devil. Jesus specifically claimed that He cast out demons by the Spirit of God. He was engaged in the work of blessing men, and the Pharisees turned and branded His whole work as that of the devil. It is not possible to conceive of a more terrible sin than this. It is like high treason, the highest of all crimes against the State. This unpardonable sin is not necessarily a spoken word as here, but rests upon the resentment against God in the heart. Philo (*De Profugis* on Ex. 21:17) is quoted by M’Neile as saying: ‘And what evil speaking could be more shameful than to say, not concerning us but concerning God, that He is the source of evil?’ Dalman (*Words of Jesus*, pp. 148–154) doubts if Jesus used the words prohibiting forgiveness in this age or in that which is to come. This ‘emphatic periphrasis’ (Plummer) for ‘never’ is indeed eschatological, and is common in the apocalyptic literature of the first century A.D. (2 Ezra 7:50; Apoc. Baruch xv. 7, 8) and in the Talmud (*Aboth* ii. 8; *Ber.* R. 44). This age and the coming age are often used side by side. Westcott (*Historic Faith*, pp. 150 f.) holds out the hope that in the end even these who commit the unpardonable sin will be summed up in Christ. Certainly there is no pleasure in contemplating the eternal damnation of any man. But the words ‘eternal sin’ in Mark throws some light on this very dark subject. The state of heart that keeps on sinning seems to compel eternal punishment. No forgiveness before confession. Confession is in this case inconceivable. One has gone to the limit of a depraved heart who will deliberately attribute the manifest work of God’s Spirit to the devil. To be sure, the natural meaning of ‘eternal sin’ here is an act of sin (ἁμαρτήμα) with eternal consequences, but even so the point remains true that no one will commit this sin save as an irrevocable culmination. It is quite possible for men to come perilously near to this same sin to-day when the work of grace in the heart of man is by some ridiculed as a superstition and a delusion, if not worse.

7. *Rejection of God in Rejecting Jesus* (John 5:42 f.; 6:52; Matt. 17:12; John 7:48; 8:21–52; 10:25–38)

Like a *Miserere* there runs a deep undertone of disappointment through the teaching of Jesus that He has to carry on His work with the active opposition of the religious leaders of the time. Votaw (*Biblical World*, Dec. 1915, p. 397) says that Jesus ‘elevated Jewish ethics so distinctly, He reformed Judaism so thoroughly, that the scribes and Pharisees—the official moral and religious teachers of His nation—rejected Him; and the Gentiles of the Mediterranean world, whom Jewish ethics had failed to win, became converts to His gospel.’ Jesus is conscious of the

opposition all the time, and endeavours to open the eyes of these hopelessly blind leaders. But He consistently warns the Pharisees of their doom, and tries to make them understand that in rejecting Him they were also rejecting God the Father who sent Him. This point comes out more sharply in the Fourth Gospel, but it is present in the Synoptic Gospels also. Finally, the warning becomes doom, but the Pharisees turned a deaf ear, and thought that with the death of Jesus they had achieved final victory over the Messianic Pretender. The words of Jesus fall like those of a judge upon those who have wasted their opportunity.

The Pharisees have just made a formal effort to kill Jesus (John 5:18), when He explains why they will not come to Him that they may have life: 'But I know you that ye have not the love of God in yourselves. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive' (John 5:41–43). This irony was literally true, as the case of Bar-Cochba proved. But note that here Jesus accuses the Pharisees of being without love for God. Jesus says expressly: 'I know you' by experience. 'I have come to know you' (ἐγνώκα ὑμᾶς) to my sorrow.

When the Jews in the synagogue in Capernaum 'strove one with another' (ἐμάχοντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους, John 6:52) because Jesus claimed to be the bread of life, better than the manna in the wilderness, He made appropriation of His flesh and blood essential to life. The Pharisees led the people away then and have led them away since. Jesus early foresaw the miserable outcome of the spiritual deadlock between Him and the Pharisees. He predicted His death on the occasion of His first visit to Jerusalem (John 2:19). Toward the close of His ministry He repeatedly predicted His death (finally crucifixion) at the hands of the Sanhedrin ('the elders and chief priests and scribes,' Matt. 16:21). He saw clearly that, as they had done to John the Baptist what they listed, so they will do to the Son of man (Matt. 17:12). The vague connection of the Pharisees with the death of John is noted in John 4:1–4. The rejection of both John and Jesus by the Pharisees (Matt. 11:16–19) would lead to the same result in both cases.

Finally, Jesus defies the Pharisees openly as His enemies at the last feast of tabernacles: 'Why seek ye to kill me?' (John 7:19). 'Where I am ye cannot come' (7:34), he added. The Pharisees took this condemnatory sentence as a confession of defeat on the part of Jesus, and ridiculed His apparent decision to go to the Dispersion, and give up His work in Palestine (John 7:35 f.). A few days later Jesus again said to the Pharisees, that whither He went they could not come (John 8:21). This time they sneered that He probably meant to commit suicide. But Jesus left no room for cavil in His reply: 'Ye are from beneath; I am from above,' and this: 'Ye shall die in your sins: for except ye shall believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.' These cutting words reveal the depth of the cleavage between Jesus and the Pharisees. They are on different sides of the chasm, with different origin, spirit, purpose, destiny. There is no 'he' after the 'I am' (εἰμί) in the Greek. Westcott (*in loco*) takes this absolute use of the verb to be a direct claim to be 'the invisible majesty of God; that I unite in virtue of My essential Being the seen and the unseen, the finite and the infinite.' If so, Jesus means to tell the Pharisees plainly that their rejection of Him involves the rejection of God. This is not a popular doctrine to-day with Jews, Unitarians, and others who take a lower view of the nature and mission of Jesus. But unacceptable as it may seem to many modern minds, I see no escape from it as the conception that Jesus Himself placed upon His person and mission as the Revealer of God to men. The Pharisees were quick to see the tremendous claim made by Jesus, and replied eagerly: 'Who art thou?' (8:25, σὺ τίς εἶ;), hoping to catch Him with a formal Messianic claim, in order to make a charge of blasphemy against Him. Jesus evaded their trap, but stood His ground. The talk grew more direct and personal between Jesus and the Pharisees. Finally Jesus flatly said that they were

not the children of God, but children of the devil (John 8:40–44). Of course, in one sense all men are children of God the Creator, and in another we are all born with the taint of sin in our natures and have to be born again into the family of God. But here Jesus seems to mean something worse if possible than an unregenerate state of heart, though that was undoubtedly true of these men. He accuses them of deliberately trying to murder Him, with doing the work of the devil for the devil, with utter inability to recognise the Son of God, and hence with being aliens to the family of God. They do not know either the Father or the Son, and hence do not belong to the family of God. The indictment is scathing in the extreme. Jesus is the test of love for God. He reveals God to men and also reveals men to themselves. We know whether we belong to the spiritual family by our attitude to Jesus the Son of God and the Elder Brother of the redeemed. So Jesus drives the wedge into the hearts of the Pharisees: ‘Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God’ (8:46 f.). The only answer of the Pharisees was that Jesus was a Samaritan, and had a demon, and then in speechless rage they tried to kill him.

Three months later, at the feast of dedication, the Pharisees again flock around Jesus to get Him to say plainly if He is the Messiah, but Jesus answers: ‘Ye believe not, because ye are not my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me’ (John 10:26 f.). He insists that the Pharisees must believe His works, if not His words, ‘that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father’ (John 10:38). The issue is always there, the irrepressible conflict. Jesus is the Revealer of the Father, and without Him they cannot understand the Father. A good while before Jesus had spoken that peculiarly Johannine saying preserved in Matt. 11:27 and Luke 10:22: ‘Neither doth any one know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.’ Thus the key to knowledge of the Father is in the hands of the Son. On this point Q reinforces the Johannine type of teaching very strongly. After the raising of Lazarus John (11:47 f.) notes that ‘the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council’ concerning the problem of Jesus. The end was near at hand.

It was not merely to harry the Pharisees after their defeat in the great temple debate, that Jesus asked them the question: ‘What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?’ (Matt. 22:41 f.). He argues with them in their *Halachah* method (Briggs, *Psalms*, i. liv.), but with no quibble. Apart from the current view that David was the author of Ps. 110 which the Pharisees accepted, Jesus shows the Messianic interpretation of the Psalm, which may have been new to them (M’Neile). But it shows clearly that the Pharisees are poor interpreters of Scripture, when they reject Jesus and wish to kill Him for claiming to be the Son of God as well as the Son of man. The mystery of the nature of Jesus remains, to be sure, but mystery is in everything at bottom as science shows. Jesus here uncovers the incapacity and insincerity of His enemies in their attitude toward Him. They are speechless.

Jesus made the Pharisees convict themselves concerning the justice of God in punishing them for their conduct toward Him. He caught them unawares by the story of the husbandman and the vineyard. When the husbandmen kept mistreating and killing the messengers sent by the householder, finally he sent to them his beloved son, whom they likewise killed. ‘When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render unto him the fruits in their season’ (Matt. 21:40 f.). The Pharisees and Sadducees are the ones who answer thus. Jesus did not leave the application doubtful, but added: ‘Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof’ (Matt. 21:43). Then Jesus added these

solemn words: 'And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust' (21:44). Matthew further adds this conclusion: 'And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parable, they perceived that He spake of them.'

The case is made out and the verdict of Jesus has become history. The leaders in Jerusalem brought upon the city the doom that Jesus foresaw. The Pharisees with the Sadducees invoked the blood of Jesus upon their heads and upon their children (Matt. 27:25). Pilate knew that for envy the chief priests had delivered Jesus up (Mark 15:10). His wife's message about her dream aroused his superstition, and that intensified his sense of elemental Roman justice. Pilate had supreme contempt for the Jews, and in particular for the Pharisaic refinements as did Gallio in Corinth. But the public washing of Pilate's hands as if that could wash away 'the blood of this righteous man' is a childish performance and thoroughly Pharisaic in principle. The blood of Jesus is still on the hands of Judas, Caiaphas, Sadducees and Pharisees, and Pilate. The dramatic washing of the hands is a common enough symbol for freedom from guilt and suits the oriental atmosphere and Pilate's embarrassment. So Lady Macbeth sought in vain to wash out 'the damned spot' from her hands. Both M'Neile and Plummer regard the disclaimer by Pilate as a later note added to the Gospel and as unhistorical. I confess that I fail to see the cogency of this argument. Pilate was more noted for inconsistency than for consistency, and this nervous conduct is thoroughly in harmony with the rest of his behaviour about Jesus. The so-called Gospel of Peter says: 'But of the Jews no one washed his hands, nor yet Herod, nor even one of his judges (Sanhedrists), and since they did not choose to wash, Pilate stood up.' That puts Pilate in a more favourable light, too favourable, I think. But the sad fact remains, that the stain of the blood of Jesus does rest upon the Pharisees along with the rest.

Later the Sanhedrin will show the utmost sensitiveness about being charged with the death of Jesus: 'Ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us' (Acts 5:28). So the Sanhedrin said to Peter after their passion had cooled, and they faced the peril of a revived Christianity, if not also of a Risen and Triumphant Jesus. This apologetic attitude towards the death of Jesus is characteristic of modern Judaism, and at least reveals a kindlier spirit toward Jesus on the part of the modern successors of the Pharisees. Every Christian welcomes this new temper heartily, and does not wish to preserve a spirit of prejudice or of resentment. Certainly Christians should be free from prejudice toward modern Jews, and should not hold them responsible for the conduct of the Pharisees toward Jesus. We cannot build monuments to the Pharisees, but we can be kindly in word and deed toward those who still follow the rabbinic traditions. After all, Jesus was a Jew, the apostles were all Jews, Paul was a Jew. If modern Judaism is able to glory a bit in these great Jewish names, who will say them nay? If they wish to build monuments to these prophets whom their fathers rejected, we shall only rejoice, provided the monument is not erected on condition that we Christians disclaim the things for which they died. Let there be no mistake about that. We are not disposed to quibble unduly about metaphysical distinctions or to turn Pharisee ourselves in modern contention for tradition. But let us not forget that Jesus stands out in clear outline as the result of modern criticism as the one hope of the ages in whom both Jew and Gentile may unite, who alone has broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and between both and God; but He has done this by the Cross, which is not to be set aside as antiquated, but to be lifted up as Jesus was lifted upon it. It is by the uplifting on the Cross that Jesus is able to draw all classes of men to Him. Modern Hellenisers still find the Cross foolishness and modern Pharisees still find the Cross a stumbling-block, but Paul, who was Pharisee and then Christian, found it the wisdom of God and the power of God Montefiore (*Judaism and St. Paul*) finds it worth while to devote a

whole book to Paul to prove how unable Paul was to understand current Pharisaism. But the effort is an anachronism. The best Pharisees of his day placed Paul forward as their champion and exponent against Jesus. If Paul knew anything, he knew Pharisaism. In many things Paul remained a Pharisee and boasted of it, though he flung behind him as worthless refuse the husks of Pharisaism when he found Jesus, the flying goal toward which he ever pressed. But the greatest of the young Pharisees of his day became the greatest Christian preacher of the ages. The man who knew Pharisaism best came to know Jesus best. He was able to relate the spiritual Pharisee or Israelite to Jesus. So then the breach between Pharisee and Christ is not unalterably fixed. The chasm can be crossed on the Cross, to which the Pharisees had Jesus nailed. It broke Paul's heart to see the Pharisees turn away from Jesus. He had to fight Pharisaism in the person of the Judaisers within Christianity itself. But Paul loved his Jewish brethren too well to let their zeal for tradition cover up the gospel as they had the law with *Halachah* and *Haggadah*. Jesus resisted the Pharisees to the death to set the human spirit free indeed. Paul took up the same fight and urged the Galatians to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had set them free. Freedom in Christ was purchased with a great price, the blood of Christ. 'He has given us new ideals. And He has given us something even above that. He has given us the power to realise these ideals' (Warfield, 'Jesus' Mission,' *Princeton Theol. Review*, Oct. 1915, p. 586). Let us preserve this ideal for progress and power. Jesus still prays for His enemies, for Pharisees of to-day as of old. Let us not make it hard for any who hear the voice of Jesus to come to Him. It was love that brought the cry from the heart of Jesus over the fate of Jerusalem: 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not' (Matt. 23:37). It was with utter sadness of heart that Paul said: 'But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart' (2 Cor. 3:15). It is our task to lift that veil, if we may, so that modern Jews may recognise in Jesus the eternal Messiah of promise and hope.⁴

⁴ Robertson, A. T. (1920). [*The Pharisees and Jesus: The Stone lectures for 1915-16*](#) (pp. 110–159). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

James Bales Compilation: *Gospel Seedline Superior to Traditions of Bloodline*

Stating Strongly & Questioning Honestly

1. Jesus, the Pharisees, the Oral Law & Heritage Traditions

- Even in the time of Jesus, the Oral Law was by no means an agreed-upon subject within Judaism. But the Pharisees, who became the voice of “normative Judaism,” acknowledged it and, as history shows, it was they who carried the day.
- Many of the controversies between the Pharisees and Jesus that are recorded in the Scripture have to do with their differing interpretations of the place and purpose of the Oral Law. For example, the written Torah forbids working on the Sabbath. Luke 6:1-2 records:
 - *Now it happened...that He went through the grain fields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them,*

rubbing them in their hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?”

- By referring to “plucking” and “rubbing” the grain, Luke is giving us clues as to exactly what the Pharisees’ objections are. According to the Talmud, the disciples were breaking the Sabbath in quite a number of ways. According to the Mishnah, “He that reapeth corn on the Sabbath...is guilty; and plucking corn is reaping.” Rubbing the grain out was considered to be threshing—another violation. “In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered sifting; if she rubs the head of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherences, it is sifting out fruit; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing” [Jer. Shabbat 10a].
- Other examples in which the Oral Law sheds light on the respective positions of Jesus and the Pharisees include the washing of hands (Mark 7:1-9), the subject of divorce (Mark 10:1-12) and the instances in the Gospels that deal with the healing miracles on the Sabbath, such as Mark 3:1-6 and John 9.
- Some argued that since the law had been given orally at first (Ex. 34:27), the oral law was superior to the written law. **If there had been a body of oral laws handed down from the days of Moses, would it have harmonized with the written law?**
- **Is the source of the “traditions” the important question? Are the “traditions of men” to be rejected because they are “traditions” or because they are “of men”?**
- **What do these people follow when the written word and the oral traditions conflict with one another? Did Jesus**

appeal to a body of oral traditions, or to the written word, when discussing the law?

- **Because the Pharisees could trace their ancestry back to the time of Moses did that prove that they kept the law? If a congregation today could trace back a line of congregations to the days of the apostles would that prove that they are continuing in the apostles' doctrine?**
- The ground of their justification they derived from the merits of Abraham, from their knowledge of God, from their practicing the rite of circumcision, and from the sacrifices they offered. And as they conceived works to be meritorious, they had invented a great number of supererogatory ones, to which they had attached greater merit than to the observance of the law itself." **Who warned the Jews against this attitude? (Matt. 3:7, 9).**

2. Jesus, the Pharisees and Charges of Heartless Legalism

- There are some who say that the Pharisees were legalists. This is true. But it is wrong to draw the conclusion that anyone who is careful to try to do what God has said is a legalist. **Does God have laws for us today? (Heb. 8:10; Matt. 28:20; I Cor. 9:21; 14:37; Jas. 2:8-9; I John 3:4; Rom. 13:8, 10). Should we try to keep them? Does love think that God has given us a license to do as we please? Or does love manifest itself in the carefulness to try to do from the heart the will of God that we may walk with Him and know Him? Did Jesus condemn the keeping of lesser: matters under the law? (Matt. 23:23). Is one a Pharisee because he tries to be careful about obeying things in God's word which seem to be small things? Is the legalism which is condemned in scripture the attitude which thinks that on the basis of one's deeds that one has merited salvation, and can claim it as something God**

owes him? (Rom. 4:4). Although we should do the will of God, is it not true that we are still unprofitable servants in that we can never merit God's mercy and salvation?

3. Jesus, External Formal Versus Internal Heart Compliance

- “What was written and engraven in stones at the time Moses' face shone? (Ex. 34:29-35). Can one really obey a New Testament command by observing the external of the command without doing it sincerely from the heart? Does not a New Testament command contain the outward act as well as the inward attitude? Does our liberty in Christ mean that we are free from the old law which condemned the sinner since its sacrifices could not take away sins? Does liberty mean that we are free from all laws? (Heb. 8:19; Cor. 14:37). Can we know what is meant by Christian liberty by consulting our own minds and inclinations rather than the word of God? How can we know God's mind on the subject of Christian liberty or on any other subject? (I Cor. 2:9-16). Are we instructed in His mind through the written word, or by direct inspiration? Do those who claim direct inspiration today contradict in their teachings, sooner or later, the written word of God? What does this prove? What does Paul tell us that we must not do with reference to sin? (Rom. 6:12-13). If we give our body members as instruments of unrighteousness, what is the end of such a course of conduct if we persist in it? (Rom. 6:15, 21, 25). Do we have the spirit of a command if we flaunt the command? Is a carefulness to do God's will an evidence that we have the right spirit?”
- How does the apostle Paul show that love is the weightiest of all? (I Cor. 13). Is it possible for one externally to do good works and yet be without love?

How? Why? Is it possible to love truly and yet to be without good works? Are there those who stress that Paul taught that we ought to give of our own free will, that we are not taxed to support the church, and then fail to give? In so far as our own salvation is concerned, what good does it do us to argue for the right way if we refuse to obey? Congregations, as well as individuals, ought to support the preaching of the gospel. “A widow in Oklahoma wrote recently about a church that has been giving ten dollars a month to spread the gospel in Africa. Since they had started that giving several members of the congregation struck oil on their land and were greatly blessed financially. Yet, she reports, they decided to discontinue the ten dollars per month for mission work in order to conserve funds for the church. This widow who makes her living principally from fifty hens continued to send her dollar. But, she added, that the man who refused to send a few dollars abroad sang ‘lustily’ the closing song ‘Send the Light.’ **Fellow Christians, are we playing at our religion? Are we trifling with the most important matter in the world?”** Were they even tithing mint, anise, and cummin? Was their religion costing them as much as that of the Pharisees cost them? Although the church treasury ought to be spent for purpose for which it is given, does the Bible teach that the elders are to be any more conscientious in handling the money that is given than a Christian is to be with reference to the money which he has? Can a person be inconsistent without being a Pharisee? Is the person who is merely inconsistent

teachable? Is the Pharisee teachable on those things which contradict his pride and prejudices? As Waymon D. Miller put it: Are some people with reference to the externals of doctrinal matters, “as straight as a marble column, and just about as heartless and cold”? Biblical baptism involves a burial and a resurrection (Rom. 6:2-5). It is right to teach this. It is right to practice this. Is it possible that some people are satisfied to practice the form without being involved in the meaning of baptism? Is baptism just a burial and resurrection in water, or does it involve a burial and resurrection with Christ? Is it biblical baptism unless it shows that we have become dead unto sin, and are buried? Is it Biblical baptism if we were not raised to walk in newness of life? (Rom. 6:6, 11; Eph. 4:22-24). Although we instruct people as to what the Bible teaches on baptism, is our purpose to convert them to the form of baptism or to Christ? Has one been baptized scripturally just because he has been immersed? Do we have to choose between the meaning of baptism and the form of baptism? What should we do? Are there some who feel that they are acceptable to God just because they have carried out a number of acts of worship? Is worship acceptable unless it is from the heart? Does going through the form of the Lord’s Supper mean that we have actually communed with Christ and shown forth His death? (I Cor. 11:20, 27-31). Does this mean that we can become so “spiritual” that we do away with the bread and the fruit of the vine?

- **“Is a thing of no importance in God’s word just because some men may say it is of no importance? If we consume all of our time and effort in the study of the lesser matters will we feel that we are outstanding Christians just because we have mastered the lesser matters, even though we have neglected the weightier ones?”** Two ways of avoiding this are: First, be sure that you concentrate on the weightier matters. Second, study through books of the Bible for this will force you to deal with all aspects of God’s word, and may enable you to see that some things which you thought were not weighty are, and some things you may have thought were weighty are weighty but not as weighty as some other matters.”

4. Jesus, Jewish Status of “Rabbi” & the Ex-Communicated

- They believe that a regular teacher must be given authority by either the Sanhedrin or other Rabbis. Since Jesus would not say that He got His authority from men, they would try to show that Jesus was an unaccredited teacher, and thus without authority. He had self-assumed his position as a teacher.

The conduct of the priests. (Matt. 12:5-6). **In what sense did the priests profane the Sabbath? (Num. 28:9, 10, 18, 19). Why were they permitted to do so? Were they permitted in the service of the temple to set aside other commandments contained in the Ten Commandments? Does the fact that they were permitted to violate the Sabbath—or, to put it another way, the demands of the temple superseded the demands of the Sabbath for those who were authorized by God to officiate in the Temple—**

indicate that the Sabbath commandment was not of the same nature as other commandments in the Decalogue?

- The Rabbinical authors sometimes spoke of one who succeeded another Rabbi as occupying his seat. We speak of a professor's "chair" today. The Latin phrase "to speak *ex cathedra*" means to speak from the seat or chair as an authoritative teacher. Some have thought that the chair in the synagogue where the authoritative teacher of the law sat was known as Moses' seat.
- They not only loved the chief places, but also the salutations in the marketplaces wherein publicly they were called Rabbi, Father, and Master. These salutations were often profuse and accompanied by humble gestures.

Does the word love indicate the strength and depth of their pride? Is that which we love an index to our character and values in life?

- According to George Campbell, in the schools in which the law was studied the highest order was that of preceptor teacher, rabbi or doctor. Such men were doctors of the law (Lk. 2:46; 5:17; Acts 5:34).
- Rabbis Emil Schurer wrote: "The Rabbis required from their pupils the most absolute reverence, surpassing even the honor felt for parents. 'Let thine esteem for thy friend border upon thy respect for thy teacher and respect for thy teacher on reverence for God.' (Aboth iv. 12). 'Respect for a teacher should exceed respect for a father, for both father and son owe respect to a teacher.' (Kerithoth vi. 9, fin). 'If a man's father and teacher have lost anything, the teacher's loss has the precedence (i.e. he must first be assisted in recovering it). For his father only brought him into this world. His teacher, who taught him wisdom,

brings him into the life of the world to come. But if his father is himself a teacher, then his father's loss has precedence. If a man's father and his teacher are carrying burdens, he must first help his teacher and afterwards his father. If his father and his teacher are in captivity, he must first ransom his teacher and afterwards his father."

- "Rashi on Deut. xvii. 111, says, "The Rabbis are to be believed even when they say that right is left, and left is right." "He that quarrels with his Rabbi quarrels as it were with the Shekinah." See Sanhedrin, f. 110, 1; Humb. xxvi. 9.
- "The curse of a Rabbi comes to pass even when it is without cause." Sanhedrin, f. 20, 2 (a flat contradiction of Prov. xxvi. 2). "When the Rabbis look at a man in displeasure, he dies or becomes poor." Chagiga, f. 5, 6. *"A Rabbi is greater than a prophet."*
- **Did the blind man's parents want to answer all their questions? (John 9:21). Why not? (John 9:22)**—to be put out of the synagogue amounted to excommunication. The ex-communicated person, during the time of his ex-communication, was not considered to be an Israelite, he was cut off from his family, from worship, and if he dies during this time, they were not supposed to mourn at his funeral. **Was not this an effort to boycott Jesus' work? How did they try to get the former blind man to denounce Jesus? (John 9:24).**
- Jesus said: "And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, even He who is in Heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even the Christ" (Matt. 23:9-10). He said a similar thing concerning Rabbi, because "one is your Rabbi". The Rabbi claimed authority over the faith of his disciples, but no one save Jesus Christ

has authority over our faith. Even the inspired apostles did not have the authority in themselves; they could not bind their whims and notions; they could bind only that which Christ the authority bound.

- **Does Psa. 111:9 mean that “reverend” is a title applied to God? What does it mean? Is “holy” a title? What does the word mean here? Is it wrong to apply the word holy to men? (1 Pet. 1:15, 16, Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7). Is the same root word or idea for reverend applied to anyone other than God? (Acts 9:26; Gal. 4:11; Eph. 5:33; Heb. 10:27, 31; 12:21).**

5. Jesus, Dangers of Hypocrisy & The Respectable Sinner

- **What does the word hypocrite mean?** In classical Greek it did not have a bad meaning. At first it meant “one who answers,” and from this the following meanings developed. (1) Interpreter of dreams or oracles. (2) Orator. (3) One who recited poems or epics. (4) Actor. “A play is a work which is made up of question and answer; and an actor can be described as a hypocrite, an answerer. Now it is from this last meaning that hypocrite develops its bad sense, and comes to mean a dissembler, one who is playing a part, putting on an act.” It came to be “an actively evil word.”
- To see what Jesus meant by hypocrite” we should study the type of person whom He classified as a hypocrite.

- (1) The one who did his good works to be seen of men, that they might be praised by men. **What three illustrations does Jesus use? (Matt. 6:1-18). Does this condemn public prayer? What does Matt. 6:2 mean? What is the difference between Matt. 5:16 and 6:1? Which one is it who wants God to get the glory? Which wants the glory for himself?** Barclay speaks of this as “play acting goodness,” “theatrical goodness”.
- (2) The hypocrite “is the man who, in the very name of religion, breaks God’s laws,” as Barclay observes. How did they do this in Matt. 15:7; Mk. 7:5? **Although such a one justified helping his own beast—in which investment was involved, if not also a sentimental attachment—what was his attitude toward Jesus’ helping an afflicted man on the Sabbath? (Matt. 12:10, 14). How did Jesus bring out the underlying principle which was involved in the answer to their question in verse 10 (12:12)? What type of argument did He used in 12:12? Are some people more considerate of animals than of people?**
- (3) The Pharisee, “conceals his true motives under a cloak of pretense...the subtle schemer with deceptive words.” **How was this done in Mk. 12:15; Matt. 12:18? Can the same question be asked by people with different motives? Is it possible to know a person’s motives just by the question which he asks? If a person is involved in a contradiction, is it hypocritical to ask a question which brings out this fact?**
- (4) The hypocrite hides “an evil heart under a cloak of piety...He is the kind of man who never fails to go to

church and never fails to condemn a sinner. His is the pride that apes humility.” **How did Jesus describe this? (Matt. 23:25-33). Are there hypocrites who do not attend church services?**

- (5) He constantly uses a double standard in his own favor. He is strict about a few things which he keeps and which may even inconvenience him or cost him something, but he leaves undone the weightier matters. (Matt. 23:23-24). On the basis of a few things that he claims concerning himself, he measures himself—establishes his self-righteousness. **What does such a one see in another? What does he fail to see in himself? (Matt. 7:1-6). Does Jesus condemn all evaluations? (Matt. 7:6, 9-12, 13-14, 15:20). Is self-righteousness the very foundation of this hypocrisy? What other descriptions of the hypocrite are found in Matt. 23?**
- A. L. Williams thought that in some cases Jesus, in speaking of the Pharisees, used hypocrite to describe that life which “is inconsistent with the profession made, but without any connotation of willful and conscious deceit.” In other words, the Lord Jesus is accusing the Pharisees of what we should call shallowness in religion. They lacked the depth which is the mark of the true believer in God. For the picture of the Pharisee in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, recorded by St. Luke (18:9), states the case accurately. The Pharisee described there was a good man. If goodness is plumbed by a short line.

But the religion of the Publican went fathoms deeper. From this point of view we can understand that the religious pride of the Pharisees was as bad as the religious indifference of the Sadducees, and that therefore John the Baptist was right when he classed them together (Matt. iii. 7),” and severely warned them as he did in verses 9 and 10. **Is the term “hypocrite” used to describe all who are inconsistent? Is everyone at one time or another? Is it sometimes due to confusion, to ignorance, to illogical thinking? Are all inconsistent people described in Matt. 23?** Surely not, since Jesus did not describe all people this way; and yet all are inconsistent in some measure. Thus, there is something involved which is willful, and is more than being inconsistent. Hypocrisy was rooted in self-righteous pride which exalted one’s self while setting others at naught.

- Hypocrisy, however, does not mean that the individual is always conscious of the fact that he is playacting at religion, or that he is using the pretense of being good to cover an evil heart. The person may have playacted in religion so long that he thinks that he is truly religious. He may have deceived others so long, that it has become habitual with him and he deceived himself. Men may rationalize so long and so shrewdly that they may finally hide their real motives from themselves. The Pharisees had evidently done this. **Does Jesus refer to this? (Matt. 23:16, 24; Lk. 12:56; 13:15; John 16:1-2). Would it be**

possible for us to become self-righteous in our attitude toward the Pharisee? If so, how? How can we keep from becoming self-righteous? What beatitude is the opposite of self-righteous? (Matt. 5:3). Does your religion cost you any more than religion cost Pharisees? Does it consist of more than their religion? These are personal questions which each must answer for himself. **Is there a difference between being conscious of one's sin; and being conscious of one's sinfulness?**

- These “respectable” sinners can be a stumbling-block as certainly as the sodden sinner in the mire. And, since they are self-righteous, and “respectable”, it is much more difficult to convince them of sin. **What did Jesus say about this? (Matt 21:28-32). Since one must repent of his sins before he can enter the kingdom, is the person, who recognizes that he is a sinner, nearer the Kingdom of heaven than one who does not realize that he is a sinner?**

6. Jesus, Partial Obedience of Pharisees was Disobedience

- Partial Obedience as Substitute for the Life of Obedience: The Pharisee rendered a partial obedience, in connection with certain religious details, but did not have the attitude of obedience to God in things both great and small. (Matthew 23:23). **How do you evaluate Smith's view of this characteristic of Phariseeism?** “It was a vulgar rule given by the Jewish doctors, which I fear too many lives by, ‘That men should single out one commandment out of God's law & therein especially exercise themselves, that so they might make God their friend by that, lest in others

they should too much displease Him.’ Thus men are content to pay God their *decimae* and *septimae* too of their lives, if need be, so that they may, without fear of sacrilege, or purloining, as they suppose, from Him, enjoy all the rest to themselves; but they are not willing to consecrate their whole lives to Him: they are afraid lest religion should encroach too much upon them, and too busily invade their own rights & liberties, as their selfish spirit calls them.

- There are such as, perhaps, think themselves willing that God should have His due, providing that He also let them enjoy their own without any let or molestation; but they are very jealous lest He should encroach too much upon them, and are careful to maintain a *meum* and *tuum* with heaven itself, and to set bounds to God’s prerogative over them, lest it should swell too much, and grow too mighty for them to maintain their own privileges under it. They would fain understand themselves to be free-born under the dominion of God Himself, and, therefore, ought not to be compelled to yield obedience to any such laws of His, as their own private, seditious lusts and passions will not suffer them to give their consent unto.”

7. Jesus, Complete Obedience Puts Mercy Over Sacrifice

- Since Christ was greater than the Temple, if in His service it was necessary for the disciples on occasion to pluck and eat grain, this was justified as surely as was the work of the priests on the Sabbath day. **Does 12:6 include, by implication the “how much more so” type of argument? In what ways is Christ greater than the Temple?**

- **Did it mean that when the demands of sacrifices and the demands of mercy conflicted, they were to follow mercy? Had the Pharisees neglected mercy? (Matt. 23:23).**
- **Do people criticize a physician for spending time with the sick? Does the fact that he associates so much with sick people prove that there is something wrong with him? Would there be something wrong, if he refused to help the sick? Did the Pharisees agree that these people were sick in sin? Were they condemned by the very principle of Matt. 9:12, which they were forced to acknowledge as being a valid principle? What other answer did Jesus make? (9:13). Is there tendency to write off whole groups as being so sick that a physician will not do any good?**
- When we go to passages which speak of God's willingness to forgive, we find that God is willing and that the failure is with man. (Ex. 33:7-20; Matt. 23:36-37). Observe on Matt. 23:36-37 that this statement would include any who had blasphemed the Holy Spirit, for some in Jerusalem did. (2 Pet. 3:9). **Since no passage says that the sin against the Spirit will not be forgiven because God is not willing to forgive, should we say it? Is not the fault with man?**
The individual who has become so hardened that he can attribute such a clear work of God, a supernatural work which he admits to be supernatural, to the devil, has gone so far into darkness that he will never see the light. He has become so hardened that truth cannot penetrate.
- If the label is an accurate description of the contents, it is not wrong to apply the label. Of course, we should first show what is in the container and thus justify our use of the label. However, individuals may mislabel others in an effort to discredit them.

8. Jesus, Pharisaic & Inverse Pharisaic Leaven of Sadducees

- **Did our Lord warn even the disciples to beware lest they become like the Pharisees? What did He mean by the leaven of the Pharisees? (Matt. 16:6, 12). How did the teaching of the Pharisees differ from that of Sadducees? Do some avoid the leaven of the one and yet fall victim to the leaven of the other?**
- They may thank God that they are relativists who are certain of nothing. Thus, they may not only decry the keeping of rules, but they may also say that there is no certainty as to meaning of any of rules or commandments given in the Bible. As a matter of fact, in a multiplicity of cases people agree on what the Bible says, but disagree over whether it is necessary to do all what it says. Thus, many Bible scholars will tell you what the Bible actually says, even though it is contrary to their practice.
- When this happens, an *inverse Phariseeism* sets in. The doubting students says: I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as certain as those native or naïve people.
- But to say that we are not justified on the ground of merit is a far cry from saying that we are not to render the obedience of faith. We must obey from the heart both in coming into Christ and in abiding in Christ (Rom. 6:17-18; II Cor. 5:7). This obedience is not one that merits; for it is the obedience of one who has sinned and who is laying hold to God's mercy in the way which God has ordained.

- Furthermore, our compliance must not be just an outward one, but an outward one which is rooted in an inward submission to God. One has not actually done what God has commanded unless he does it from a heart of faith which is in submission to God.

9. Jesus, Hypocrisy, Humility & The Importance of Motive

- Truth is binding because it is truth, and not because of the one who taught it to us. It was not because the Pharisees were Pharisees, but because they were expounding the Law of Moses when in Moses' seat, that Jesus said they were to be obeyed. It is a very human tendency to accept a teaching because we like the teacher; or to reject it, on the other hand, because we do not like the teacher. While it is true that we had rather hear and see a sermon than just to hear one, and while it is true that we should try to so conduct ourselves that our manner of life is not a stumbling-block to those whom we teach, yet it is also true that one is obligated to accept truth even though it is taught to him by a hypocrite. The Lord exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in this very chapter, and yet when they expounded the Law of Moses He said that they must be obeyed. How does Paul set forth this same truth concerning the gospel? (Phil. 1:15-18). **What terms does Paul use to describe their lack of character? Has God made us the custodians of the divine word, so that if anyone is to get any of it he must get it from us?**
- Two men may do the same thing, but it may not be the same thing when seen in its total context, which context includes the motive. Although men may not know the motive, God knows since He looks on the hearts of men. Two men may give alms, fast, and pray, yet one may do it to be seen of men while the other does it in service to

God. He wants men to glorify God because of his good words, while the other person does it to be seen of men that they may praise and reward him in various ways. (Matthew 6:1-18; 5:16). Because of their pride the Pharisees did their works only to be seen of men. They exalted themselves, trusted in themselves that they were righteous; and when men exalted themselves they set others at naught. (Luke 18:9-14). **How was their self-exaltation manifested?**

- **Is it wrong to seek true greatness? Is motive important here? Could a person be proud that he is such a great servant. Do some become proud of their humility? Do some look with scorn on those who are more educated than they are? Are there some who are proud of the fact that they do not have academic degrees? Is it possible to take a Pharisaical attitude toward the Pharisees?**
- **Can hypocrisy, with reference to small things, grow? Is hypocrisy any less hypocrisy because it is with reference to small things in some cases? Does this mean that every person becomes a hypocrite through one hypocrite? Is it hypocrisy to control one's temper and tongue? Does sincerity mean that we say everything we think? Does it mean that we should not control our feelings?**
- **Is it possible that some who would not fall because of threats may fall for flattery and other appeals to pride? What are some of the ways, other than mentioned in Matt. 23:5-10, that men exalt themselves? How shall they be humbled? How does one humble himself? Is humility involved in Matthew 5:3? How is such a one exalted? Does any of this exaltation take place now?**

(Eph. 2:6). Does such a one have to be on guard lest he attribute to himself, to a merit of his own, the exaltation which God has given to him? What exaltation is there in heaven for God's servants?

10. Jesus, Declarations of Independence versus Dependence

- The Pharisee recognized God's existence, that He has the right to command man—that He has manifested mercy- & yet the Pharisee had “carved out his sphere of autonomy.”
- If man decides that he is going to be independent of God but only in what man calls little things, is he in rebellion against God? Has he decided on his own authority what is small and what is great?
- Is sin basically a declaration of independence from God? In accepting Christ is there the declaration of dependence on Him? Is man trying to be independent when he says that he is saved just because he has a mental grasp of certain divine truth—that this saves him? Or when he says that the ground or underlying cause of his salvation is that he has performed some ritual, or even some act of great moral courage?
- Without any knowledge of God we could not enter into a fellowship with God, but is it possible to have a mental grasp of divine truth and not enter into fellowship? (1st John 2: 2 - 4). Does the fact that we intellectually hold this knowledge mean that we deserve this fellowship? We must renounce our autonomy in order to have fellowship, but does this renunciation merit fellowship? Will we become Pharisees if we live by the thought that something which we think or do, even if it is something we are supposed to think or do, merits God's mercy?

- “In the actual development of the sinful character, self-trust is deeper and more radical than self-serving. Out of the self-trusting the self-serving seems to grow. And in self-trusting, the self-sufficiency, the spirit of proud, arrogant, and defiant self-assertion and independence, precedes the self-righteousness or self-glorifying, which presupposes it and issues from it. Therefore, selfishness in the form of self-sufficiency is the primitive seed or root of all sin.”
- If we are to leave the life of sin - we must leave the life of self-sufficiency. We must make the declaration of dependence on God; but even this would avail nothing if it were not for God’s mercy. Thus, it is not our declaration of dependence that creates our justification, but rather is the indispensable condition thereof.
- It is far easier to renounce this sin or that sin, than to renounce sin. It is much easier to deny ourselves this or that sin, than to deny self. **Who must be denied if we are to follow Christ? (Matthew 16:24). Is this the dethroning of self and the enthronement of Christ? If we obey the first and greatest commandment, will this not of necessity involve the denial of self as supreme?**

11. Jesus, Acknowledged Sinfulness with Pride in Humility

- **Is a person righteous just because he acknowledges that he is a sinner? Is this the ground of his salvation? Would it be possible for an individual to feel that he is better than others because he thinks he has earned righteousness in that he has confessed that he is a sinner?** A confession does not merit pardon. **Is it the confession of sin which in itself saves us, or is it essential because our recognition of our need of the Savior leads us to Him who saves from sin? Is it possible for a person**

to begin to be proud of his humility? Is our trust in our humility? If it is, are we not trusting in ourselves? What is “voluntary humility”? (Col. 2:18, 23). Our humility, our refusal to trust in ourselves for salvation, is essential, for without it we shall not seek salvation in Christ and through trust in Christ. But our humility does not merit salvation.

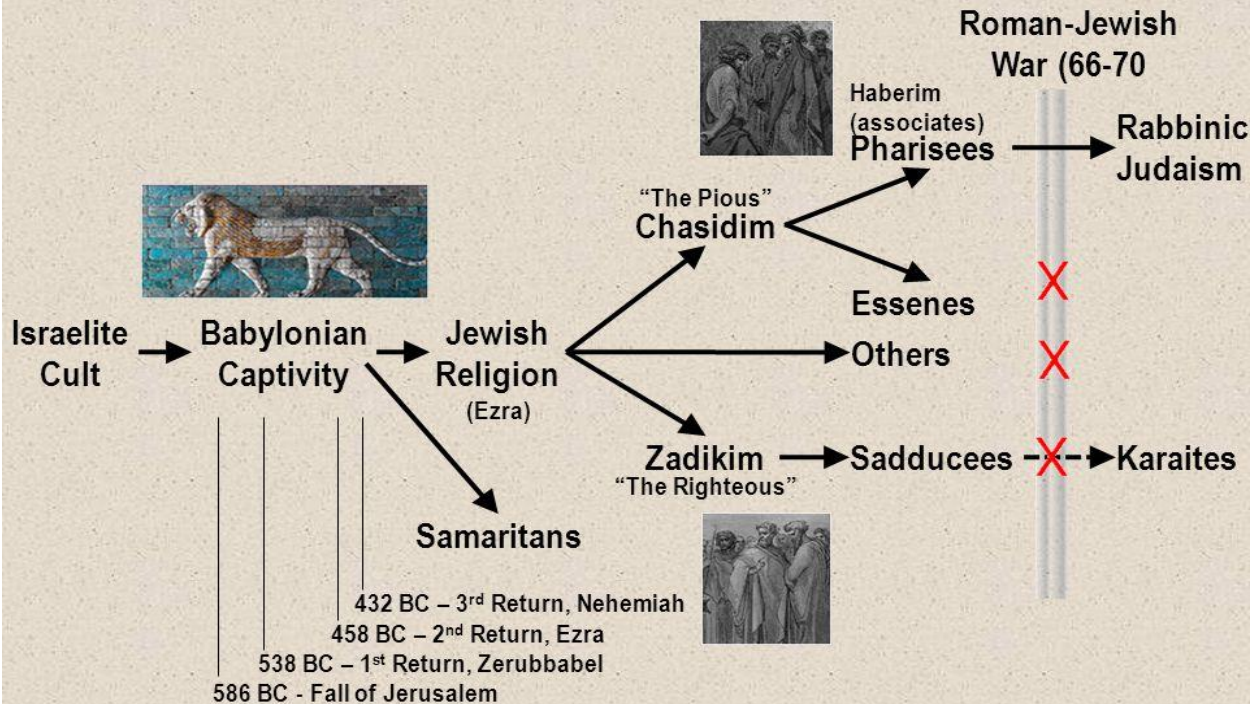
- **Does the person who realizes that he is saved by the mercy of God look upon the unsaved in contempt or in compassion? With what attitude did Paul say that we should approach an erring Christian? (Gal. 6:1). If we have not this attitude will the atmosphere be clouded and will it hinder the recovery of the other person?**

12. Jesus, Pharisees A Small Self-Righteous Separated Sect

- “The Pharisees formed a fraternity with peculiar vows, which separated them from the heathen, the common people, and the Sadducees. The great majority of Jews were Pharisees in belief, but only about 6000 or 7000 were members of the brotherhood. Edersheim compares them with the Jesuits in the Roman Church.¹² They married, however, and their fellowship included the families of members. On entering the order, they took two vows in the presence of three witnesses, one to tithe everything eaten, bought, or sold; the other not to be guest of the ‘am-ba’arez, and to observe all ceremonial purification. They were the true Israel, ‘the saints’; their opponents were ‘the ungodly,’ ‘the profane’ (cf. Lk. 18:9, Ps-Sol. 14:1, 17:16). The Pharisees were the religious power in Palestine in the time of Christ. They represented the authority of the Scriptures in home, school, synagogue, courts of Law, and daily life.”
- **Did the Pharisees finally separate themselves from others, including their fellow Jews, in self-righteousness?**

- Is it possible for us to so conduct ourselves that we debase—in the eyes of some men—the name “Christian”? (Compare Rom. 2:24). Is it therefore wrong to be called Christians, to be separated from denominationalism, and to be just Christians? Is it easier to defend a few external features of New Testament Christianity than to live by its spirits?
- What in the Bible indicates that not all Pharisees were alike? (John 3:1; 7:50-52; Acts 5:33-39; 26:5; Phil. 3:5-6). In what sense was Paul still a Pharisee? (Acts 23:6-9).

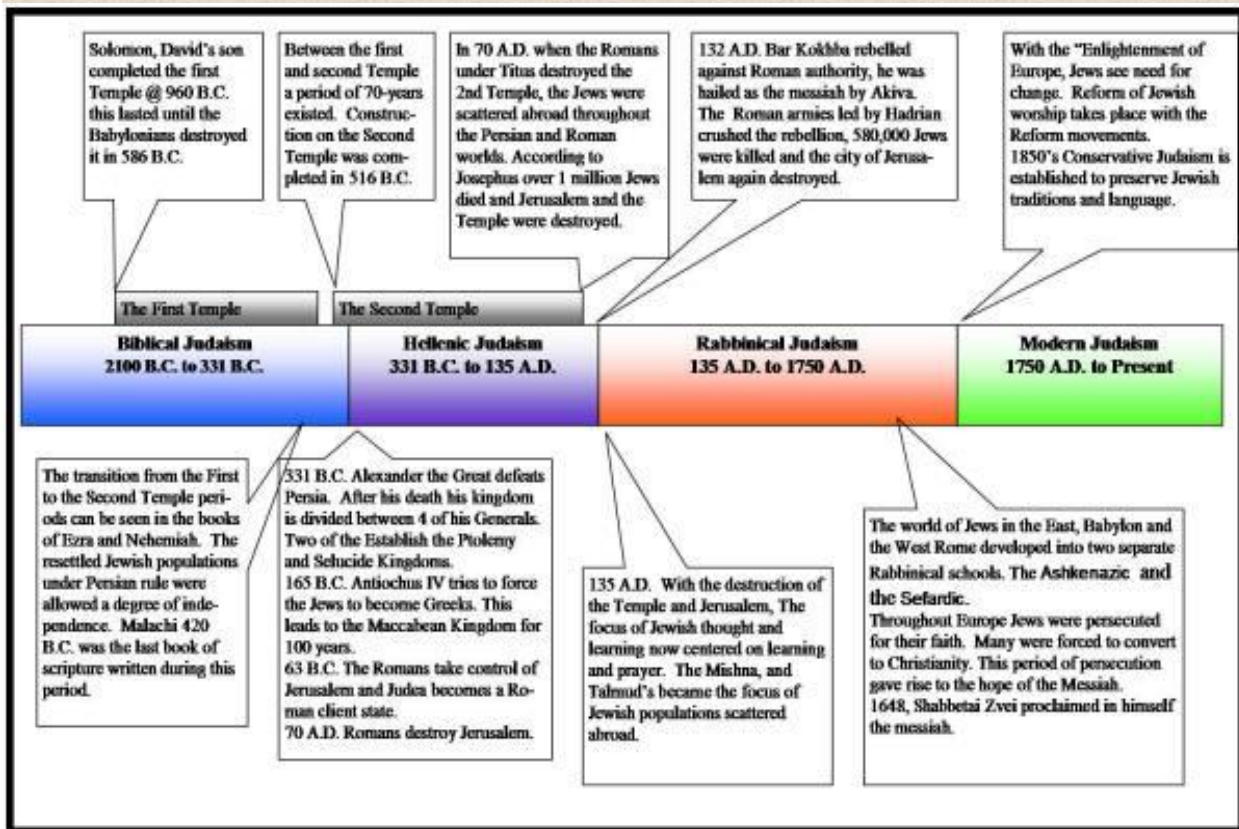
Origins and Destinies of the Pharisees and Sadducees



22 Feb 2010

- Bill Brewer

30



Pharisees Could Change: Two That Did

Nicodemus' Night Interview with Jesus (John 3:1-2)

1 Now there came a man of the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a member of the council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could do the miraculous signs that you do unless God were with him.”

Nicodemus cannot overlook the weight of the evidence. His fellow Pharisees will quickly begin to find alternative explanations for Jesus' success, but Nicodemus cannot get away from his personal conviction that Jesus has some kind of divine mission, and that He possesses divine authority by which He speaks and heals. I am now inclined to read the first verses of chapter 3 in this way: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could do the miraculous signs that you do unless God were with him ...”

I am not sure Nicodemus knows what to say from here on, or that he came with a predetermined agenda for this interview. If he does have a plan, we do not know what it was as he never gets to it. He simply tells Jesus that, from what he has personally seen, he has concluded that Jesus has come from God on some divinely inspired mission. Having said this, Nicodemus may have waited, hoping Jesus would take up the subject where he leaves off, fill in all the blanks, and answer all his questions. If this is his hope, he is in for a big disappointment.

By his words, we can see that Nicodemus has a great respect for Jesus. Nicodemus calls Jesus “**Rabbi**.” No doubt this is the same title many used to address him, for he was a teacher of the law as well. He further refers to Jesus as “**a teacher come from God**.” When Nicodemus speaks to Jesus, he does not say, “Rabbi, **I** know that You are a teacher who has come from God,” but rather “**Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God**.” To whom is Nicodemus referring when he says “**we**”? It must be the Pharisees, his colleagues.¹⁵⁰ Is Nicodemus speaking for his fellow-Pharisees here, expressing their point of view? Has Nicodemus come as the official spokesman for the

Pharisees? It is certainly possible, but it just does not seem to be the Pharisees' style to act in such a secretive manner. In the cases above ([John 1:19-25](#); [Luke 5:17](#)), the Pharisees make their moves very publicly, almost as though they intend to be seen. They wanted to be viewed as the accrediting agency for all those who taught the law.

I am inclined to think that Nicodemus is acting independently, without the sanction of the Pharisees. Why **“we”** then? Because Nicodemus is still a Pharisee, a member (and even a leader) of their organization. He thinks in terms of this system; his observations and preliminary conclusions are drawn *as a Pharisee*. When Nicodemus says **“we,”** this should suggest to us that at this point in his life, Nicodemus is still 100% Pharisee. Not until Nicodemus recognizes the failure of Pharisaism and renounces his faith in this religious system will he cast himself on Jesus alone for salvation. This is precisely what our Lord's response is all about. Jesus seeks to show Nicodemus that his system of religion does not, and cannot, save anyone.

Before we move to our Lord's response, we should observe that Nicodemus is partly correct in his assessment of Jesus. Jesus is a **“teacher come from God,”** and God is **“with Him”** (verse 2). What Nicodemus does not know is that his words are even truer than he realizes. Jesus is literally a **“teacher come from God.”** He has come down to earth from the Father. And God is **“with Him.”** But Jesus is much greater than Nicodemus ever imagined at this moment in time. He is God, and He manifests the power of God in His teaching and working of signs. It will be some time yet before Nicodemus realizes the full truth of what he has just said. What he hears next catches him completely off guard.

“You Must Be Born Again” (3:3)

Jesus replied, “I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is [re]born from above,[151](#) he cannot see[152](#) the kingdom of God.”

In the conversation which Nicodemus initiates, let us remember that Jesus is the focus. Nicodemus has not come to talk about himself or about Pharisaism. He has come to find out about Jesus, His message, and His relationship to God. What does Jesus have to say for Himself? Nicodemus opens the door by assuring Jesus that he sees Him as a man with a mission and a message from God. It is a perfect opener for Jesus. All He has to do is pick up from here and tell Nicodemus what His mission is. It doesn't turn out at all as Nicodemus may have expected.

Our Lord's words will stun Nicodemus. He begins by indicating to Nicodemus that the words He is about to speak convey a most solemn truth. He uses an expression unique to this Gospel, which in the King James Version is rendered, "**Verily, verily ...**"¹⁵³ Leon Morris sums up the impact of our Lord's few words:

Then in one sentence He sweeps away all that Nicodemus stood for, and demands that he be re-made by the power of God.¹⁵⁴

Nicodemus' brand of Judaism did not know anything of re-birth.¹⁵⁵ Quite frankly, the Pharisees thought one birth of the "right kind" was quite enough.

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit worthy of repentance! 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, '**We have Abraham as our father,**' because I tell you that God can raise up children for Abraham from these stones! 10 Even now the ax is ready at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" ([Matthew 3:7-10](#), emphasis mine).

To many Jews, to be born a Jew was to be born into the kingdom of God. We know the Jews also believed that Gentiles are born "lost." Even the Jerusalem church leaders had to be forcefully convinced that God had purposed the salvation of Gentiles (see [Acts 10: 11:15-18](#)), and even then, the practice of many Jewish believers did not match their profession (see [Acts 11:19](#)). Paul, likewise, hit hard at this point. All Israelites are not true Israelites ([Romans 9:6](#)). *Those who trust in the atoning work of Jesus Christ for salvation are true Israelites, whether their racial origins are Jewish or Gentile* (see [Galatians 3:28; 6:16](#)).

Imagine the shocked look on the face of Nicodemus when Jesus tells him that his natural birth (as a Jew) will not save him, and that he must be reborn from above. The implication is clear: Unless Nicodemus is reborn from above, he will not see the kingdom of God. Here is a man who thinks he has reserved seats on the 50 yard line of heaven. Jesus tells him that he is not even going to get into heaven as he is. He first must be born again, from above.

Nicodemus Takes Jesus Literally (3:4)

4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time, can he?"

Nicodemus chooses to understand Jesus' words literally, so that he assumes the expression "**reborn from above**" must refer to some kind of literal re-birth.¹⁵⁶ I am not convinced that this is because our Lord's choice of words forces Nicodemus in this direction, but because he does not wish to pursue the implications of the only other direction open to him. It is easier to take Jesus as Nicodemus does, because then His words might be brushed aside as ridiculous and absurd. And so Nicodemus objects, "You can't mean that in order to enter the kingdom of God one has to repeat the human birth process, can you?"

The reader of this Gospel has an advantage over Nicodemus. First, we know John has already identified Jesus as God. The creation of life was His work in the beginning, and so it is in the work of creating spiritual life. We have also read that those who become God's children are those born by a divine act of creation ([John 1:12](#)). All of this is beyond Nicodemus at the moment, who can only think in the most crass literalism, and who cannot understand Jesus at all.

What It Means to Be Reborn From Above (3:5-8)

5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the solemn truth, unless a person is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be amazed that I said to you,¹⁵⁷ 'You¹⁵⁸ must be born from above.' 8 The wind blows wherever it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Once again, Jesus begins His response to Nicodemus by indicating the solemnity of His words. He then goes on to answer the objection Nicodemus raises: "**... unless a person is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**" (verse 5). I believe we can safely reason that to be "reborn from above" is synonymous with being "**born of water and spirit**." The question many ask is, "What is meant by the terms "**water**" and "**spirit**"? Some take the term "**water**" to refer to natural birth, while they believe "**spirit**" refers to one's spiritual re-birth from above. If this is what our Lord intended, then He would be saying that a man must first be born naturally ("of water") and then supernaturally ("of the Spirit"). The support for interpreting "**water**" in this way is less than compelling. Neither do I find it necessary for Jesus to argue the need for both physical birth and spiritual birth.

I am inclined to understand the terms "**water**" and "**spirit**" as one expression, "**water and spirit**," which together refer to spiritual rebirth. There are several Old Testament

texts which seem to justify the conclusion that both “**water**” and “**spirit**” refer to one’s spiritual rebirth:

3 “For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring; 4 They will spring up among the grass Like willows by the watercourses.’ 5 One will say, ‘I *am* the LORD’s’; Another will call *himself* by the name of Jacob; Another will write *with* his hand, ‘The LORD’s,’ And name *himself* by the name of Israel” ([Isaiah 44:3-5](#), NKJV).

24 “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*” ([Ezekiel 36:24-27](#), NKJV).

This work of regeneration, is also described in the Old Testament as the work of the “**wind**”:

9 Also He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, “Thus says the Lord GOD: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”” 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army ([Ezekiel 37:9-10](#), NKJV).

The New Testament describes God’s work of salvation as the “**washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit**”:

3 For we too were once foolish, disobedient, misled, enslaved to various passions and desires, spending our lives in evil and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But “when the kindness of God our Savior appeared and his love for mankind, 5 He saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Savior. 7 And so, since we have been justified by his grace, we become heirs with the confident expectation of eternal life” ([Titus 3:3-7](#)).

I believe that the “**water**” of which our Lord speaks here is also related to the “**water**” of baptism. The Pharisees are most concerned to know why John is baptizing ([John 1:25](#)).

Immediately after our text, John’s disciples express their concerns to him about the rising popularity of Jesus. John has just told us that Jesus has been spending time with His disciples and baptizing (3:22). John’s disciples then protest to John: “**Rabbi, the**

one who was with you on the other side of the Jordan River, about whom you testified—see, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him!” (3:26). I believe our Lord’s baptism and John’s baptism are, at this point in time, one and the same. It is the baptism of repentance, in preparation for Messiah’s coming. Baptism was a part of the message and the ministry of both John and Jesus, and baptism by the Spirit is what John said distinguished the Messiah’s ministry from his own ([John 1:33](#)). Thus, to be born of water and the Spirit is to be “reborn from above,” to be saved. John’s baptism was viewed as preparatory to the coming of our Lord. It was a baptism of repentance. By being baptized, one testified that he (or she) was renouncing Judaism (law keeping) as the means of their salvation. This is precisely why unbelieving and unrepentant Pharisees refused baptism:

29 (Now all the people who heard this, even the tax collectors, acknowledged God’s justice, because they had been baptized with John’s baptism. 30 However, the Pharisees and the experts in religious law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.) ([Luke 7:29-30](#)) Jesus was very careful to identify Himself with John and his ministry. If a Pharisee or anyone else wished to enter the kingdom of God, they must do so through the means God had appointed—identification with John and with Jesus, the One of whom John bore testimony.

Before we consider the meaning of our Lord’s words about the wind here, let us pause to consider the context in which they are spoken. Jesus shocks Nicodemus by indicating to him that apart from being reborn from above, neither he nor anyone else will see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus thinks that his birth alone (as a Jew) assures him of seeing the kingdom of God (see [Matthew 3:9](#); [John 8:39](#); [Romans 9:6](#)). But even beyond this, Nicodemus must feel as though he holds the keys to the kingdom. Pharisaism saw itself as the guardian of the Law of Moses. It viewed itself as the pure remnant of Judaism. Pharisaism viewed itself as the “gate keeper” of the kingdom, governing it by the rules and regulations it had added to the law through oral tradition (see [Matthew 23:13-15](#)). In short, Nicodemus, like his peers, felt as though the Pharisees had the kingdom under their control. Jesus is about to blow this myth away.

Jesus likens the saving work of God through His Spirit to the working of the wind. The effects of the wind can be seen, but the wind itself is not seen. Neither can the wind be controlled. The wind goes where it wishes and does what it will. Men do not control the wind. The Spirit’s saving work is like this. The Spirit goes about His life-giving work, and no man controls Him.¹⁶⁰ No one, by his own works, or striving, or manipulation can direct the Spirit in His work. But when the Spirit brings about the new birth, the effects are evident. We know it is the work of God’s Spirit, unseen and beyond man’s control.

How Can These Things Be?

(3:9)

9 Nicodemus replied, “How can these things be?”

Nicodemus has been at a loss for words ever since our Lord’s response to him in verse 3. In verses 4 and 9, Nicodemus asks two different questions, but both begin the same, “**How is it possible ...?**”¹⁶¹ He is so dumb-struck by what Jesus has told him that he cannot conceive of how our Lord’s words could be true. Nicodemus is so much a part of the natural world that he cannot fathom the possibility of anything spiritual and supernatural. In theory, the Pharisees believed in the miraculous (see [Acts 23:6-8](#)), but in practice Nicodemus appears to be anti-supernatural. Let’s face it, we do the same thing. We claim to believe God is in control, and that He is all-powerful, yet we often fail to live like it is true.

Teaching the Teacher of Israel About Spiritual Things

(3:10-15)

10 Jesus answered, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you don’t understand these things? 11 I tell you the solemn truth, we speak about what we know and testify about what we have seen, but you people¹⁶² do not accept our testimony. 12 If I have told you people about earthly things and you don’t believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses *lifted up*¹⁶³ *the serpent in the desert*, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

Our Lord’s words are a gentle rebuke: “Can you really be the teacher in Israel and not grasp these things?” Nicodemus is not only a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, he is “**theteacher of Israel**” (verse 10). It is generally understood that the definite article here indicates that Nicodemus was the most prominent and respected teacher of his day. How could a renowned teacher of the Old Testament not know what Jesus is talking about? It seems incredible; indeed, it is. Notice the words of verse 12 in this regard. Jesus contrasts “**earthly things**” with “**heavenly things**.” He seems to place the things of which He has been speaking in the category of “**earthly things**.” “**Heavenly things**” would thus refer to those things associated with the coming kingdom of God, things presently beyond our comprehension.¹⁶⁴

How can Nicodemus, a teacher of the Old Testament law, not grasp those things the law teaches? *The problem with mankind has always been with the heart* ([Genesis 8:21](#); [Exodus 7:14](#); [Deuteronomy 5:28-29](#); [8:14](#); [Isaiah 29:13](#); [Jeremiah 17:9](#)), a problem which God alone can solve by giving men a new heart ([Deuteronomy 30:6](#); [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)).

In verse 11, Jesus once again underscores what He is about to say with the words, “**I tell you the solemn truth.**” He assures Nicodemus, “**We speak about what we know and testify about what we have seen.**” He then goes on to say, “... **but you people do not accept our testimony.**” The NET Translation nicely informs us that the “**you**” is plural. Who is the “**we**” Jesus is speaking of, and who is the “**you people**”? The “**we**” seems to be John the Baptist and Jesus, both of whom have testified to what they have seen. The “**we**” might conceivably include the Old Testament prophets, though this is less likely. The “**you people**” is Nicodemus and his fellow-Pharisees.

John bore witness to the coming of Messiah. The Pharisees sent a delegation to inquire of John just who he was and what his message might be ([John 1:19-25](#)). They obviously did not accept John’s testimony because they refused to be baptized by him ([Luke 7:30](#)). The Pharisees also assembled in large numbers, coming from all over the land of Israel to hear Jesus and to judge His message and ministry ([Luke 5:17](#)). They certainly did not submit to Jesus as their Messiah. Thus, the witness of both John and Jesus was rejected by the Pharisees.

Jesus has been speaking of re-birth, a re-birth which comes from above. It is the work of God’s Spirit, who brings about new life (verses 7-8), and it is a work that comes “**from above**” (verses 13-15). Does Nicodemus believe in a heavenly kingdom? He certainly should, as did the Old Testament men and women of faith (see [Hebrews 11:13-16](#)). If anyone could ascend into heaven, they must first come down from heaven. It is a round trip, with heaven as the point of origin. Only the Son of Man can return to heaven, because this is where He came from (verse 13). This is why salvation is “**from above.**” The story of the bronze serpent, recorded in [Numbers 21](#), foreshadows the salvation which God will provide through the “**Son of Man.**” The Israelites had been complaining against God, grumbling about the journey and their apparent lack of food and water. They did not like the manna God gave them day after day. And so God sent fiery serpents among them, and many of those who were bitten died. God provided a salvation for this disobedient people, so that they might survive divine judgment. He instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and to set it on a pole, so that anyone who was bitten by one of the serpents could merely look up at the serpent and be healed. This is precisely what happened. All who were bitten and looked up were healed.

This Old Testament provision for Israel's healing is illustrative of the salvation God is about to accomplish through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. As the serpent was lifted up, and thus became a source of salvation, so the Son of Man must be "lifted up," so that those who look up to Him in (obedient) faith can be saved from God's wrath as well. The snake-bitten Israelites were smitten of God for their sin. They deserved to die, and apart from His provision of the serpent, they would have. Those who did not look up to the bronze serpent died. The act of merely looking up to the bronze serpent was an act of (obedient) faith. So far as the people could see, there was no direct link between the snake bite they had received and the healing for which they hoped. But it was the means God provided for their salvation. It was the means God declared through Moses. It was the one way God said His people could be saved. Those who looked to the bronze serpent were saved from the death they deserved.

In verses 14 and 15, Jesus connects the serpent, which is lifted up on a pole, with His own death at Calvary, when He is lifted up on the cross. Nicodemus asks how a man can be reborn from above. Jesus first tells him by analogy; now He tells him more directly. If anyone is to be saved from the penalty of their sins, they must "look up" to Him for salvation. He, like the bronze serpent of old, will be "**lifted up**" on a cross, and He will later be "**lifted up**" in His resurrection and ascension. In so doing, He will be "lifted up" in another way—He will be exalted by God for His sacrificial obedience at Calvary. All those who "look up" to Him in faith, trusting in Him to remove the judgment for their sin, like the Israelites of old, will be saved.

The Love of God and the Coming and Cross of Christ (3:16-21)

16 For this is the way God loved the world: he gave his one and only Son that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. 18 The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. 19 Now this is the basis for judging: that the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil deeds hates the light and does not come to the light, so that their deeds will not be exposed. 21 But the one who practices the truth comes to the light, so that it may be plainly evident that his deeds have been done in God.

This brings us to verse 16, perhaps the most well known passage in the Bible.

Unfortunately, this verse is almost always used in a “stand alone” fashion, without any reference to its context. In addition, virtually all the major later translations still follow the reading of the King James Version. This would not be bad except that the meaning of words change. The word “**so**” is particularly problematic:

For God **so** loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (KJV, emphasis mine).

The Bible in Basic English most clearly conveys what most of us understand this verse to mean:

For God **had such love for** the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever has faith in him may not come to destruction but have eternal life (emphasis mine).

In so doing, the Bible in Basic English translation renders this verse in a way that obscures the principle thrust of what our Lord is saying. Fortunately, the NET Bible gets it right:

For this is the way God loved the world: he gave his one and only Son that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

A translator’s note in an earlier version of the NET Bible pointed me in the right direction. The note simply read, “Or, in this way.”¹⁶⁵ As I began to search out the use of this word (rendered “**so**” in [John 3:16](#)) in John’s writings and the rest of the New Testament, I came to realize that I understood the word in a way that John does not seem to have intended. The two words, “**for ... so**,” are the rendering of a two-word combination in the Greek text, which occurs nine times in the New Testament.¹⁶⁶ None of these occurrences can or should be rendered in a “so much” way. Every one can, and perhaps should, be rendered “in this way,” or “this is the way,” or something very similar. This can be seen by the way the NET Bible handles these other eight occurrences of the expression found in [John 3:16](#):

“In Bethlehem of Judea,” they said, “**for** it is written **this way** by the prophet” ([Matthew 2:5](#), emphasis mine).

So Jesus replied to him, “Let it happen now, **for [in this way]** it is right for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John yielded to him” ([Matthew 3:15](#), emphasis mine).¹⁶⁷

Rejoice and be glad because your reward is great in heaven, **for** they persecuted the prophets before you **in the same way**” ([Matthew 5:12](#), emphasis mine).

But the magician Elymas (**for that is the way** his name is translated) opposed them, trying to turn the proconsul away from the faith ([Acts 13:8](#), emphasis mine).

For this is what [this is the way] the Lord has commanded us: “I have appointed you to be a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth” ([Acts 13:47](#), emphasis mine).

We went on ahead to the ship and put out to sea for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, **for** he had arranged it **this way**. He himself was intending to go there by land ([Acts 20:13](#), emphasis mine).

For **in the same way** the holy women who hoped in God long ago adorned themselves by being subject to their husbands ([1 Peter 3:5](#), emphasis mine).

For thus [or, “For in this way ...”] an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be richly provided for you ([2 Peter 1:11](#), emphasis mine).

Based upon the consistent use of this expression in the New Testament, I believe we should understand [John 3:16](#) the way the NET Bible has translated it.

Now notice something else. The expression, “**for in this way**,” points back to something previously stated. It links what is being (or is about to be) said to what has just been said. To find out what “**this same way**” is, we must look back to what has already been said. What will, or should, happen must happen in a way similar to the way something has already happened. A study of the eight verses above demonstrates this.

Now let us apply this aspect of the expression to [John 3:16](#) and earlier by going back to verse 14: Just as Moses *lifted up the serpent in the desert*, **so** [in the same way] **16** must the Son of Man be lifted up, **15** so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. **16** For **this is the way** God loved the world: he gave his one and only Son that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him (emphasis mine). Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be reborn from above. Nicodemus is surprised and confused by what Jesus has said (3:4, 9). Jesus gently rebukes Nicodemus, a prominent teacher of the Old Testament law, because he finds our Lord’s words so new and so difficult (3:10). And so in verse 14, Jesus turns to the Old Testament to clarify what He has told Nicodemus. In this incident, Moses lifted up a bronze serpent in the desert, so that all who (by faith) looked up to it were saved. In **the same way** that Moses lifted up the serpent, the Son of man must be “**lifted up**.” The Son of man is to be “**lifted up**” so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.

The words which commence [John 3:16](#), “**For this is the way God loved the world ...**,” pick up and expand upon the thought of verses 14 and 15. Notice the repetition of the statement, “**so that everyone who believes in Him ... may have eternal life,**” in verses 15 and 16. The argument of Jesus (and John) goes something like this: “How can one be reborn from above, Nicodemus? Well, first, no one can ascend into heaven except the One who first descended from heaven. Thus, God’s provision for man’s salvation has come from above. The story of the salvation of the Israelites in the desert speaks of salvation from above. Moses lifted a bronze serpent up on a pole and placed it where all the Israelites could see it. All those bitten by a serpent could “look up” to this bronze serpent and live. The salvation of which I speak, and about which you inquire, is from above, not only in that God has provided it through Him who descended from heaven, but also in that men must look up to Him to be saved.”

This salvation in the wilderness by means of the bronze serpent was a prototype of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ. “**In the same way**” that the bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole for all to see, the “**Son of man**” must be “**lifted up,**” so that all who look to Him by faith may have eternal life. “For in this way God loved the world: He gave His only begotten Son in order that all who believe in Him may not perish but have eternal life.” God gave His only begotten Son by sending Him to this world, by lifting Him up on the cross of Calvary, and by lifting Him up from the grave and exalting Him above every name.

God’s love for the world was demonstrated in Jesus, the One whom Pharisaism rejected, whose testimony (along with John’s) they did not believe. The Jews wrongly assumed that God loved them because they were Jews. Now they are informed that God loves them *only through Christ*. If they reject Christ, they also reject the love which the Father manifested toward them in Christ.

In verse 16, Nicodemus has yet another shock in store for him. This verse declares that God’s love extends to *the world*, and that God has purposed to save Gentiles as well as Jews. This was literally beyond the comprehension of many Jews, including believing Jews. The Prophet Jonah, for example, could not conceive of the Ninevites (Gentiles) being saved, and thus he did everything in his power to see that this city would be destroyed. John and his brother James wanted to call down fire from heaven and “torch” a Samaritan village ([Luke 9:52-56](#)). When Peter went to the home of Cornelius and preached the gospel to the Gentiles who had gathered there, the church leaders in

Jerusalem called him to account for his going to the Gentiles with the gospel ([Acts 11:1-3](#)). After Peter convinced them that this was of God, and they confessed that God must be saving men from among the Gentiles, Jewish believers continued to go out, **“speaking the message to no one but Jews”** ([Acts 11:19](#)). When Paul addressed a hostile Jewish audience, they listened to him patiently—until he mentioned that God had called him to take the gospel to the Gentiles—and then they were enraged ([Acts 22:1-24](#), note especially verses 21-22). For Jesus (or John) to say that God loved the world was revolutionary, shocking, and very distressing for a strict Jew.

I would like to highlight another lesson to be learned from [John 3:16](#). The word **“loved”** is in the past tense. The Greek verb is in the aorist tense, indicating a specific act at a particular point in time. This verse does not say, “God **loves** (present tense) the world.” I believe the reason for this is because we are to understand that God has manifested His love for the world in a particular way. *He “loved” the world through His Son, Jesus Christ. He “loved” the world by sending His son into the world, so that He might be “lifted up” as a sin-bearer.*

This brings us to a new element in John’s Gospel, introduced in verse 16, which surely must have caused Nicodemus and his colleagues a great deal of difficulty. That “new” element is the concept of hell, or eternal judgment, introduced by the term “perish.” Our Lord’s earlier reference to the bronze serpent raised this issue in a more subtle way. The people who were “saved” by looking up to the bronze serpent were those who were dying. They were “perishing” because God was judging them on account of their sin, and they knew it. If they did not quickly look up to the serpent in faith, they would perish. Jesus first shocked Nicodemus by telling him that he would not even see the kingdom of God unless he was reborn from above. Jesus’ words in verses 14-21 are even more disturbing. Nicodemus is not only unable to see the kingdom of God in his present state, he is destined to perish.

Nicodemus must surely be in a state of shock by now. He is no longer even speaking. In fact, he may already have left, and it may be John who now fills in these details, writing these words after the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. The man who thinks he has arrived is told he isn’t even on his way to heaven; he is on his way to eternal torment. He is a condemned man. Spiritually speaking, Nicodemus is on death row.

God's purpose in sending Jesus into the world was not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. We may wonder how our Lord (or John) can make such a statement in the light of these later verses in John:

26 "For just as the Father has life in himself, thus he has granted the Son to have life in himself; 27 and he granted the Son authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man" ([John 5:26-27](#)).

"I can do nothing on my own initiative. Just as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just because I do not seek my own will, but the will of the one who sent me" ([John 5:30](#)).

Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that those who do not see may gain their sight, and the ones who see may become blind" ([John 9:39](#)).

We see above in John chapter 5 that Jesus is talking about the judgment He will execute at the resurrection of the dead (see verses 25, 28-29). The judgment spoken of in [John 9](#) seems to be essentially the same as that in verses 17-21 of John chapter 3. *Jesus came into the world as the expression of God's love for the world. He came to save those sinners who believe in Him. Those who do not receive Jesus Christ as God's only way of salvation (see also [John 14:6](#)) reject God's love.* The primary purpose of our Lord's first coming was to implement the love of God toward lost sinners by providing a way of salvation, like the bronze serpent provided a means of healing for all who would look up and be saved. The story of the woman caught in the act of adultery, recorded in chapter 8, illustrates the relationship between Jesus' first coming and the judgment He will execute at His second coming. The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who was caught in the very act of adultery (notice, they did not bring the man). Desiring to put Jesus on the spot, they virtually dared Him to "**judge**" or condemn her. Under the law, she did deserve to die, but Jesus did not respond as His opponents expected. Jesus did not deny the woman's guilt; He showed her accusers that they were guilty sinners as well. Perhaps their form of sin was self-righteousness and pride, rather than immorality, but they were not "**without sin.**" No one present was truly qualified to condemn this woman, except Jesus. And rather than condemn her, He forgave her of her sins. *The purpose of Jesus' first coming was to make an atonement for man's sins.* Jesus refused to condemn this woman, because He had come to save her. Indeed, He came to bear the guilt and punishment for her sins, so that her sins could be forgiven.

Judgment is a secondary effect of our Lord's first coming, and it will be a more dramatic part of His second coming. Those for whom He came to provide a way of salvation are guilty sinners, already under condemnation (see [Romans 3:9-18](#), 23). Those who reject the offer of salvation in Jesus Christ reject God's love, and fall under even greater

condemnation for having seen the light and then rejecting it (see [John 9:35-41](#)). *A person's response to the light of our Lord's coming is indicative of their moral and spiritual condition.* Those who practice the truth do not fear the light, but welcome it. Light reveals the righteousness of righteous men. Those who are unrighteous hate the light because it exposes their sins. Wicked men reject the light while righteous men welcome it. One's response to the light, then, demonstrates his or her moral and spiritual condition. *Light condemns, both by exposing sin and by exposing sinners, who reject the light. In this sense, our Lord passively judged (exposed) the sins of men in His first coming. He will actively judge sinners at His second coming.*

Conclusion: Important Principles

First, being religious is not the same as being a Christian. Some time ago a book was published, based on the Book of Romans, and entitled "How To Be Christian Without Being Religious." It attempted to show that one can become a Christian without having to act "religious." I believe one could very well write a book entitled, "How To Be Religious Without Being a Christian." This would apply not only to Nicodemus, but to many "religious" people today. One could not get much more religious than Nicodemus, but our Lord's words make it clear that as "religious" as he is, Nicodemus is not yet a Christian. He must be reborn from above.

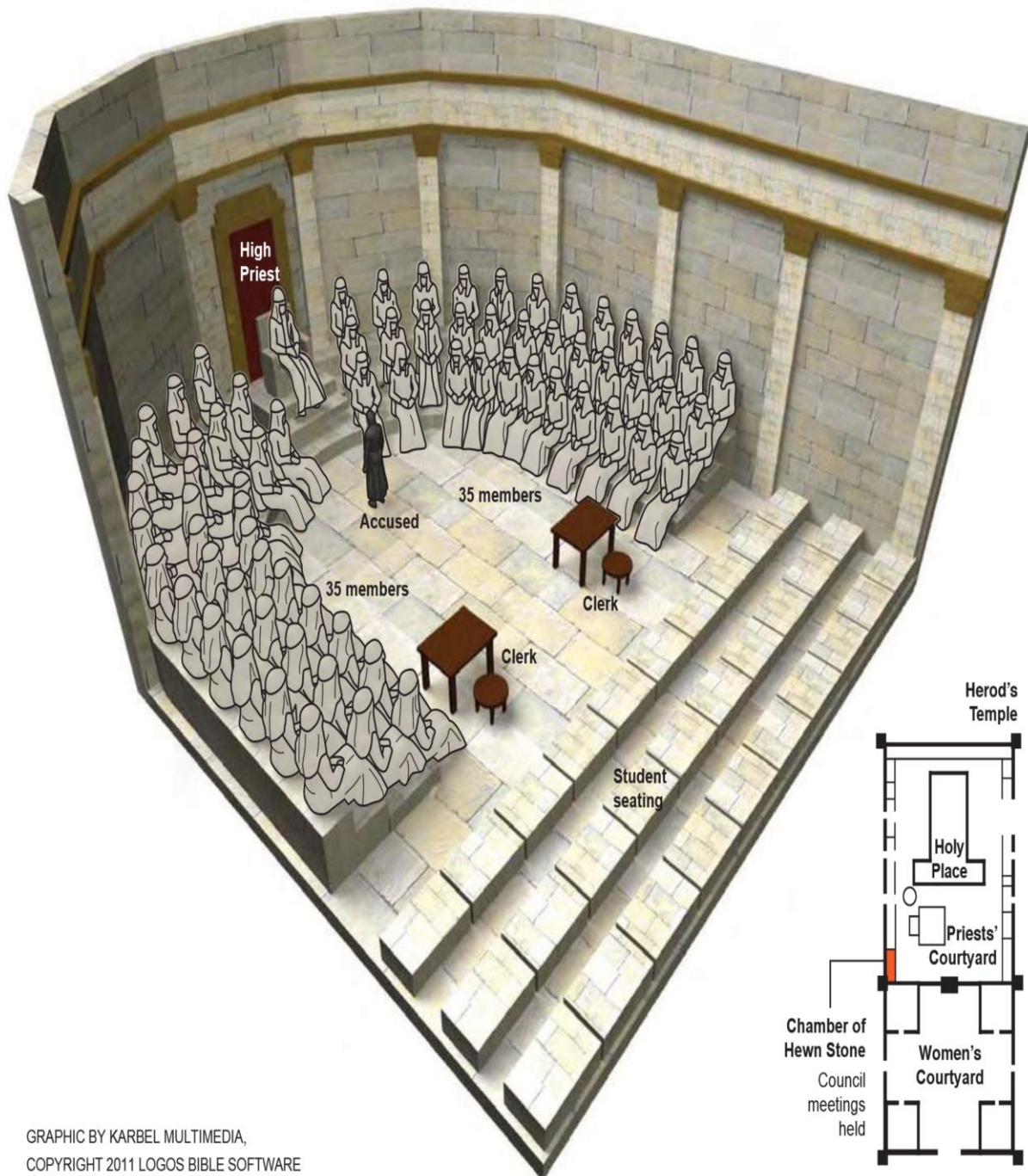
I must ask you, my friend, *"Are you a Christian, or are you just religious?"* If you take the words of our Lord seriously, there is a great difference between those who are religious and those who are reborn from above. Nicodemus was as lost as the Samaritan woman at the well ([John 4](#)). Hell will be populated by many people who are "religious," who have trusted in their religion to save them, rather than trusting in Christ alone. *There will be many in hell who trusted in their works to get them to heaven, rather than in His work—the work of our Lord Jesus Christ and the cross of Calvary.*

Second, God's love for the world has been manifested through the coming and the cross of Jesus Christ. This is the way God "loved" the world. It is the only way anyone can enjoy the love of God for now and eternity. To reject Jesus Christ as God's provision for our salvation is to reject God's love, and to be under divine condemnation, awaiting the day of God's eternal judgment. Many today seek to find comfort by assuring themselves that God loves them. God "loved" them in Jesus Christ. To reject Him is to reject His love. It is both foolish and dangerous to believe in a "God of love" without submitting to the Son of His love, Jesus Christ.

– From BIBLE.ORG

The Sanhedrin

The Jewish high court of justice consisted of 71 men and was led by the high priest. The council could decide almost any fate of its people—except the death penalty, which was decided by the Romans. The court was located within the Chamber of Hewn Stone inside Herod's Temple.



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Pharisee of the Pharisees

A story of Saul

He stood by the little pile of garments, stiffly erect, his lip curling in disdain as he listened to the shouting of the mob. He had chosen this duty, the guarding of the witnesses' clothing, in order to keep away from the scene of the actual execution. He did not disagree with the verdict; he was a member of the Sanhedrin and sat at the trial of the Christian, Stephen, giving his voice in favor of the death sentence. He nevertheless despised, with all his heart, these tumultuous and ignorant Jews of Jerusalem and wished sometimes he was back in his native city of Tarsus in Cilicia, where his own family and all their fellow-Jews had adopted Greek customs and culture and lived their lives on a level of dignity and poise which was completely unknown to the masses here in Judea.

He turned now and looked again towards the crowds, his well-built form standing in an attitude of impatience and his aquiline features making no attempt to conceal the distaste he felt at the whole proceeding. The man deserved his fate; he had clearly been guilty of blasphemy and he felt no remorse or sympathy for him, but he was thoroughly disgusted with the manner in which the Sanhedrin had handled the trial and allowed things to get out of hand.

Saul had wanted the evidence to be carefully presented and the connection of this man Stephen with the crucified felon Jesus of Nazareth clearly demonstrated, so that the whole affair could be made a stern warning to all who felt tempted to listen to the message of the risen Jesus so persistently being preached in Jerusalem. He had hoped to hear a grave and solemn statement from the High Priest, to be repeated from lip to lip as the news got round, followed by the pronouncement of a salutary sentence which would send a shiver of fear into the hearts of those who professed discipleship of Jesus. This man Jonathan was not a bit like his predecessor Caiaphas, thought Saul bitterly as he turned again and looked moodily at the heap of clothes at his feet. Joseph Caiaphas was a shrewd and crafty politician and knew just how to handle the men around him. Jonathan on the other hand had first lost control of his own feelings when Stephen made that absurd claim of seeing heaven opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God, and then allowed the disorganized rabble to take the prisoner by force and hurry him away to the place of stoning before so much as a formal judgment could be uttered. The proud claim of the Pharisees that whilst they sat on the Sanhedrin no son of Israel should have his blood shed, even judicially, until every means of avoiding that final act had been sought out and found unavailing, was a dead letter whilst these Sadducee High Priests ruled, he thought angrily. First Jesus of Nazareth; now this; even

though they deserved what they received it was an offence against God and against Moses that their trial and execution should be dictated by mob law and not by the judicial procedure laid down in the statutes given at Sinai.

He shook his head as though to rid himself of the vision which remained still before his eyes; a countenance looking up to heaven, and appearing as though it was the face of an angel. A prisoner, accused of serious crime against God and Moses, by the stern law of Israel's great lawgiver commanded to be cut off from amongst the people, yet calmly standing there delivering a discourse on the purposes of God and Israel's place in those purposes which had won Saul's ungrudging admiration. That was the kind of sermon he himself liked to give and liked to hear. Stephen was a Greek Jew like himself, a man in every way superior to these clods of Judean Jews and had he not embraced this blasphemous heresy about a Son of Man who was also the Son of God he might have done great things in Israel. But he deserved to die, and for the sake of the purity of Israel's religion and the sanctity of the covenant he must die, and the sooner the whole wretched business was over and done with the better. He turned his head impatiently and through a gap in the crowd he caught a glimpse of that face again, once more a face as it had been that of an angel; upon his ears fell a faint voice borne to him on the wind "Lord, lay not this sin to

their charge" and then the crowd closed in again and suddenly there was a great silence.

How long Saul stood there after that he never knew. He was dimly conscious of the witnesses picking up their clothes and speaking to him, but he comprehended nothing of what they said. The mob was dispersing and going down the hillside in twos and threes and groups; the members of the Sanhedrin were coming towards him rubbing their hands and Jonathan the High Priest, a complacent smile on his face, began to say something to Saul of a congratulatory nature. Suddenly, Saul could bear it all no longer; he nodded curtly to Jonathan, turned his back on the group and walked quickly away, as though pursued by some nameless thing whose existence he would not admit and yet from which he must try desperately to escape

Saul of Tarsus was a man of about thirty at this time, four years after the death of Jesus. Born in Tarsus, a seaport town in the Greek-speaking Roman province of Cilicia, some four hundred miles from Jerusalem across the Mediterranean Sea, the greater part of his life had been spent under the influence of Greek life and culture. His father was a Jew of the Dispersion, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Pharisee. For how many years his forbears had lived among the Gentiles is not known; maybe several centuries, maybe much less. But the father, though resident in an alien land, gave the lad the true training of a son of Israel, and

to such good effect that at this early age Saul was already a member of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, the highest religious court in the land. His elevation to that position must have been quite recent, for four years earlier when Jesus was arraigned before that same Sanhedrin Saul was not a member; it is quite certain that he never saw Jesus in the flesh and could not have been in Jerusalem during His ministry. In all probability he was, as a young lad, sent to Jerusalem for a few years to study under the Doctors of the Law. This was when he *"sat at the feet of Gamaliel"* (Acts 22. 3), then he returned home in Tarsus and was trained there to earn his living as a tentmaker (Acts 18.3) Cilicia was noted for its sail cloth and other materials made from the woven hair of Cilician goats and weaving was probably Saul's trade. Then he returned to Jerusalem, after the death of Jesus but before that of Stephen, to take up some official position in the Pharisee community which involved his election to the Sanhedrin.

Great changes had taken place in Jerusalem in those four years. Caiaphas had been deprived of his High Priesthood by the Romans. Pontius Pilate had been recalled to Rome in disgrace. The Emperor Tiberius had died and been succeeded by the insane Gaius Caligula. None of those who shared responsibility for the death of Jesus remained. It was almost as if a new generation was taking over the control of Judea and Jerusalem, and the young man Saul was one of that generation, marked out for high office

in Pharisaic circles. Although so young, he was probably already a widower, for one of the qualifications for membership of the Sanhedrin which was considered almost an essential was that the candidate should have been married. The fact that there is no reference in the New Testament to Paul having a wife would seem to infer that if in fact he had been married, his wife must have died before his conversion on the Damascus road. The tones of almost yearning affection in which in after years he referred to Timothy and Onesimus as "sons" might well point to a great disappointment in earlier life in the lack of any sons of his own. It might even be that some great untold sorrow connected with the loss of a wife at an early age may account at least in part for the bitter unsparing frenzy in which he now plunged, hunting out and persecuting to the death, those who to his mind were disloyal to the Mosaic law. That he had a married sister and a nephew living in Jerusalem is known from Acts 23.16, but no other details of his family life are recorded.

The physical appearance of this great champion of the faith has always provoked curiosity. Nothing is known for certain. There is a very common impression that St. Paul was of most unprepossessing appearance. A certain amount of play has been made with his own statement in 2 Cor. 10.10 to the effect that *"his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible"*, "to be accounted nothing of" is the meaning of the original. The verse need

only mean that in the circumstances of his relation to the Corinthian Church he was far more terrible by his letters in his absence than he would be by his words at his presence. The one definite clue to his physical appearance comes from his visit in company with Barnabas to Lystra on his first missionary journey, when the pagan citizens, impressed by the miracle he had performed identified Paul with Mercury on account of his eloquence. Now Mercury in the ancient mythologies, the wing-footed messenger of the gods, was always conceived as young, tall and strikingly handsome. The Lycaonians would hardly have identified Paul with Mercury unless he at least measurably fulfilled their conception of the physical appearance of their god. That was when Paul was a comparatively young man; it is more than likely that persecution, ill-treatment and poor health through the years took their toll so that 'Paul the Aged' may well have come nearer to fulfilling the traditional aspect.

So Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, young, talented, ambitious, burning with zeal for the God of his fathers and intolerant of all who questioned the rigidity of the ancient traditions, came in touch with the message of the Gospel and the power of God, all unconscious that this thing was about to overturn his whole scheme of things and change his entire life. On the day that he gave his vote for the death of the martyr Stephen he all unwittingly set in motion a chain of circumstances that was destined to make him,

first, the greatest exponent of the Christian faith and the most noted missionary of all time. Then it would lead through persecution and prison and thirty years of indefatigable labor, to a martyr's death in his own turn. He died alone, at the hands of the Roman executioner, on the Appian Way outside the city of Rome, but the torch he lit and tended with such fiery zeal during his eventful life has never been put out, and will not dim until it is swallowed up in the greater light of the Kingdom for which he lived and died. Resource: Bible Fellowship Union

The Pharisee Saul Becomes the Apostle Paul





Bales @The Faithful Labeled as Legalist

Modern Pharisees. Even if one is a Pharisee, it does not mean that one teaches no truth. When the Pharisees were in Moses' seat (i.e., when they actually expounded what Moses taught) they taught truth, and this truth was to be obeyed. Jesus Christ makes clear that truth is truth, and truth is binding, regardless of by whom taught. "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you do, these do and observe, but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:2-3).

Paul rejoiced when Christ was preached even when a person preached "Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds. What then? only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:17-18).

One may need to study what the Pharisees say even when they are making void God's word through their traditions. Why? Because such is an assault on the Christ and the faith which He made possible. Such teaching can lead others astray. Therefore, we should study to show what they teach and why it is contrary to the will of God. How can we contend for the faith, and do what we can to keep others from being led astray by Pharisees, if we do not know what they are saying and the arguments which they use to support their false doctrines? Jesus spent considerable time exposing and refuting the Pharisees.

Furthermore, one might find out, through studying what comes from one whom they have labeled “Pharisee,” that this person was mislabeled and that what he says may scripturally refute error which is held by those who mislabeled one a Pharisee.

The author of “The Church in Transition” charges that [the churches of Christ] took the same wrong turn the Pharisees took, *“This error seems to be the Achilles’ heel of most restoration movements at some point in their history. I fear that we, in what is known as the American Restoration Movement, have fallen victim to the same weakness,”* The next sentence indicates that it is more than a fear on his part, *“We have searched the Scriptures, thinking that in them we have eternal life; and, not realizing it is He who is the life, we have failed to come to Him that we may have life. We, like they, have become enamored by the written Word to the point of becoming oblivious to the Living Word.”*

I have never heard anyone pray to the written word instead of to God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Those who believe that “the implanted word... is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21) realize that Christ is the Savior and the word is His instrument. It is not God, but is God’s voice (Matt. 22:31-32; Rom. 9:17; Ex. 9:16), the voice of the Spirit (Rev. 2:1, 7; 3:8, 11, 17, 18, 29), the witness of the Spirit on whatever the Spirit speaketh (Hebrews 10:15-16), the voice of the inspired men (Acts 13:27), and to have the word of the inspired person is to have the person who spoke in times past (Luke 16:29-31). It can produce faith (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31), certainty (Luke 1:3-4), make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:16), produce understanding (Eph.3:3,4)

convey commandments (Acts 13:45-47; 1 Cor. 14:37), regulate our conduct (1 Tim. 3:14-15), exhort (1 Pet. 5:12; Heb. 13:22), remind (2 Pet. 1:12-14; 2 Pet. 3:1-2), make our joy full (1 John 1:4), admonish and warn (1 Cor. 4:14), guard us and enable us to meet temptation (Psa. 119:11; Matt. 4:3-10), guard us against error (1 John 4:1-2; 1 Tim. 4:1-7), show Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:27-28), teaches, reproves, inspires, is sacred, corrects, instructs, or disciplines (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Shouldn't we love God's word as well as love God? How can one love God and be indifferent to or minimize His word?

How can one, whose heart is right, fail to realize that God's word reveals God and Christ to us? How could such a one look intently at the word and not see Christ revealed? I have never met anyone whom I thought was so enamored with Christ's word that they did not see Christ. Are some so enamored by the Living Word that they are "to the point of being oblivious" to the written word? What can one know about the Living Word without some knowledge of the written word, whether they studied it personally or learned something from someone who studied it? Devotion to the Living Word without any knowledge of the written word would not cramp anyone's life-style or cause them to be uncomfortable with it. In fact, faith in the Living Word comes through the written word (Rom. 10:17).

Unless we learn what wrong turn was taken, which "**virtually... derailed** the American Restoration movement from its original in-tent," we shall not make the necessary changes. We are not the first restoration movement which took a wrong turn. Some think that a restoration started by Ezra took a wrong turn and

ended up with the Pharisees (the Separated Ones). Christ gave true criticisms of the Pharisees and these criticisms were “Jesus’ harshest criticisms.”

“Jesus told them the wrong turn had been made at the point of their perspective on the Scriptures: ‘You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life’ (John 5:39-40). They had become enamored by the written Word but oblivious to the Living Word.” The author concludes that we also have become Pharisees. Could he make a harsher criticism? Does John 5:39-40 mean that the Pharisees “had become enamored by the written Word but oblivious to the Living Word”?

(a) They searched the scriptures but not with good and honest hearts. Instead they had blinded themselves. Their heart had waxed gross, their ears were dull, and their eyes closed (Matt. 13:14-15, 23; Lk. 8:15). They were not the only ones who had done so, but they had done it. If they had loved God’s word and stored it up in their hearts they would have accepted Jesus.

(b) If they had searched the scriptures with integrity & industry they would have found eternal life for they would have realized - in the light of the amazing words and deeds of Jesus, that the prophets spoke of Him. Jesus said the Scriptures bore witness of Him but they refused to follow it and come to Him (John 5:39-40).

(c) Jesus also said they “have not the love of God in yourselves” (John 5:42). How could such a one love God’s word when they loved not its Author?

(d) They could not believe because they sought glory of man and not of God (John 5:44).

(e) They rejected Him who came in the Father's name and thus in the Father's power because He was not what they wanted. However, they believed someone who came in his own name and therefore with only the power that a man could muster (John 5:43).

(f) They set their hope on Moses as they misinterpreted him in their unbelief. But they did not believe Moses and Moses would accuse them to the Father (John 5: 45). "For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye *believe not his writings*, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46-47).

(g) If they had been of those whose will was to do God's will, instead of the will of man, they would have realized that Jesus and His teachings were of God (John 7:17). If they had searched the scriptures with honest hearts they would have accepted Jesus and found in Him life eternal. It is profitable to search Scripture if our will is to learn and do God's will, but if we are like the Pharisees we search them to no ultimate profit.

Does Jesus indicate, in John 5:39-47 that the Pharisees were so "enamored by the written Word" that it made them oblivious to the "Living Word" to whom the written Word bore witness? How is such a conclusion possible concerning those who made void God's word that they might keep their traditions? What proof does the author give that we are Pharisees? The title of the chapter from which we have quoted is "Where We Are." The first, and I assume he considers it a *major* proof, is that: "We have searched the Scriptures, thinking that in them we

have eternal life; and, not realizing it is *He* who is the life, we have failed to come to Him that we may have life. We, like they, have become enamored by the written Word to the point of becoming oblivious to the Living Word.” He has the authority to make this assertion concerning *himself*, but who gave him authority to make this judgment concerning “the American Restoration movement”? How does he prove this assertion? Concerning the point (1), which I shall evaluate under the next heading, the author said: “To illustrate we need go no further than the running debate between the ‘Word Only’ brethren and the ‘Spirit Indwelt’ brethren.” Point (2) he calls “further evidence.” Let us consider these, and other, “evidences” which “prove” we have become so enamored by the written word that we are “to the point of becoming oblivious to the Living Word,” and have become Pharisees.

What Proof. What proof does the author give that we took the wrong turn as did the Pharisees and became like them? (1) We differ on how the Spirit dwells in us. I cannot understand how the difference between brethren on how the Spirit dwells in us proves anything with reference to being so enamored by the written word one is oblivious to the Living Word. As far as I know, no one denies that our bodies are the temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Christ dwells “in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:17). God and Christ come to those who love them and obey Christ’s words, and make “our abode with him” (John 14:23). Does one have to know precisely how they make their abode with us in order to believe it? The Father is in us and we are in the Father. To differ over the *how* proves nothing

concerning the position that some do not see beyond the written word to the reality of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

(2) The author thinks logic has much to commend but when one “enshrines Aristotelian logic as the know-all, and end-all of doctrine” and has replaced “Christ’s perspective, we have made a wrong turn.” Is it unscriptural to think logically as one reasons concerning Scripture? When Paul “reasoned with them from the scriptures” (Acts 17:2), was he reasoning illogically? Using our minds and trying to think straight while studying to find what the Bible teaches has nothing to do with whether one has replaced the Living Word with the written word. I know of no one who “enshrines Aristotelian logic as the know-all, end-all of doctrine.” Of course, I do not know everyone. However, to try to reason logically in studying scripture and set forth what it teaches is not making logic our doctrine. Because without the mind I cannot understand anything God or anyone else teaches does not mean that I enshrine the mind as the know-all and end-all of doctrine. Nor is one trusting in one’s self that one is righteous and despising others, because one uses one’s own mind in understanding scripture. In speaking of the desire for unity among young people, Woodruff [the author] said:

[They] are not interested in points of doctrine arrived at by syllogisms instead of a ‘thus says the Lord.’ They do not share our convictions about some of our finely-tuned positions. However, they do share our respect for the Bible, and they may have gone beyond us in their respect for the biblical plea for unity of believers. They deserve to have a biblical base upon which they can stand in their desire to accept those who differ with them.

Syllogism or Scripture. One must use one's mind in discerning what the Scriptures say & syllogism may help clarify something for at least some. There is a biblical basis for this statement.

The Sadducees thought that when man died, man was like the little dog Rover. When he died he died all over. In dealing with these deniers of the resurrection, Jesus said: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:23, 31-32).

When we go back to Exodus 3:6 we find God was speaking to, and identified Himself to, Moses. "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." God was not discussing with Moses the nature of man but what He said revealed something about man's nature. God said I *am*, not *was*, their God. If death ended all, God *was* (past tense) their God, but would not be their God when God spoke to Moses, for these had long ago died. Since God said I *am* their God, the spirit had survived death although the body turned to dust. This destroyed their false view of man's nature. What was inferred here was used to combat their doctrine of man's nature. But what does this have to do with the resurrection? Since God was able to create man with such a nature that the spiritual aspect of man survived the death of the body, God would have no problem in bringing about a resurrection. The Sadducees erred because they did not know "the *scriptures*, nor the *power* of God" (Matt. 22:29).

It can help some to put the argument in the form of a syllogism.

Major Premise: God *is* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Minor Premise: God *is* the God of the living, not of the dead.

Conclusion: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living, not dead.

Jesus was not discussing the nature of the written word, of scripture, with the Sadducees, but what He said revealed something of its nature. Scripture is the voice of God. When we listen to it, God is speaking to us. But God is speaking whether we listen or not. “Have ye not *read* that which was *spoken unto you* by God, saying...” (Matthew 22:31). Though written hundreds of years earlier, it was still God speaking & in this case speaking to *them*.

Are there no “finely-tuned positions” here? What is wrong with fine-tuning? This is the first time I have heard that fine-tuning is a bad thing. Does one tell a mechanic not to fine-tune a car, does one want a non-fine-tuned musical instrument such as a piano? Of course, one cannot conscientiously accept a position as biblical, whether finely-tuned or not, unless one sees that it is biblical. Bales 2:38 is not sufficient in and of itself to prove or disprove anything concerning Scripture. I am not right in and of myself, and neither are you. The Bible is right and we are right as long as we understand and agree with the Bible. Did not the Pharisees finely-tune tithing when they tithed “mint and anise and cummin,” small garden plants? Did Jesus condemn this? No, but He did condemn substituting this for something far weightier. “These ye ought to have done, and not left” undone justice, mercy, and faith. There are weightier matters and there are lesser matters, but those who will to do the Father’s will seek to do it in things both great and small. We should major in

majors and minor in minors, but this does not mean we should eliminate the minors. In fact, in some cases it may be a greater test of one's faith to obey in a minor matter than a major one. One may be able to see why a major matter should be done, but the minor seems foolish to some. Why bother about the minor, they may assume. Let us not fail to obey those things for which we can see no rhyme or reason except that the Lord, the God of love and of justice, told us to do it.

Every generation, through no fault of its own is born ignorant, but they should not remain in this state. Teaching them how to think & study the Bible is very important. One must understand with one's own understanding, but all of us need help from time to time. There are those who just want to *feel* and do not like the work which is involved in studying and thinking. Jesus Christ was trying to get the Pharisees to *think* when he placed a scripture alongside a scripture to which they had referred. He then asked: "If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:45). If they had reasoned correctly they could have understood that He is David's son in that he was of the physical lineage of David but He is David's Lord because He is the Son of God. Some might think this was fine-tuning. It is certainly scriptural tuning.

The author said this philosophy predates the Common Sense Movement and the American Restoration. He cited Eusebius who spoke of those who treated Scripture recklessly, set aside the rule of ancient faith and have not known Christ, "They do not endeavor to learn what the Divine Scriptures declare but strive laboriously after any form of syllogism which may be derived to sustain their impiety." That reason may itself be

prostituted to arrive at unreasonable and ungodly conclusions is no argument against reason itself, any more than it is against the mind or heart. One can twist logic as well as twist scripture. One can twist logic in order to sanction twisting scripture (2nd Peter 3:17). The fact that some are of a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28) is not an argument against the mind or loving God with all your mind. The fact that the mind can be defiled does not prove that one who endeavors to reason logically is defiled. Eusebius made it clear that those of whom he spoke had no love for truth and twisted things to support their impiety. In 1979 I published a book on *The Irresponsibles or Righteousness Through Rationalization*, and showed how people try to escape responsibility for their wrong-doing. There are two possible kinds of reasons in such situations. One the reason they did it, and the other the reason they give to justify what they did. Isaiah spoke of those who put darkness for light and light for darkness and called evil good and good evil (Isa. 7:18-21). It is possible to convince one's self that the evil one wants to do is good and therefore one should do it; or the good one does not want to do is evil and one should be praised for not doing it.

Reactionary Theology. (1) We, have majored “in reactionary theology, occupying ourselves with the task of fine-tuning the religious world around us, while minoring in or ignoring the task of formulating and verbalizing a positive message of good news that would meet the needs of the unchurched.”

(a) Some brethren seem to be concentrating today on what-is-wrong-with-the-church theology. They may be reacting against what they thought in the past or what some think today.

(b) There is a reactionary theology where one reacts from one extreme to another. The author has gone to extremes.

(c) Is it not good news to tell those who are “churched” in denominations that they can become just Christians, members of Christ’s church, by obeying God’s word concerning entrance into the church, and how to work and worship therein? The vast majority of people who attend our Bible classes and assemblies will not be people who do not believe in Christ or the Bible. If we are going to preach any sermons to meet their needs we shall have to deal with the wrongly “churched.”

Furthermore, it is my opinion (though I have never made a survey) that most people who will permit you to study the Bible with them in their homes are not people who do not believe the Bible and are atheists, etc. There are lots of people in our country who do not belong to any religious body but have at least some faith in Christ, the Bible & moral principles. Isn’t it just as good to get a person who is “churched” but has not obeyed the gospel to obey it and be saved, as to convert one who has had no faith at all in Christ? Of course, we want to win all kinds of people for Christ.

(2) The author cited a school of preaching that did not have a course in the life and teaching of Jesus though it had courses on how to meet denominational errors. When their attention was called to this, they immediately put in such a course. This showed they were interested in being balanced. However, we must not overlook how much of the life and teaching of Christ can be found from Acts through Revelation. For many years I taught a course in the life and teaching of Jesus.

(3) The author says we have a reactionary theology if we feel more qualified to discuss various doctrinal differences with the denominationally churchd than we do in leading unbelievers to the faith. The author said “most people in our movement would” feel more qualified to discuss doctrinal differences than to converse with unbelievers.

(4) *“The Restoration movement of which I have been a part for nearly forty years has been a doctrine-exalting movement directed at the intellect of the religious rather than a Christ-exalting movement directed at the heart of the unchurched.”*

Everything is doctrine, including the doctrine that Jesus is the Christ and Savior of mankind. The gospel was first preached to religious people, i.e. the Jews. Cornelius was a religious person. It was also preached to those who were pagans (Acts 17). Since the restoration movement grew of a desire to answer Christ’s prayer for the unity of all believers, it was natural that they directed their message to the religious at first. They believed world evangelism would receive a powerful stimulus from being a united people and Jesus said it would be a factor in leading the world to believe (John 17:21). Was it unscriptural to appeal to their intellect? Should not the Lord’s prayer for unity, when called to their attention, move them to do something about it if they love the Lord? The biblical mind and heart are viewed often in Scripture as being the same thing. In a world in which so many people are wrongly “churchd” it is important to address them while not neglecting unbelievers. One must aim New Testament teaching at particular audiences. In preaching in a Jewish synagogue, or to pagans in Athens, Paul aimed at these audiences. When addressing the saints, he aimed at

them. How much of Acts through Revelation is aimed at the unbelievers? How many messages delivered in the assemblies of the saints were addressed to unbelievers? One can address the saints with reference to their duty and privilege to sow the seed of the kingdom, bring out ways and the spirit in which it should be done, how to teach unbelievers, etc. Paul preached a sermon on baptism to baptized believers with the purpose of reminding them of the significance of their baptism and whether they were now living the new life to which they were raised from the watery grave.

Preaching the Effect & Not the Cause. A fourth proof, that we took a wrong turn and ended up being Pharisees, is that we have been preaching the effect and not the cause. The cause is Christ as presented in the Gospels and the effect is Acts-Revelation. Instead of majoring in Christ (the 4 Gospels) we have majored in the effect (Acts-Revelation). Preaching from pulpits has been on the effect not the cause. We didn't "intentionally ignore or try to minimize Jesus' exalted place in God's plan," but assumed that those to whom we preached already knew about Jesus. Therefore, we did the "fine-tuning we thought necessary to bring our hearers to the degree of doctrinal purity we felt we possessed." What of these charges? (1) Is there no revelation of the nature and power of the cause to be found in the effect? Is nothing known of the power of an atomic bomb (the cause) in its effect (the explosion)? Did the dynamite of the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17) explode in the world before Pentecost? (2) The effect from which I draw hope is not the sinless life of Christ in the Gospels (which demonstrates how far I fall short) but the message of His death for our sins,

His burial, His resurrection and His reign. This is the cause and my salvation is the effect. Of course, without His sinless life He could not have been God's Lamb who died for our sins.

To major in the Gospels is to major in the time of incomplete revelation (John 16:12-14), the time the new covenant was not in force, nor sins remitted (Heb. 1:3; 10:1-5), when Christ was not mediator of the new covenant, when people were not sanctified in the new covenant, when Christ had not made the offering for sin in the holy of holies (heaven), when Christ was not King or High Priest, when the true tabernacle was not yet in effect, when our altar did not exist, when the blood was not available, when we had not come to the realities of Hebrews 12:18, 22-24, when there were no children of the freewoman, before Christ was the author of our salvation, before His throne of grace existed, before we were made to be a kingdom, before the gospel was preached as fact. It was the time when the kingdom was *at*, not *in*, hand.

Paul Preached Effect Material. What Paul, and other writers of Acts through Revelation, preached to the churches is evident from what they wrote to the church and that which would be read in assemblies of the saints. Take Romans for example.

(1) Christ the fulfilment of prophecies and promise of the Old Testament and by His resurrection (Romans 1:1-4).

(2) Christ the one who gives us grace (Romans 1:5; 3:29-28; 4:4-5; 5:2; etc.).

(3) The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

(4) General revelation shows man's need for salvation (Romans 1:18-32).

- (5) Special revelation in the Old Testament proves that Jew and Gentile need salvation for all have sinned (Romans 2:1-2:20).
- (6) God meets this need through Christ who must be accepted by faith (Romans 3:21-5:2). These themes are returned to several times in Romans.
- (7) Romans also contains a sermon on the meaning of baptism into Christ which reminded them of their obligation to walk in newness of life (Romans 6).
- (8) The struggle of man who is under the law of an earned salvation and the deliverance through Christ (Rom. 7:1-8:13).
- (9) The help of the Spirit (Romans 8:14-30).
- (10) One with God makes a majority (Romans 8:31-39).
- (11) Paul's concern, though the apostle to the Gentiles, for his kinsmen according to the flesh and that they had failed God. God had not failed them (Romans 9:1-11:36).
- (12) Exhortation to Christian duties (Romans 12).
- (13) Subjection to civil government (Romans 13:1-7).
- (14) The Christians duty and privilege to walk in love and light (Romans 13: 8-14).
- (15) How to treat weak brethren (Romans 14:15:13).
- (16) One of the values of the Old Testament to Christians (Romans 15:4).
- (17) Paul's concern for his work among the Gentiles and his requests for prayer. (Romans 15:14-33).
- (18) Greetings to various brothers and sisters.
- (19) Warning concerning those who preach contrary to the doctrine they had learned (Romans 16:17-18).

(20) The prophesied gospel made known to all the nations to produce the obedience of faith (Romans 16:25-27). These are some of the things preached in the assemblies of the saints. One can go through the other epistles and Revelation and prove that a wide variety of subjects was preached in the assemblies of the saints. If one wants to call it majoring they majored in the *effect* material, i.e. Christ crucified, buried, raised, and reigning. It is absolutely impossible to preach Acts through Revelation without preaching the exalted Christ. The author writes as if he did not know when Christ was highly exalted, i.e. after His resurrection (Luke 24:25, 46-47; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Timothy 3:16). Why did Christ, in the closing weeks of His life on earth, devote so much time speaking of “the things concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3)? Why did He not dwell on His exaltation in the personal ministry? Why was He preached as King and as Savior on Pentecost (Acts 2:21,32ff)? The King is vitally related to the kingdom. When He entered into His kingdom, after His ascension, He entered into His glory (Matthew 20:21; Mark 10:37). Acts through Revelation not only contain the basic truths set forth in the Gospels, but they also contain material concerning the exalted Christ which is not dwelt on in the Gospels. Has the author focused so much on the Gospels that he had blinded himself to the fact that Acts through Revelation deals with the time when the Messiah was exalted and glorified? He still is.

Fine-Tuning. There are two parts of the great commission, i.e. preaching to those who have not accepted Christ, and teaching those who have “to observe all things” He has commanded for

them to observe (Matthew 28: 18-20). Acts shows how they carried out the preaching to those outside Christ & something of what was taught to converts. The rest of the New Testament concentrates on those in Christ in their various stages of growth and development. It also contains warnings, some of which are found in the Gospels and Acts, concerning the various dangers and departures as well as how to be on one's guard. All this was based on and flowed from the authority of our Risen and Reigning Lord (Matt. 28:18). Weren't the apostles and prophets fine-tuning the church? If in preaching to pagans, the author had to major in the Gospels. It would be impossible for him to instruct and convert a pagan jailor the same hour of the night (Acts 16:31-34). The gospel of 1st Corinthians 15:1-5; Romans 1:16-17 is God's power unto salvation. How much did the jailor know of the four Gospels? The author said we assumed our audience knew about Jesus and that we therefore could spend our time fine-tuning. He illustrated this by saying that:

[Billy Graham preached] Christ, bringing people to the point of faith and repentance. He would leave them thinking that they were at that point 'in Christ' and needed only to identify with a denomination. He said Graham had no right to leave it off and the people need to "hear baptism," but the general impression which was left was "All you teach is baptism." He and many others were: ...only "half-gospel preachers" – and the second half of that, of which Paul says quite disturbingly, "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel" (1st Corinthians 1: 17). We had no more right to preach only the last part of the good news than Billy Graham had to preach only the first part.

Since it should not be left off and people need to hear about baptism, what is wrong with preaching what the Bible teaches about it? A sermon on baptism does not devote as much time to faith as a sermon on faith, but it should be shown that salvation by faith involves baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Were Priscilla and Aquila engaged in unscriptural fine-tuning when they taught Apollos “the way of God more accurately” concerning baptism? They quickly realized Apollos “had been instructed in the way of the Lord” but needed instruction showing that the baptism of John should not be preached under the new covenant. Paul taught that those who received the baptism of John needed to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. It is right to teach this either to one privately or to a group (Acts 18:24-19:7).

Not Sent to Baptize? When we deal with the unscripturally “churched,” it is important to teach them what Christ teaches about His church. Does Paul teach that maybe Billy Graham may have more right to preach faith and repentance than the author had to preach baptism? He admits that it was not right to omit either. Baptism is related to faith and obedience. Was Paul disturbed because some taught baptism? “For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel” (1st Corinthians 1:17). If Paul had been sent to do the act of baptizing he could not have been faithful to his commission without personally baptizing people. If he were not sent to do the act of baptism, but commissioned to preach Christ, he could leave the baptism to others without being unfaithful to his commission. If he were disturbed because people were baptized, why did he baptize?

Why was Paul glad he had not personally baptized many of the Corinthians? The party spirit of some in Corinth led them to start a party around the one who baptized them. Because of this party spirit he was glad he had not personally baptized many of them. “I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius; lest any man say that ye were baptized into my name” (1st Corinthians 7:14). This shows the importance of baptism. If they had been baptized into the name of Paul, they would have belonged to Paul and it would have been scriptural to have been in a Paul Party in the church. He was glad that he had baptized so few. This gave but few the remotest and far-fetched excuse to say they had been baptized “into my name” (1 Corinthians 1:15). Baptism is important because one belongs to the one into whose name one was baptized. We are baptized in Jesus’ name, in submission to and reliance on Him, therefore we belong to Him. To leave out preaching baptism leaves out the culmination of the way we become Christ’s possession. Paul did not say he was not sent to preach Christ and that those who believe in Him are to be baptized to get into Christ. When Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch he must have mentioned baptism, otherwise the eunuch would not have requested baptism (Acts 8:32-37).

Fellowship Issues. I leave the final judgment of every person to the Lord. But this does not relieve me of the responsibility of drawing certain lines of fellowship. To implicitly or explicitly charge us with being Pharisees is not bearing true witness. There are undoubtedly some Pharisees in the church, but to charge “the American Restoration movement” of having become Pharisees is not scriptural.

Theological Insight Into Today's Pharisee

Narcissism of the Small Difference. In numerous cases of ethnic conflict, the deepest hatreds are manifested between people who—to most outward appearances—exhibit few significant distinctions. It is one of the great contradictions of civilization and one of the great sources of its discontents, and Sigmund Freud even found a term for it: "*the narcissism of the small difference.*" As he wrote, "It's precisely the minor differences in people who otherwise are alike that form the basis of feelings of hostility between them." – Internet Search

More Than Textbook. "Reading the Bible for spiritual transformation is tantamount to inviting a Damascus road experience. If we venture onto the ancient roads of the Bible's world with an open mind and an inquiring heart, we can expect to encounter the living God. The Bible is far more than just a resource text, which we can use to shape our theology or ethics. It is God's living and active voice and every time we open its covers we expose ourselves to the possibility of a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ!" - Renovare' Perspective Newsletter

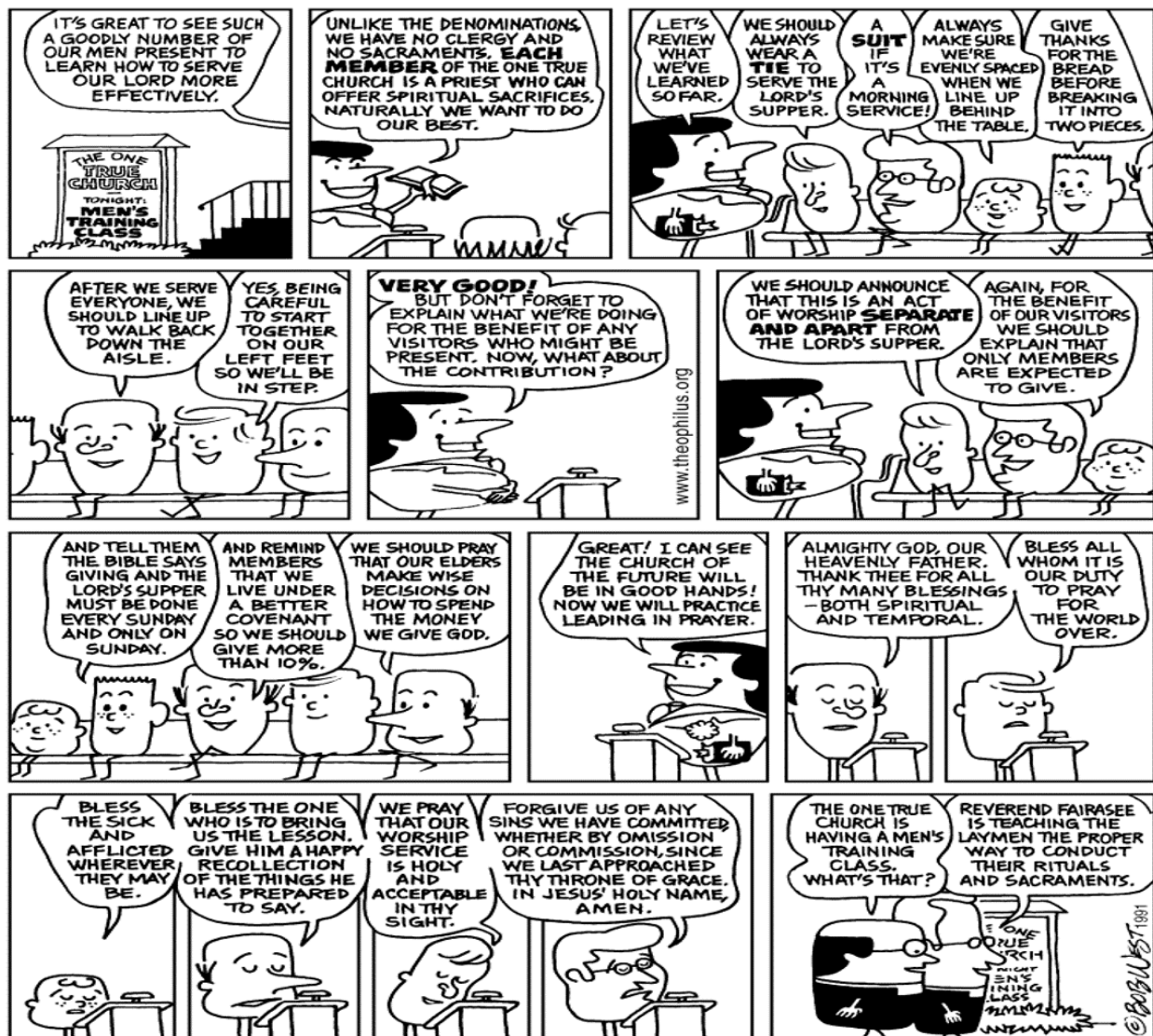
Proof-text Preaching. “There are certain passages of Scripture which have been used so long to fight a particular doctrinal deviation, that the original context of the passage may be forgotten. The problem with the proof-text is the same as the theorem in mathematics. The student who takes up the theorem without having proven it for himself places his confidence in the math professor who delivered the formula. The man who memorizes the proof-text without testing it for himself places his faith in the person or persons who derived the doctrine not in the principles and Person which underlie the doctrine. In his case, contending earnestly for ‘the faith’ is no longer a defense of the ‘system of faith,’ but a defense of the ‘system,’ in other words, the ‘institution’ that is manufactured by his thinking it so.” - Abundant Life

Ironical Trend. “The Restorationist Movement has often been very liberating because it frees converts from the restraints of dead traditionalism. Yet, the regular pattern of such pietistic movements has been repeated by the followers of Stone and Campbell as well. The insights or practices that made possible the original liberation sometimes become calcified sets of standard procedures and automatically expected beliefs. The result for 2nd and 3rd generation Restorationists can be restriction of

spontaneity and an end to real freedom. Restorationist movements are sometimes marked by considerable self-congratulation at having broken through the stultifying bonds of human tradition. Yet, when such reform groups proceed to establish their particular restoration reforms as 'traditionless traditions,' they can become every bit as inflexible as the supposedly corrupt traditions that these movements came into existence to overcome. – Wineskins

THEOPHILUS

Practice Makes Perfect



Basic Bifurcation	N.T. Model Church	Traditional Church
- Worship Location	From House To House	Special Meeting Place
- Group Scale Size	Intimate Gatherings	Impersonal Gatherings
- Common Activity	Daily Fellowship	Weekly Services
- Category Relation	Deep & Personal	Remote & Superficial
- Method Discipling	Observed Example	Classroom Lecture
- Expect Members	Servants & Stewards	Contribute & Attend
- Leaders' Tasks	Equipping Believers	Committee & Program
- Preacher's Duty	Internalized Example	Entertaining Sermons
- Teaching Emphasis	Searching Scripture	Subscribing Doctrine
- What Committed	Unity & Quality	Uniformity & Quantity
- How Evaluated	"How You Serve"	"What You Know"

Weighty Matters

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." ([Matthew 23:23](#))

This particular "woe" among the eight in [Matthew 23](#) is often only partially proclaimed. Usually, sermons are delivered about the "judgment, mercy, and faith" that are indeed the "weightier matters of the law"—but Christ's somewhat offhand remark on the responsibility to tithe is either ignored or downplayed.

Surely the legalistic and public display of "obedience" to the law is condemned by Jesus. He rebuked these same men for their desire to show their spirituality. "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men" ([Matthew 6:2](#)). But Jesus also said in our text that they "ought . . . to have done" the tithing of their wealth.

The condemnation is that this kind of hypocrite seeks only his name in a bulletin, or a plaque on a wall, or a brick in a walkway, or a wing in a hospital or museum, and is indifferent to the quiet, background work of ministry that doles out judgment, mercy, and faith.

Jesus measures "weightier matters" this way: "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" ([Matthew 25:35-36](#)). "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" ([Matthew 25:40](#)).

Majoring in Minors

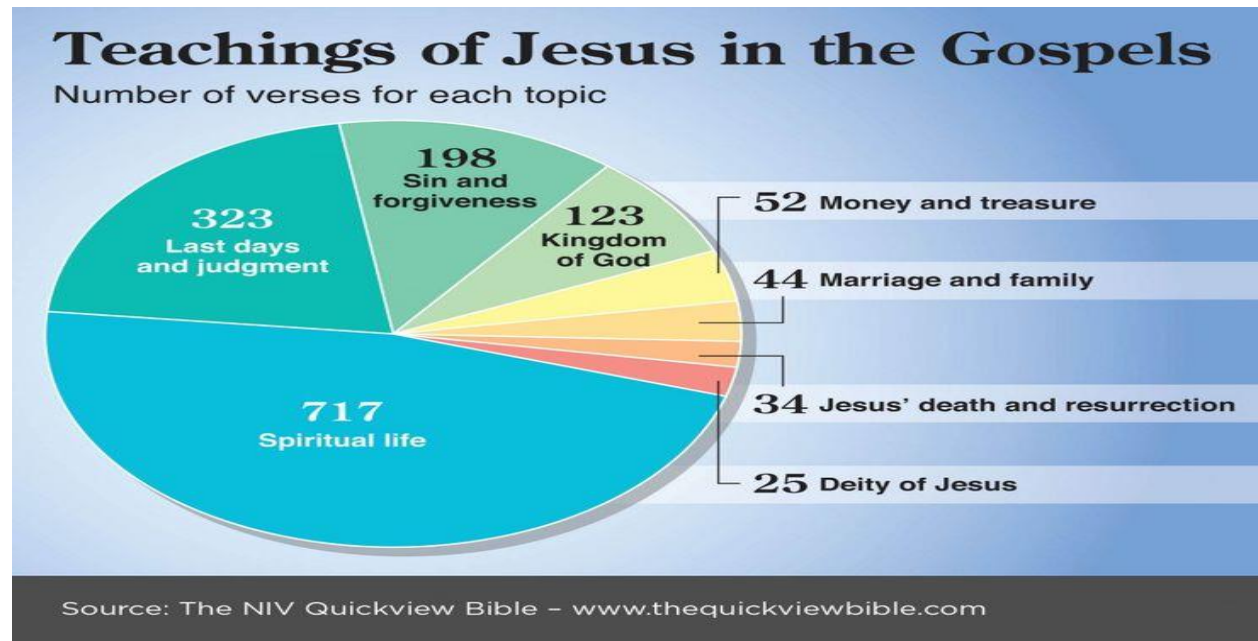
Closely related to the elevation of human traditions to the norm of law is the problem of majoring in minors, which again was modeled by the Pharisees. The Pharisees distorted the emphasis of biblical righteousness to suit their own behavioral patterns of self-justification. Jesus frequently confronted the Pharisees on this point. Jesus said to them, “You tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness” (Matt. 23:23a). On numerous occasions, Jesus acknowledged that the Pharisees scrupulously obeyed some points of the law. They paid their tithes, they read their Scriptures, they did a host of things the law required—and Jesus commended them for their actions, saying, “These you ought to have done” (23:23b). However, it was the emphasis that was out of kilter. They scrupulously tithed, but in doing so they used their obedience to this lesser matter as a cloak to cover up their refusal to obey the weightier matters of justice and mercy. That distortion occurs today.

Why do we have a perpetual tendency to major in minors? As Christians, we want to be recognized for our growth in sanctification and for our righteousness. Which is easier to achieve, maturity in showing mercy or in the paying of tithes? To pay my tithes certainly involves a financial sacrifice of sorts, but there is a real sense in which it is cheaper for me to drop my money into the plate than it is for me to invest my life in the pursuit of justice and mercy. We tend to give God the cheapest gifts. Which is easier, to develop the fruit of the Spirit, conquering pride, covetousness, greed, and impatience, or to avoid going to movie theaters or dancing? We also yearn for clearly observable measuring rods of growth. How do we measure our growth in patience or in compassion? It is much more difficult to measure the disposition of our hearts than it is to measure the number of movies we attend.

It is also our inclination as fallen creatures to rate as most important those virtues in which we have achieved a relative degree of success. Naturally, I would like to think that my moral strong points are the important ones and my moral weaknesses are limited to minor matters. It is a short step from this natural inclination to a widespread distortion of God’s emphases.

One final type of legalism might be called “loopholeism.” Loopholeism involves getting around the law by legal and moral technicalities. Again we return to the Pharisees for the biblical model of loopholeism. The Pharisees had a clearly defined tradition about restrictions on travel on the Sabbath day. One was not permitted to travel on the Sabbath more than a “Sabbath-day’s journey,” which was a certain distance from one’s home. If a Pharisee wanted to travel a distance exceeding the limit, he would take advantage of a technical provision in the law allowing one to establish separate residences during the week. He would have a traveling merchant take some articles of clothing or personal possessions, such as toothbrushes, and put them at strategic points along the road. Perhaps at the two-mile mark, the Pharisee’s toothbrush would be placed under a rock, thereby legally establishing his “residence” at that rock. With his legal residences defined in two-mile increments along the way, the Pharisee was free to travel from rock to rock—from “residence to residence”—and make his full trip without ever covering more than the prescribed distance from his “home.” The Sabbath-day’s journey principle was violated shamelessly while technically being protected by the loophole.⁵

⁵ Sproul, R. C. (2009). [*How Should I Live in this World?*](#) (Vol. 5, pp. 33–36). Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing.



MAJORING IN MINORS

“Every Bible topic is important; none are ‘minor’ in the purest sense. But when brethren enforce their convictions to the point of splintering churches into factions with each regarding the other as 2nd rate citizens of the kingdom, something is out of balance.”

– ROBERT HARKRIDER

"Beauty is only skin deep" seems to be the modern secular equivalent of this "woe" in [Matt. 23](#). The corresponding Old Testament statement is probably this: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion" ([Proverbs 11:22](#)). This principle has lasted for millennia simply because it is easily observed in all cultures. Our Lord's application to the scribes & Pharisees was particularly pointed: "Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" ([Matt. 23:28](#)). God is not interested in the "pretty outside" but in what's on the inside. "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" ([1 Samuel 16:7](#)).

- Institute for Creation Research

The Pharisaical Mindset Today

REAL MARKS OF A PHARISEE

**Loves to hang out in high places
with VIP status**

(Matthew 23:5-6)

**Only accepts positive confession &
self-praise from people**

(Matthew 23:7-12)

Loves money, is covetous & a show-off

(Matthew 23:16, Luke 16:14)

Exploits the simple for their money.

Despises the poor, sick & needy

(Matthew 23:14, Luke 7:36-50, 21:1-6)

**Exalts expensive buildings,
important people, objects & lifestyle**

(Matthew 23:17-22)

Thinks of self better than a sinner.

Trusts in own self-righteousness

(Luke 7:36-50, 18:9-14)

**Outwardly holy to get noticed & to get
others to follow, inwardly hypocrite**

(Matthew 6:5, 23:5, 15, 25-26)

Seeks after signs & wonders

(Matthew 16:1-4, 27:40-43, Mark 8:11-12, Luke 11:29-32)

Believes in own deceit

(Matthew 15:12-14, 23:16, John 9:39-41)

**Twists the Scriptures,
omits weightier doctrinal issues**

(Matthew 16:6-12, 23:23-24)

**Upholds the traditions of men
over the Word**

(Matthew 23:4, Mark 7:5-13)

**Challenges the authority
of the Word**

(Matthew 21:23-27, 22:34-46, Luke 17:20-21)

Hates to be corrected by the Word

(Luke 7:29-30, John 8:39-59, 12:42)

**Misleads many into the broad
road to destruction**

(Matthew 23:13)

**Suppresses those who
warn them of own errors**

(Matthew 23:34-35, Luke 22:2, John 12:42)

**Fails to identify the true Christ
from the Scriptures**

(Matthew 12:14-37, John 5:18, 10:24-39, Luke 7:29-30)

**Rejects the real Messiah,
expects a false messiah**

(Matthew 26:62-68, Mark 3:6, Luke 22:2, Acts 1:6)

Don't many of the famous preachers fit into this category today?

#EXCHARISMATICS

Christians: More Like Jesus or Pharisees?

One of the common critiques leveled at present-day Christianity is that it's a religion full of hypocritical people. A new Barna Group study examines the degree to which this perception may be accurate. The study explores how well Christians seem to emulate the actions and attitudes of Jesus in their interactions with others.

The research project was directed by David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, in conjunction with John Burke, author of *Mud and the Masterpiece*, a book exploring the attitudes and actions of Jesus in all of his encounters.

Assessing Christlikeness

In this nationwide study of self-identified Christians, the goal was to determine whether Christians have the actions and attitude of Jesus as they interact with others or if they are more akin to the beliefs and behaviors of Pharisees, the self-righteous sect of religious leaders described in the New Testament.

In order to assess this, Barna researchers presented a series of 20 agree-or-disagree statements. Five actions and five attitudes that seem to best encapsulate the actions and attitudes of Jesus Christ during his ministry on earth. The researchers did the same for the Pharisees (10 total statements, five reflecting behaviors and five examining attitudes).

Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, directed the study. He commented on the creation of a "Christ-like" scale: "Our intent is to create some new discussion about the intangible aspects of following and representing Jesus. Obviously, survey research, by itself, cannot fully measure someone's 'Christ-likeness' or 'Pharisee-likeness.' But the study is meant to identify baseline qualities of Jesus, like empathy, love, and a desire to share faith with others—or the resistance to such ideals in the form of self-focused hypocrisy. The statements are based on the biblical record given in the Gospels and in the Epistles and our team worked closely with a leading pastor, John Burke, to develop the survey questions."

Fleshing Out Christ-likeness

To flesh out the objectives of the study, a nationwide, representative sample of Christians was asked to respond to 20 statements. They could rate their agreement on a four-point scale. The 10 research statements used to examine **Christ-likeness** include the following:

Actions like Jesus:

- I listen to others to learn their story before telling them about my faith.
- In recent years, I have influenced multiple people to consider following Christ.
- I regularly choose to have meals with people with very different faith or morals from me.
- I try to discover the needs of non-Christians rather than waiting for them to come to me.
- I am personally spending time with non-believers to help them follow Jesus.

Attitudes like Jesus:

- I see God-given value in every person, regardless of their past or present condition.
- I believe God is for everyone.
- I see God working in people's lives, even when they are not following him.

- It is more important to help people know God is for them than to make sure they know they are sinners.
- I feel compassion for people who are not following God and doing immoral things.

The 10 statements used to assess self-righteousness (like the **Pharisees**), included the following research items:

Self-Righteous Actions:

- I tell others the most important thing in my life is following God's rules.
- I don't talk about my sins or struggles. That's between me and God.
- I try to avoid spending time with people who are openly gay or lesbian.
- I like to point out those who do not have the right theology or doctrine.
- I prefer to serve people who attend my church rather than those outside the church.

Self-Righteous Attitudes:

- I find it hard to be friends with people who seem to constantly do the wrong things.
- It's not my responsibility to help people who won't help themselves.
- I feel grateful to be a Christian when I see other people's failures and flaws.
- I believe we should stand against those who are opposed to Christian values.
- People who follow God's rules are better than those who do not.

How Christ-like are Christians?

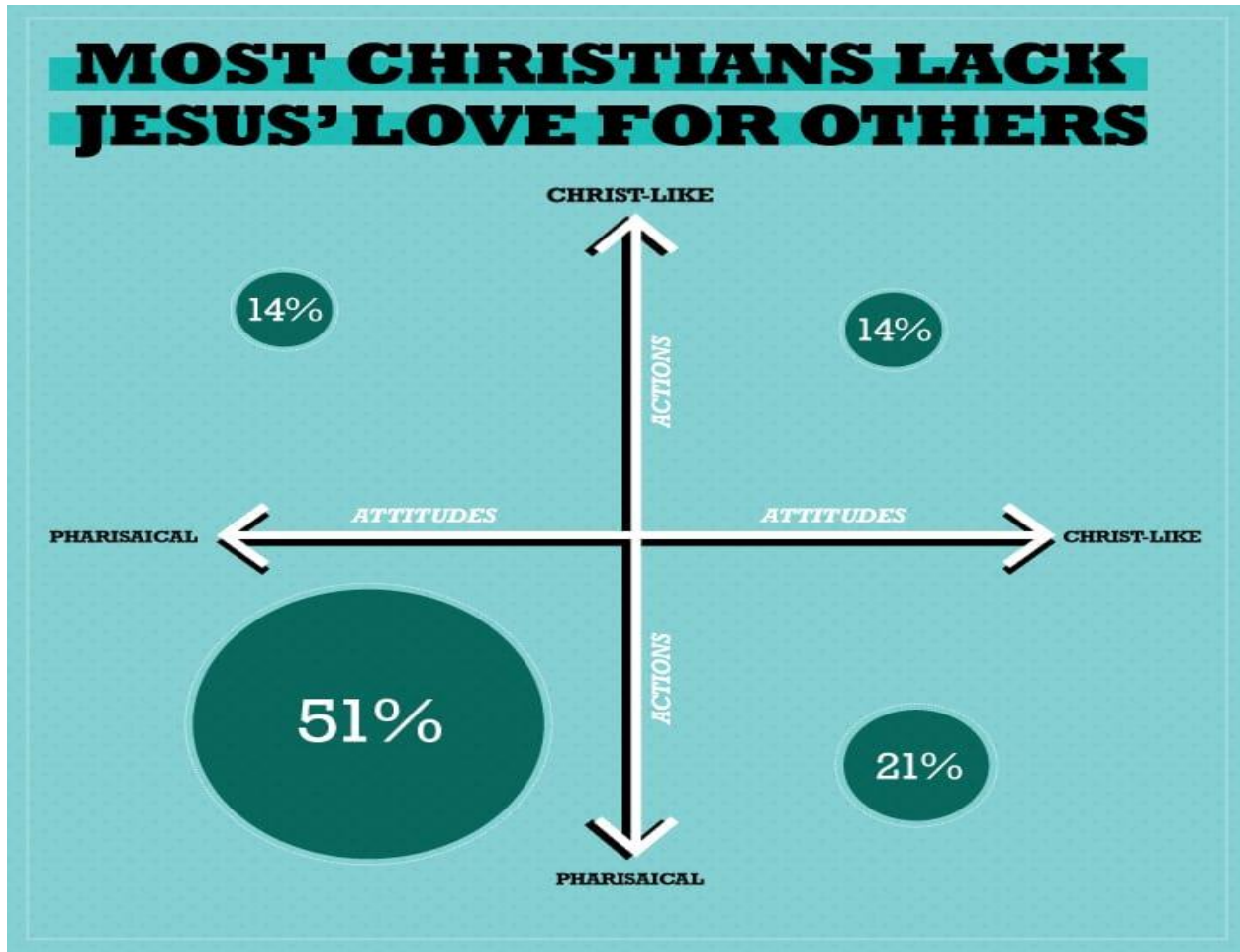
Using these 20 questions as the basis of analysis, the researchers created an aggregate score for each individual and placed those results into one of four categories, or quadrants. (Further definition of the way these findings were analyzed is found later in this article.) The four categories include:

- Christ-like in action and attitude
- Christ-like in action, but not in attitude
- Christ-like in attitude, but not action
- Christ-like in neither

The findings reveal that most self-identified Christians in the U.S. are characterized by having the attitudes and actions researchers identified as Pharisaical. Just over half of the nation's Christians—using the broadest definition of those who call themselves Christians—qualify for this category (51%). They tend to have attitudes and actions that are characterized by self-righteousness.

On the other end of the spectrum, 14% of today's self-identified Christians—just one out of every seven Christians—seem to represent the actions and attitudes Barna researchers found to be consistent with those of Jesus.

In the middle are those who have some mix of action and attitude. About one-fifth of Christians are Christ-like in attitude, but often represent Pharisaical actions (21%). Another 14% of respondents tend to be defined as Christ-like in action, but seem to be motivated by self-righteous or hypocritical attitudes.



Evangelicals and Others

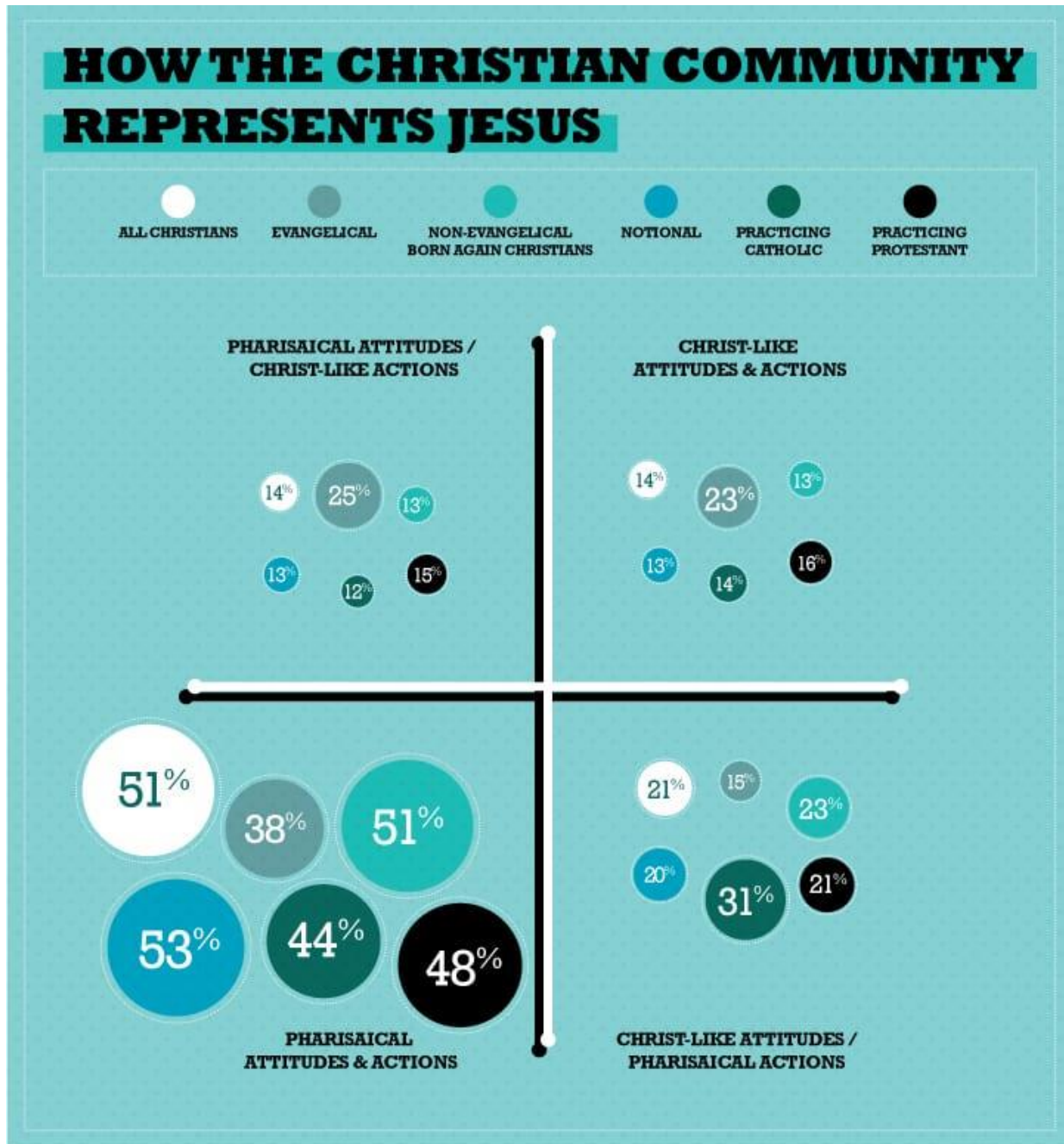
Looking at America's evangelical community—a group defined by Barna Group based on its theological beliefs and commitments, not self-identification with the terms “evangelical”—38% qualify as neither Christ-like in action nor attitude, according to their responses to these 20 questions. About one-quarter (23%) of evangelicals are characterized by having Jesus-like actions and attitudes, which was higher than the norm. About half were a mixture of Christ-like actions and Pharisaical attitudes (25%) or vice versa (15%).

Evangelicals are notably distinct from the norms in two ways: first, they were slightly more likely than other Christians to be Christ-like in action and attitude. However, among those in the “middle ground,” with so-called jumbled actions and attitudes, evangelicals are the only faith group more likely to be Pharisaical in attitude but Christ-like in action.

Kinnaman explains: “This research may help to explain how evangelicals are often targeted for claims of hypocrisy; the unique ‘sin’ of evangelicals tends to be doing the ‘right’ thing but with improper motives.”

The research shows that non-evangelical born again Christians and notional Christians were not much different from one another and not too distinct from national norms among all Christians.

Practicing Catholics were more likely than average to have Christ-like beliefs, but to demonstrate Pharisaical tendencies (i.e., they were 10 points above the average in terms of being Christ-like in attitude but Pharisaical in action).



Who Exhibits Christ-likeness?

Despite their shortcomings in the study, evangelical Christians are the most likely Christian segment to be categorized as having both the Christ-like actions and attitudes (23%) identified by Barna researchers.

Interestingly, a similar proportion (22%) of Christians who have a more liberal political ideology claimed both Christ-like attitudes and actions. Non-mainline Protestants with a practicing faith are also more likely than average to be in this top category (19%), as are women (18%) and college graduates (18%).

Some population segments that are statistically less likely to have both Christ-like actions and attitudes are Elders, ages 67 or older (6%), Hispanics (6%), Christians with a conservative political ideology (8%), and men (9%).

What the Findings Mean

Kinnaman has spent more than five years presenting to Christian leaders about the perceptions of Christians, based upon his bestselling book *unChristian*. “In the research for that book project, our team discovered that 84% of young non-Christians say they know a Christian personally, yet only 15% say the lifestyles of those believers are noticeably different in a good way. This new study helps to explain that gap. It is not surprising that believers miss the mark in terms of representing Jesus, because transformation in Christ is so difficult and so rare. In particular, evangelicals seem to know the right way to behave, but they often admit to harboring sanctimonious motives.

“Many Christians are more concerned with what they call unrighteousness than they are with self-righteousness. It’s a lot easier to point fingers at how the culture is immoral than it is to confront Christians in their comfortable spiritual patterns. Perhaps pastors and teachers might take another look at how and what they communicate. Do people somehow get the message that the ‘right action’ is more important than the ‘right attitude’? Do church leaders have a tendency to focus more on tangible results, like actions, because those are easier to see and measure than attitudes?

“Finally, the question of authentic faith—is a particularly sore topic for many Millennials—who are often leaving church due in large part to the hypocrisy they experience. Again, no research is a perfect measure, but this study points out a sobering possibility: that the perception so many young people have of Christians contains more than a kernel of truth. Just as the New Testament writer Paul demonstrates in Galatians 2:11-16, the responsibility of the Christian community is to challenge hypocrisy just as boldly as other kinds of sin.”

About the Research

The OmniPollSM included 1,008 telephone interviews conducted among a representative sample of adults over the age of 18 in each of the 50 United States. The interviews included 300 interviews conducted by cell phone, to help ensure representativeness of cell-only households. Of those surveyed 718 self-identified as Christians and were included in this study. The survey was conducted from November 11, 2012 through November 18, 2012. The sampling error for self-identified Christians is plus or minus 3.7 percentage points, at the 95% confidence level.

Based upon U.S. Census data sources, regional and ethnic quotas were designed to ensure that the final group of adults interviewed reflected the distribution of adults nationwide and adequately represented the three primary ethnic groups within the U.S. (those groups which comprise at least 10% of the population: white, black, and Hispanic).

To assess the results to 20 different questions, a numeric value was assigned to each response option and the results were tallied. A perfect score was 30 points on the action questions and 30 points on the attitude questions. The equal and opposite result represents Pharisaical actions and attitudes.

Furthermore, respondents were penalized if they agreed with multiple Pharisaical statements. If they did embrace these self-oriented perspectives, their score was downgraded. This was done because, in many cases, people often got the “right” answer to Christ-like questions, but also harbored some self-righteousness in action or attitude. For example, depending upon one’s total aggregate score, agreeing with two or more Pharisaical actions could remove a respondent from being categorized as having Christ-like actions; instead, he or she would be categorized as having Pharisaical actions.

The research was commissioned by Baker Books and John Burke, author of a new book, *Mud and the Masterpiece: Seeing yourself and others through the eyes of Jesus*. More about the book can be found [here](#).

Definitions

People are identified as having a practicing faith if they have attended a church service in the past month and say their religious faith is very important in their life.

“Evangelicals” meet the born again criteria (described below) plus seven other conditions. Those include saying their faith is very important in their life today; believing they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians; believing that Satan exists; believing that eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works; believing that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; asserting that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches; and describing God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today. Being classified as an evangelical is not dependent upon church attendance or the denominational affiliation of the church attended. Respondents were not asked to describe themselves as “evangelical.”

“Non-evangelical born again Christians” is defined as people who said they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. These adults are born again, but do not meet the additional evangelical criteria.

“Notional” Christians are individuals who identify themselves as Christian yet do not meet the criteria for being “born again.”

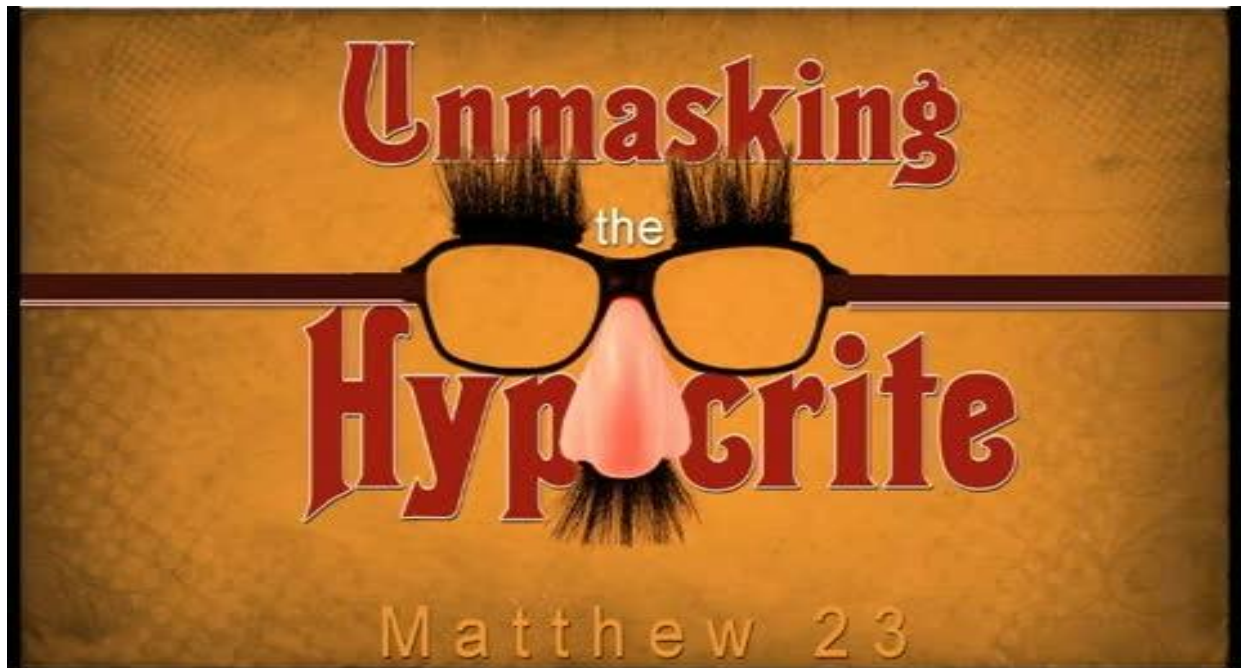
Generations: Mosaics / Millennials are a generation born between 1984 through 2002; Busters, born between 1965 and 1983; Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964; and Elders were born in 1945 or earlier.

About Barna Group

Barna Group (which includes its research division, the Barna Research Group) is a private, non-partisan, for-profit organization under the umbrella of the Issachar Companies. Located in Ventura, California, Barna Group has been conducting and analyzing primary research to understand cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors since 1984.

If you would like to receive free e-mail notification of the release of each update on the latest research findings from Barna Group, you may subscribe to this free service at the Barna website (www.barna.org). Additional research-based resources are also available through this website.

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<http://www.churchofchristatmemorial.com/sermons/2019/07/21/signs-of-a-hard-heart-attack>

In conclusion, I would like to link to Jeff Trahan's Sermon this site @07.21.19 entitled: "Signs of a Hard Heart Attack"

Jesus corrected Pharisaical misunderstanding by redirecting the Pharisees to Old Testament *Precedent*, the original intent or *Purpose* of God's Command, and the *Person* of authority standing before them. Symptom indicators of their need for heart surgery – *Close Minds, Critical Outlook and Vengeful Spirit*. Brother Trahan also said tender heartedness can be achieved and preserved by *checking for the warning signs*, consuming a *heart healthy diet* of feeding on the words of Jesus and prioritizing benevolence and *mercy over sacrifice* and financial contribution.

