
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Are Pharisees still alive today?** (Part 1)

The Pharisees were a sect of the Jews who lived during the time of Jesus. These people as a whole were lifelong, bitter enemies of Jesus.

- They criticized Him for associating with sinners (Mt 9:11).
- They accused Him of casting out demons thru the Prince of demons (Mt 9:34).
- They condemned Him because He healed men on the Sabbath Day (Mt 12:9-10).
- They suggested that the miracles Jesus worked were no miracles at all and they wanted to see a real sign from heaven (Mt 12:38).
- They found fault with Him because He did not keep their traditions (Mt 15:1-2).
- They accused Him of blasphemy because He forgave sins (Lk 5:21).
- They accused Jesus of being a liar and false witness (Jn 8:13).
- They threatened to expel anyone from the synagogues if they professed belief in Jesus (Jn 12:42).
- They lead the way for the troops into the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus (Jn 18:3).
- It was the Pharisees who remembered that Jesus said He would resurrect from the dead and they were the ones asking Pilate to post a guard to prevent the body from being stolen (Mt 27:63).

WHAT WERE THEY GUILTY OF?

Exactly what was it about the Pharisees that made them such bitter enemies toward Jesus? Why didn't they get along? What were they guilty of that provoked such a bitter rebuke from Jesus as we read in Matthew 23?

#1: DISOBEDIENCE

They did not keep the commandments of God.

This is what many people fail to realize. Many are under the false impression that the Pharisees were real "sticklers" for the law and that they kept the most minute details. But the fact of the matter is they weren't obeying God's law at all.

Matthew 23:1-3

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

² saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

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

Although they taught the law accurately, they did not keep the law themselves. They only kept the parts of the law that were convenient to them.

Matthew 5:19-20

¹⁹ "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁰ "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Notice carefully that Jesus put "doing" before "teaching." Before one can teach the law to others he must first do the law himself. They preached, but they did not practice what they preached. Jesus warns us that we must do better than this or we will not enter the kingdom!

No ... the Pharisees were not obedient to the law. Jesus never condemned them for following the law too strictly. Rather, He condemned them because they would pick and choose only those things they wanted to do and the rest they discarded.

This is what separates children of God from children of the devil - obedience to divine law!

1 John 3

⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

¹⁰ In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

Anyone who thinks they're saved without obeying God is self-deceived.

1 John 2:3-4

³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Matthew 7:21

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Anyone wishing to be saved must obey the Father's commandments. The Pharisees didn't obey the Father's will. They would pick and choose only what they wanted to do. They were doing their own will and the Lord condemned them for this.

Q: Do you know people who pick and choose which commands they shall follow and which ones they will discard?

If you do, then you know a Pharisee!

#2: ELEVATING OPINIONS

They elevated their opinions to the status of divine law.

There were certain traditions which the Pharisees had that were simply matters of opinion. These opinions included such things as:

- Ceremonial washing of hands before eating (Mk 7:3)
- Washing of pots, cups, and other utensils (Mk 7:4)
- What constituted work on the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-2)

None of these opinions were wrong within themselves.

- If a person wants to wash his hands in a certain way before eating, there's nothing wrong with that.
- If a person wants to refrain from plucking grain on the Sabbath to eat, there's nothing wrong with refraining.

However, when they began to condemn others for not holding to their opinions, that's where they overstepped the bounds of decency. They were now making their opinions (traditions) equivalent to divine law and this was wrong.

Matthew 15:1-6

¹ Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,

² "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

³ He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

⁴ "For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

⁵ "But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God";

⁶ 'then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

In this passage we see clearly two standards: (1) Human opinion (called "tradition"), and (2) Divine Law.

While insisting that men adhere to their opinions, these same men turned right around and violated divine law! They were constantly doing this.

We need to be careful not to do the same thing! We may not make laws for God. We may not insist that our opinions be followed.

Rom 14 was given to tell us to keep our opinions to ourselves and not condemn others who do not hold the same opinions that we hold.

NOTE: Here again that the Pharisees were not keeping the law of God. That was their problem.

Q: Do you know of anyone who makes laws for God? People who elevate their opinions to the status of divine law?

If you do, you know a Pharisee!

(We will continue this study next week.)