

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

The attacks used by the Pharisees against our Lord were primarily verbal. Even at the end, they delegated the physical dirty work of crucifixion to the Romans. Why? Their incessant attempts at slandering Christ's character and credibility were motivated by the threat which He posed to their leadership. An early example involves their impugning the legitimacy of Jesus' ministry, in Matthew 9:32-34 –

“As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him. After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, ‘Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.’ But the Pharisees were saying, ‘He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.’”

The same fabrication is repeated in Matthew 12:22-24. In that instance, Jesus defends His ministry by means of the following logic, in Matthew 12:25-28 –

“And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, ‘Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.’”

The reason why slander can be so effective is that it consists of a falsehood which turns the truth upside down. It states the opposite of what is factual, for the purpose of undermining the person being victimized by that distortion. No wonder one of the names of Satan in Scripture is the devil. It is the Greek “diabolos” and means “slanderer.” Therefore, it should come as no surprise that when the Pharisees (cf. John 8:13) issue the slanderous and insulting innuendo of John 8:41, Jesus goes on the offensive in John 8:43-47, in order to set the record straight –

“Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.”

The simple yet practical application? Habitual liars who slander others are under a demonic influence. Any professing Christian should know better than to follow such a corrupt individual or surrender to their evil influence.