

28. Jesus vs. the religious elites

April 3, 2011

Let's do a quick survey. This survey must be extremely honest. Remember that you are in the church. I ask all of you to close your eyes. No peeking. If you can see me, I can see you, too.

Please listen carefully:

- Anyone who DOES NOT BELIEVE in the existence of absolute moral truth, raise your hand.
- Anyone who DOES NOT BELIEVE in the total accuracy of the Bible, raise your hand.
- Anyone who DOES NOT BELIEVE satan is a real demonic spiritual being, raise your hand.
- Anyone who DOES NOT BELIEVE in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, raise your hand.
- Anyone who DOES NOT BELIEVE the fact that Jesus is God and He is the only way of salvation and we cannot make our way to heaven, raise your hand.

Because of the people next to you, if you didn't raise your hand but you were thinking, "Yes" to any of these questions, that means that you don't have a biblical worldview.

A "biblical worldview" is defined as believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; satan is considered to be a real demonic spiritual being, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator of the world who rules the universe today.

In this 2009 Barna research, anyone who held all of those beliefs was said to have a biblical worldview. Overall, this research revealed that only 9% of all American adults have a biblical worldview. Labeled "born again Christians," the study discovered that they were twice as likely as the average adult to possess a biblical worldview. However, that meant that even among born again Christians, less than one out of every five – 19% had such an outlook on life.

Of adults who attend mainline Protestant churches, only 2 percent shared biblical worldview. Among Catholics, less than one-half of 1 percent had a biblical worldview. The denominations that produced the highest proportions of adults with a biblical worldview were non-denominational Protestant churches, with 13 percent, Pentecostal churches, with 10 percent, and Baptist churches with 8 percent.

Upon comparing the perspectives of those who have a biblical worldview with those who do not, the former group were 31 times less likely to accept cohabitation; 18 times less likely to endorse drunkenness; 15 times less likely to condone homosexual sex; 12 times less likely to accept profanity; and 11 times less likely to describe adultery as morally acceptable.

This morning we are going to witness the dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish religious elites regarding Jesus' credentials and doctrines.

These religious rulers had their religion down pat, but they didn't know anything about God just like the majority of the born-again Christians in America don't.

A. WHAT? NO SEMINARY DEGREE?

John 7:14-16 Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. 15 And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?" 16 Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

When Jesus began to teach openly in the temple, the debate shifted, first, to His credentials and then, to His doctrine. The Jews were amazed at what He taught because He did not have any credentials from their approved rabbinical schools. But since He lacked this "proper accreditation," His enemies said that His teachings were nothing but private opinions and ain't worth much. While the scribes and Pharisees taught by quoting all the famous rabbis, Jesus taught with authority from Scriptures.

In other words, Jesus didn't have a seminary degree to be a Bible teacher. We see the same kind of situation in the Book of Acts.

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Peter and John stunned the group of Sanhedrins who were the cream of the crop when it came to the spiritual authority and knowledge of Israel at that time.

I am not saying that going to a seminary or Bible college is wrong. I highly recommend it to anyone who has a call of God to pursue Bible college and seminary education. But it is absolutely necessary to be called by God. I believe that the one God calls, He equips.

One lady who used to attend our church a few years ago asked someone what kind of qualification our assistant pastor Jack had to be ordained. The person who was asked replied what I would have said, "A call of God." The lady said with a snort, "Is that all?" Yes, that is more than enough.

If you ask my qualification, I am in the process of getting a Ph.D from the seminary of Hard Knocks which is the same school where Jesus' apostles, such as Peter and John attended. Just in case you don't know what Ph.D stands for, it is "Pile High in Deep."

Do you know there are some Christians who think 'doctrine' of Christianity is like some eight letter dirty word? To understand what Jesus wants us to learn, we need to get the meaning from its Greek word. The Greek word for 'taught' is 'didasko'. And 'doctrine' is 'didache'. Do you see the resemblance? Of course, you do. Because they both came from the same root word. The definition of 'doctrine' is "teaching" or "instruction".

Some would insist, "I am not into doctrine. I am into Jesus." Hold your horse, buckaroo. Jesus was into doctrine and He taught His doctrines to His disciples. Have you noticed that we are going much deeper into the doctrines of Christianity in the Book of John than the other Gospels? It is because Jesus wants us to know and build a solid foundation in our hearts, instead of a bunch of fancy spiritual decoration stuff.

If a Christian says, "I don't care about the Christian doctrines," it is the same for him to say, "I don't care about what God the Father speaks to me."

At the beginning of this study, I gave you a survey from the Barna Group. Do you know why such a low percentage of born-again Christians have the biblical world-view? It is because they don't have the necessary knowledge of the Bible. Either they are not taught well from the pulpit or the congregation just don't care to learn the Word of God. Probably both.

Hosea 4:6a My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge,

Unfortunately there are many Christian churches that do not teach the Word of God. On Sunday mornings, they have sermonettes by their pastors that last about 15 minutes and are filled with feel-good-messages. I cannot even clear my throat in 15 minutes.

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

As a pastor, it is my goal and prayer to make you the best fed and best loved congregation in the world. That is why we make it our practice to go deep, to learn background and language and context on every Sunday morning and Thursday night as we go through the Bible for the sake of the truth and to be more like Jesus.

B. SEEKING THE GLORY OF THE LORD

John 7:17-18 If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. 18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.

Satan tempted Adam and Eve with knowledge, but it was knowledge based on disobedience and pride.

Genesis 3:5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

But Jesus offered knowledge as the result of obedience: the responsibility and the joy of knowing God's truth.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan said it perfectly: "When men are wholly, completely consecrated to the will of God and want to do that above everything else, then they find out that Christ's teaching is divine, that it is the teaching of God."

If we really seek God's will, then we will not worry over who gets the glory. God alone deserves the glory for what He has taught us. No teacher or preacher can take the credit for what only can come from God. If he does go after the glory, then it is a proof that his teaching is self-generated and not received from God. This is the origin of many cults and church splits: somebody "invents" a doctrine, takes credit for it, and uses it to divide God's people.

That is the reason why I do not copyright any of my teachings. They are all available from the web site for everyone. I freely received from the Lord and I freely pass to others.

The Jewish leaders were attempting to murder Jesus, yet at the same time they claimed to understand God's truth and obey it. Obviously they didn't get the sixth Commandment of the Ten Commandments:

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder.

This proves that an enlightened and educated mind is no guarantee of a pure heart or a sanctified will. Some of the world's worst criminals have been highly intelligent and well-educated people.

C. AN APPARENT CONTRADICTION

John 7:19-24 Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" 20 The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?" 21 Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. 22 Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? 24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

V19 is a serious, serious indictment against the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Scribes of that time who were so religious and pious in their own mind. They were going through motions of religious rituals, but their hearts were far from God.

Let me say this very clearly to all of you. Are you listening to me? I want all of you to hear this well. Religion is harmful. Religion sends more people to hell than anything else, because it gives a false sense of security. Some of you might be wondering, "Isn't Christianity a religion?" No, it is not. It might be in the eyes of government, media, and unbelievers, but to us, it is a glorious life in Christ Jesus. We have relationship with our Savior and Lord Jesus, not religion.

I heard this definition of religion and I think that it explains it precisely: Religion is my approach to God on my own terms – my own idea of who God is; my own idea of how good God is; my own idea of how I can choose to worship if I feel like; my own idea of what God needs to do for me above everyone else.

The father of socialism and communism Karl Marx said, "Religion is the opiate of the masses." I agree with him on that one. 86% and more of 7 billion people on earth are religious including Christianity. Remember what I said. In the eyes of government, Christianity is a religion. Though millions and billions of people might be religious seriously, but not all of them will go to heaven because they have their own definition of religion like these Jewish religious rulers.

There was really only one religion that God ever gave to man – it is Judaism. From Exodus to Deuteronomy, God shows His religious system to the Jews. The reason why He gave them this Judaism is for Jesus to fulfill it in every aspect since man could not, and would not.

Matthew 5:17 Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

Some of you may wonder why God wanted the Israelites to have circumcision? Let me explain it to you:

God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17. The sign of this covenant was circumcision. Although this was the purpose of outward fleshly circumcision in the

OT, Jesus came and made another covenant with mankind which doesn't require outward physical sign. This new covenant is based on placing faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and to be born-again.

When we place faith in Christ, the Bible teaches us that we're circumcised in our hearts. The old spiritual heart is taken out and a new one placed in. The OT outward circumcision was symbolic of what was to come.

Colossians 2:9-12 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Here is an apparent contradiction. The Jews are real sticklers about keeping the Sabbath then and even now. The problem is that a baby can be born anytime. Eight days from the baby's birthdate might be the Sabbath. Even to the most strict Orthodox Jews it was perfectly OK to carry out a circumcision on a baby boy on the Sabbath. Why? Because the Jews put so much emphasis on the ritual of circumcision by their own idea above the heart to follow and obey the Lord. That is what Jesus was pointing out to them.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) We should not neglect in learning sound doctrines of Christianity because they come from God the Father through the Holy Spirit.

2) When we truly seek God's will in our lives, we naturally give all the glory to the Lord.

3) Religion is harmful to our spirits. What we desire should be a deeper walk with our Savior Jesus everyday.