

# Jesus v. the Pharisees

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 16, 2020

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**Main Theme** – Contrasting the Religion of the Pharisees v. the Religion Espoused by Jesus Christ

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## WORSHIP & PRAYER COMMUNION

I want to invite the USHERS to distribute the emblems of the Lord's Supper. Remember that the wafer and the juice symbolize the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ—offered for us all. Since UNITY has been a dominant theme in recent weeks, I want to share the following...

**QUOTE** – “We should remember that it is through Christ's death that we are reconciled to God and [to] each other. He has made us ONE, and we set our hearts on pursuing UNITY in love. The Lord's Supper is a great time to pray and plan for oneness with our brothers and sisters.”

**Q. In what way does Holy Communion facilitate Christian unity?**

- Communion reminds us that we share a common NEED
- Communion reminds us that we share a common SAVIOR
- Communion reminds us that we share a common LORD
- Communion reminds us that we share a common HOPE
- Communion reminds us that we share a common MISSION

### **1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)**

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

## WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Special Events**
  - Women's Ministry – Tuesday, March 10, from 6:30–8pm
  - Men's Meeting – Saturday, March 14, from 9–10am

## MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH**
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## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

Even the most casual reading of the Gospels indicates that Jesus had ENEMIES during His earthly ministry. Of course, I could address the SPIRITUAL forces arrayed against the Son of God (cf. Eph. 6:12 – “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against” . . . wicked spiritual forces). HOWEVER, I want to call your attention to the HUMAN adversaries Jesus consistently dealt with.

**FYI** – Perhaps the most TRAGIC IRONY in human history is the fact that Jesus’ most brutal enemies were NOT those easily classified as wicked or sinful (e.g., tax collectors, prostitutes, Roman pagans, etc.)—but as those who were RELIGIOUS (i.e., the clergy of His day). i.e., Those Jewish leaders who SHOULD have been the FIRST to embrace Him.

On nearly every page of the Gospels, their ADVERSARIAL position against the Lord is evident in their ONGOING harassment, mockery and hatred of the Son of God. In response, Christ’s HARSH words of criticism and/or judgment were leveled against these religious elite (e.g., Matthew 23).

## SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

**KEY** – Who were these religious figures (historically)? Allow me a moment to identify the TWO primary groups that comprised the religious class of first-century Israel (i.e., briefly—volumes have been written on this topic)...

### 1) Sadducees

**A** – The Sadducees were an aristocratic group of Jewish religious leaders who tended to be wealthy and politically connected. The Chief/High Priest of Israel and the majority of the Sanhedrin (i.e., Jewish Supreme Court) were Sadducees.

**B** – The Sadducees sought to maintain peaceful relations with occupying Rome and were, therefore, more concerned with politics than religion. FYI – Much of their wealth and power came from their favorable connections with Rome.

**C** – Because the common-man hated Roman dominance in Israel, the Sadducees—as a group—were powerful, but out of touch with the vast majority of the peasantry.

**FYI** – They were recurring but **INFREQUENT** adversaries of Christ (comparatively).

## **2) Pharisees**

**A** – The Pharisees were quite popular with/regarded by the commoners. They opposed Roman dominance and the benefits derived from Roman favor. Thus, the Pharisees were lauded by the people of Israel. These sentiments fueled rivalry between the sects.

**B** – They were an incredibly strict religious sect within Judaism. They emphasized dutiful observance to the Law of Moses, racial purity, and practiced a rigorous form of ritualistic/ceremonial purity (as we will note in the moments ahead). This also fueled the rivalry between the sects.

**C** – Of the two groups noted, the Pharisees were the more **FREQUENT** adversaries of Jesus Christ. If we read of Jesus clashing with a religious group in the Gospels, it was **LIKELY** the sect known as the Pharisees.

### **SETTING THE STAGE PT. 3**

**Q. Why did these groups so vehemently OPPOSE Jesus? What FUELED this conflict?**

**A.** Simply stated – the **RELIGION** espoused/commanded by Christ **CLASHED** with theirs

**NOTE** – In many Protestant groups the word **RELIGION** is deemed an **UGLY** word (and rightfully so as we shall address). But Scripture has much to say about the religion we **SHOULD** practice before the Lord (cf. James 1:27). Thus, religion it is **NOT** always an ugly word!

**James 1:27 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)**

**27 Religion** that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

**Q. What were the DIFFERENCES between the RELIGIONS posited by Jesus and the Pharisees?**

**KEY** – Great question! Let's take some time to **OUTLINE** the **DIFFERENCES** between the two...

**LET'S DELVE IN...**

## POINT 1

### Matthew 6:1–4, 5–6, 16–18 (Emphasis Mine)

1 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others **to be seen by them**. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 “So when you **give** to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the **hypocrites** do in the synagogues and on the streets, **to be honored by others**. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

5 “And when you **pray**, do not be like the **hypocrites**, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners **to be seen by others**. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

16 “When you **fast**, do not look somber as the **hypocrites** do, for they disfigure their faces **to show others** they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

**NOTE 1** – The religious practice of the Pharisees was motivated by the praise of men.

**NOTE 1** – The religious practice posited by Christ is motivated by the praise of heaven.

### cf. Matthew 23:5 (re: The Pharisees)

5 “Everything they do is done for people to see . . .”

**KEY** – Because they wanted the acclaim of men, they worked to secure their attention. **THUS...**

**NOTE 2** – Pharisaical religion prioritized looking religious (i.e., outward appearances—mask).

**NOTE 2** – Christian religion prioritizes being religious (i.e., service unto/connection with God).

### cf. Matthew 23:27–28

27 . . . 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.

**NOTE 3** – Note that the religious practice of the Pharisees had earthly/temporal reward.

**NOTE 3** – Note that the religious practice lauded by Christ has heavenly/eternal reward.

## POINT 2

### Matthew 15:1–11

1 Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, 2 “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!”

3 Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ [cf. Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16] and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ [cf. Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9] 5 But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ 6 they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 “These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.  
9 They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are merely human rules.’ [cf. Isa. 29:13] ”

10 Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. 11 What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

17 “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? 18 But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.”

**NOTE 1** – The religion of the Pharisees emphasized outward ritual and form (i.e., ceremony).

**NOTE 1** – The religion commanded by Christ emphasizes inner righteousness (i.e., morality).

### cf. Matthew 23:25–26

25 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

**NOTE 2** – The practice of the Pharisees emphasized man-made tradition over Holy Scripture.

**NOTE 2** – The practice commanded by Christ emphasizes the truth of the Word over tradition.

### POINT 3

#### **Matthew 23:1–4 (Emphasis Mine)**

1 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 2 “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. 3 So you must **be careful to do** everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, **for they do not practice what they preach**. 4 They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are **not willing to lift a finger to move them**.

ONCE AGAIN...

**NOTE 1** – The religious practice of the Pharisees was characterized by hypocrisy (pretense).

**NOTE 1** – The religious practice advocated by the Christ is characterized by sincerity/devotion.

#### **cf. James 1:22**

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

**NOTE 2** – Pharisaical religion was burdensome (prioritization of rules/regulation—deadening).

**NOTE 2** – The Christian religion is freeing (prioritization of intimate relationship—empowering).

### POINT 4

#### **Matthew 7:28–29 (i.e., Post-Sermon on the Mount)**

28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

**NOTE 1** – The religion of the Pharisees was powerless and devoid of heavenly authority.

**NOTE 1** – The religion of Christ is powerful and anointed (life-giving and transformative).

It is NO surprise that the religion of Christ is power/life-giving (as it is founded on the WORD)!

#### **cf. Hebrews 4:12 (Emphasis Mine)**

12 For the word of God is **alive** and **active**. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

## POINT 5

### Mark 3:1–6

1 Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.”

4 Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent.

5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

**NOTE 1** – The religion of the Pharisees prioritized ritual and ceremony over people.

**NOTE 1** – The religion of Christ will always prioritize people over ritual and ceremony.

### cf. James 1:27

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

## POINT 6

### Luke 7:36–50

36 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. 37 A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. 38 As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”

40 Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

41 “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,[a] and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”



43 Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

48 Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

49 The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

50 Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

**NOTE 1** – The religion of the religious elite was both judgmental and elitist.

**NOTE 1** – The religion commanded by Christ is compassionate and accessible.

**KEY** – Christ was known to be a “friend of . . . sinners” (cf. Matthew 11:19).

## POINT 7

### Matthew 9:9–12

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

12 On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.”

**NOTE 1** – The evangelistic strategy of the Pharisees was “come and get it!”

**NOTE 1** – The evangelistic strategy of Christ was/is always “go and get them!”

### cf. Luke 14:23

23 “. . . Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.”

## CONCLUSIONS

**NOTE** – You may be thinking to yourself: “Pastor, this is all very interesting. Thank you for the history lesson! But what does this ANCIENT clash between the religion(s) of the Pharisees and Christ have to do with me TODAY?”

GREAT QUESTION...

**KEY 1** – The REALITY is this — the CHURCH of Jesus Christ in EVERY generation must be DILIGENT in ensuring that its religion (i.e., faith and practice) MIRRORS that of Christ and NOT that of the Pharisees. Left to its own devices, the Church will always DRIFT toward a religion that is PHARISAICAL in nature...

### 1) i.e., A religion that...

- Prioritizes outward app. v. devotion
- Emphasizes ex. ritual v. inner holiness
- Prioritizes the ‘praise of men’ over ‘Him’
- Prioritizes human tradition over Scripture
- Prioritizes religious practice over people

### 2) i.e., A religion that is...

- Powerless and dead v. powerful and anointed by God
- Judgmental and elitist toward the lost v. compassionate
- Characterized by do’s & don’ts v. ‘renewing’ relationship
- Marked by a desire to STAY v. engage the world and “GO”
- Entirely devoid of heavenly notice, favor or eternal reward

**Q. Which of the two categories has the N. American Church most mirrored?**

**Q. Do you think this may be responsible for the waywardness of our nation?**

MOREOVER...

**KEY 2** – WE must CONTINUALLY CONSIDER what type of church WE are/want to be?

**Q. Who does our church resemble the most? Christ or the Pharisees He contended with?**

**Q. Do we tend to mimic the Lord that we confess or those who were the most adversarial?**

**NOTE** – We will continue next Sunday with the Beatitudes (hallmarks of the Christian religion)!