

37. The Ultimate Religion Crasher

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The Bible says, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, that God has put eternity in people's hearts. There is no way people can deny the very presence of God of the universe whether a person is a faithful believer of Jesus Christ, or a down right hardcore atheist, or a cult worshiper. The only difference is that one may completely acknowledge God Almighty, while others try to convince themselves that either God is not existing or someone / something that they imagine in their own limited minds is their god.

That is how people start their own religion. Some would say, "I am sure that God likes religions. They all worship same God or something in that nature." That kind of comment only reveals one's ignorance of the Bible. Let me make this clear for you: God DOES NOT HAVE a religion; He DOES NOT LIKE a religion; He DOES NOT CARE FOR a religion. As a matter fact, God is the Ultimate Religion Crasher because He doesn't want a religion, rather relationship with humans.

Because religion is made by humans to approach God. It only makes humans be prideful for one's own accomplishment through one's religion. In addition to that, religion leads people astray from true worship of God the Son Jesus Christ.

When God gave the Ten Commandments to the ancient Israel people, He promised them that He would bless them as long as they obey His commandments and worship Him. He would protect them from harm; He would provide what they needed and much more. He would have made them to be the greatest nation on earth. But God's promises were not good enough for the Israelites. They sought after worthless idols of the other nations around them which brought one consequence after another to the Israelites.

After they returned from the exile of Babylon, the Israelites promised themselves not to worship foreign idols. Did they keep their promise to the Lord? Yes and no. Yes, they have not worshiped foreign idols. No, they have replaced them with their own rules and regulations that engulfed the intention of God's commandments. It became Judaism. That is what Jesus despised.

This morning we find ourselves in the middle of heated conversation among the man who was born blind, but he was healed by the power of Jesus Christ, his parents, his neighbors, and a group of the Pharisees in Jerusalem over his miraculous eyesight and the Healer Jesus.

A. ON THE SABBATH, NO!

John 9:13-16 They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. 14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

They, that is the neighbors of this former blind man, brought him to the Pharisees. Because he was healed on the Sabbath. According to this man, Jesus spat on the ground and made clay from the dirt and put it in his eyes. We may say, "OK, that's gross but he got his eyesight. Cool, praise God!" But to the hard core Jewish people that was "NO, NO."

According to the Mishnah, a collection of writings of what to do and what not to do for the Jews, there is an entire section of their writing devoted to the Sabbath day. 39 different kinds of work were forbidden on the Sabbath. Here are a few examples:

- On the Sabbath day, it was forbidden to heal. So if a man had a broken arm, you couldn't set the arm. In fact, the law said on the Sabbath, only if it is a life-threatening situation, you can only do what is necessary to keep the person alive but you can't make the person better. No EMT or Para-Medic rescue work on the Sabbath.
- On the Sabbath day, you can't knead. Kneading dough or kneading clay is considered working.
- On the Sabbath day, you cannot spit on the ground. Weird, huh? Because if you'd spit on the ground, the spittle might roll in the dirt and make a furrow in the earth. And that's plowing and that's work. I am not kidding you.

These are three of the 39 regulations that their Mishnah forbids – against their Sabbath, not God's Sabbath.

So Jesus did all of these things and this guy is healed. It is not that Jesus forgot that it was a Sabbath, He knew and He intentionally broke all these. Because He didn't care about their traditions and rules, but His Father's.

The Pharisees should have been praising God for a miracle; instead, they sought evidences to prosecute and kill Jesus. The Pharisees did not realize that Jesus was offering the people something greater than the Sabbath – the true spiritual rest that comes from God alone.

B. FROM 'A MAN' TO 'A PROPHET', TO 'THE LORD'

John 9:17 They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

We see a progression of the title that the former blind man used for Jesus.

He started with 'A man called Jesus,' in v11; now we see him calling Jesus "A Prophet," in v17; then we will see him addressing Jesus as "Lord" in v38.

The more the Pharisees tried to discredit Jesus, the stronger this man's conviction about Jesus has become.

C. DON'T CONFUSE US WITH THE FACTS

John 9:18-23 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. 19 And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

The Pharisees wanted to ignore the fact that this was the man who was born blind. They wanted to come up with their own version of fabricated story that they could cancel the truth.

This same concept applies to the majority of the population around the world, especially the ones who fancy themselves as intellects of the society. They think that they are the thinkers and the driving force of the country; they think that Christianity is

plain stupid and unscientific, not sophisticated enough for them. Thus it only works for uneducated and illogical people. For that we will be glad to be called 'Fools' for our God, amen?

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; 20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

The religious leaders did not want to see Jesus given any kind of high recognition. "Perhaps," they thought, "this man Jesus switched the man with someone who looks like him." Yes, these intelligent people of the nation, the high echelon of the society were grasping at straws to get themselves out of jam.

The best way to get that kind of evidence would be to interrogate the parents of the beggar, so they called them in and asked them two questions: "Is this your son?" and "How then does he now see?" If they refused to answer either question, they were in trouble; or if they answered with replies contrary to what the leaders wanted, they were in trouble. What a dilemma for the parents!

Christian young people who go to colleges and universities become the receiving ends of constant ridicules from their college and university's faculty and fellow students. These anti-Christian people think that they are more intelligent than others so they can intimidate and ridicule them. They are the same types of bullies we see here in this chapter.

The parents of this former blind man were in a serious dilemma. Ancient Jewish synagogue was more than a place to gather together for their religion – Judaism. It had functions of a court house and Better Business Bureau with Mafia power.

If you were a Jew and got kicked out of your synagogue for some reason, it meant that you are not only isolated from religious gatherings of your community, but also from any possibility of business connections. Soon you have no means of supporting your family in that community. Besides, since the religious leaders were the ones who decided your legal situations, they had pretty much cornered the legal, commercial and religious market however they wanted.

D. I WAS BLIND, NOW I SEE

John 9:24-25 So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." 25 He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

This command "Give God the glory" to the former blind man may be an admonition to tell the truth as it was used by Joshua in Joshua 7:19. It was a form of Jewish 'swearing in an oath' at their court.

Listen to me, my brothers and sisters. The theologies of Christianity can be ignored and ridiculed by the skeptics and atheists. But the testimonies of changed lives by Jesus cannot be ignored. It is that important. Because you are the live evidence of God's life changing power.

Of course, your life must show the drastic changes from your past. Maybe you were using drugs, drinking alcohol, cussing, using profanity, vulgar, committing fornica-

tions and adulteries and other sins. But as a follower of Jesus Christ you should not. Why? Because that kind of action does not glorify the Lord in the eyes of unbelievers no matter what.

There are three very important elements we must remember when we give our testimonies to the unbelievers around us:

- 1) Do not emphasize or glorify your sinful past.
- 2) Tell the people what Jesus has done for you like this former blind man.
- 3) Make it less than five minutes.

Apostle Paul, who was a great intellectual and a brilliant orator, would often begin with his testimony when presenting the message of the Gospel. Why would Paul start with his own testimony? It built common ground between him and the people to whom he was preaching.

When you share the story of how you came to Christ, you are in a sense saying, "I have been where you are. And let me tell you about the way I used to think, the way I used to be – the way that my life was. Now let me tell you about what Christ has done for me." A testimony helps a person to understand that you weren't born a Christian. It helps them to see that there is a bridge for them, a way for them to come to Christ. Testimonies prove that anyone can change through the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

This former blind man did not debate the character of Jesus Christ, because that was beyond his knowledge and experience. But one thing he did know: "Now I see." His testimony here reminds me of Psalm 27. Read that psalm in the light of this chapter, from the viewpoint of the healed beggar, and see how meaningful it becomes.

E. COME AGAIN?

John 9:26-34 Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" 28 Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. 29 We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from." 30 The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! 31 Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. 32 Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. 33 If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." 34 They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

For the Pharisees, it is hard to argue with the man with the testimony of the power of Jesus, because he was staring at their faces. However, they would not go down without another pointless argument.

I admire the boldness of the man in asking those irate Pharisees if they wanted to follow Jesus. He is not pressured by these religious Mafia henchmen. When he was asked the fourth time about his experience with Jesus, he became rather sarcastic.

The former blind man then gave the "experts" a lesson in practical theology. Perhaps he had Psalm 66:18 in mind:

Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

The leaders called Jesus a sinner, yet Jesus was used of God to open the blind man's eyes. He added another telling argument: Jesus healed a man born blind. Never, to their knowledge, had this occurred before. So, God not only heard Jesus, but He enabled Him to give the man sight. How, then, could Jesus be a sinner?

These religious bigots did not want to face either evidence or logic. Their minds were made up. Had the Pharisees honestly considered the facts, they would have seen that Jesus is the Son of God, and they could have trusted Him and been saved.

The excommunication of the former blind man turned out to be a good thing, because it prevented him from trying to live in two worlds. Being "put out" of our old group is undeniably painful in some ways, but it is usually spiritually helpful.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) God is not impressed by our religious activities, rather a sincere heart to follow and honor Him.**
- 2) Give your testimony of the power of Jesus Christ to the unbelievers around you. And make sure that your godly life backs it up.**
- 3) Never regret that you left your carnal past behind, but rejoice that your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life.**