

Jesus and the Pharisees: Introduction (part one of a twelve part study)

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was no mere man. Even though His personhood consisted of a completely sinless humanity, it also embodied undiminished Deity, as revealed in Colossians 2:9 –

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form . . .”

Some of the most common ways of describing the person of Jesus Christ are God incarnate, the God-Man and God the Son who became God the Man. In spite of these accurate descriptions, even a brief consideration of God Almighty walking on this earth as a sinless man, is an overwhelming thought.

On the other hand, during the course of Christ’s earthly life, we find Him encountering a group of Jewish religious leaders known as the Pharisees. In comparing them to the various factions within Evangelical Christianity today, they would have been the ultra-conservative fundamentalists. Even the apostle Paul, in identifying himself as a former Pharisee, stated that they were the strictest sect in Judaism (Acts 26:5). The Pharisees were literal interpreters of the Old Testament. They believed in an uncompromising adherence to Mosaic Law, characterized by separation and loyalty to God, as their name implies. This zealous attitude created an adamant opposition to the secular thought of Greek culture which so greatly influenced the Middle East. The two teachings that distinguished them from their more liberal counterparts, the Sadducees, involved a strong emphasis on Divine providence, as well as resurrection from the dead; which Paul used to his advantage in addressing the Jewish Council in Acts 23:6-10.

So you would think that Jesus and the Pharisees would have been the proverbial marriage made in heaven. Not exactly! In surveying the various interactions and confrontations which occurred between God incarnate on earth and the most prominent Jewish religious leaders of that day, it would be safe to say that no group harassed and slandered their promised Messiah more than the Pharisees. In addition, no collection of individuals within Israel received stronger and angrier rebukes from the Lord of glory than this ultra-conservative sect.

So for those of us who desire to be sincere followers of our Savior, seeking to be Christ-like in thought, word and deed; the one thing this study will admonish us to avoid at all costs, will be the tendency of becoming like a Pharisee. Simply put, the comprehensive and practical lesson to be learned? **“Don’t be that guy!”**