

I. Introduction

- A. It would seem that the fundamental difference between what Jesus taught and what the Rabbi's taught is this:
1. One seeks the approval of God.
 2. The other seeks the approval of men, while SAYING they seek the approval of God.
- B. These two are mutually exclusive.

Matthew 6:1

1 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 6:16–18 16 “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites *do*, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 17 “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face 18 so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

C. In fact, it can be understood that seeking the approval, applause, smiles of men for your righteousness is the same as storing up treasure for yourselves *on earth!*

1. Matthew 6:19
 2. Storing up treasure for yourselves in heaven is the same as seeking the approval of the Father.
- D. Therefore, the conclusion is this: why do you do what you do?
1. The approval = the treasure.
 2. That is where your heart will be.
 3. And, if that is where your heart will be, then that is the height and depth of your sincerity, truthfulness, and reality of your service to Christ.

E. However, this does not mean that you deny the effect you will have upon people for your service, either.

1. Matthew 5:16

16 “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων = “in front of the place of men.”

F. It would be easy for some to react and do what they do *in spite of men*.

G. That is not acceptable either.

1. Their key is: do what you do before God, and you will be acceptable to men AND God.

a Luke 2:52 *cf. 1 Samuel 2:26

26 Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the Lord and with men.)

H. Beloved, this is not a psychological concentration.

1. We are talking about worship.

2. We are talking about service to the true God.

3. If a man makes his worship to the living God hinge on whether he is approved by men or not, then that is false worship.

4. That is what Jesus is condemning in John 12:42-43.

I. The rulers of the Jews could not divorce themselves from their religion that demanded absolute adherence to the approval of men in a variety of ways.

1. Jesus’ teaching spoke so devastatingly against that, that to align yourself with Him is to assault the only religion you have ever known.

II. John 12:42-43

V. 42 “NEVERTHELESS, YET, ALSO MANY FROM THE RULERS BELIEVED INTO HIM, BUT THEY DID NOT CONFESS BECAUSE OF THE PHARISEES, IN ORDER THAT THEY WOULD NOT BECOME UNSYNAGOGUED.”

- A. Notice the strong adversative: “ὅμως μέντοι καὶ”.
1. John seems to be contrasting the judgment of Jesus Christ, and His leaving the temple “in the dark” under judicial ruling, with the fact that there were some still believing.
 2. This is interesting.
- B. Why say this, and then say they were not confessing Him?
1. Were they “saved”?
 2. Did they not really believe?
- C. What is John’s point?
1. John 2:23 =
 - a *Many believed in Him during the feast.*
 - b *However, Jesus did not believe them and left them.*
 2. John 4:39, 41 =
 - a *Many believed in Him in Sychar.*
 - b *And, they continued to believe in Him.*
 3. John 7:31 =
 - a *Many believed in Him in the crowd.*
 - b *However, there were mixed feelings concerning Him because of the Pharisees.*
 4. John 8:30 =
 - a *Many of the Jews believed in Him.*
 - b *However, Jesus challenged them that if they truly believed, they would continue in His Word (v.31).*
 - c *Notice, too, the denseness of this crowd in the following verses.*
 5. John 7:42 =
 - a *Many believed in Him while He ministered in the Judean area, where John baptized.*
 - b *There is no word as the validity of their faith.*
 - c *It would seem, then, that each time “many believed in Him” is used, it is used in specific ways.*
 - d *There was a mixed bag of those who “believed.”*
- D. John 20:30 = John wrote that his readers might believe.
- a *I am sure this is not superficial belief.*
 - b *John wrote so that his readers, whomever they were, might be convinced and understand Jesus Christ.*
- E. In this context, we need more information, which we go get.

- F. “...many from the rulers...”
1. Who are these people?
 2. “rulers” = does not use further description.
 - a *Luke 23:35; John 7:26, 48; 12:42; Acts 3:17; 4:5, 8; 13:27.*
 - b *Who were they?*
 - (1) They were not normally Pharisees (but see John 3:1) - John 7:48 “No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?”
 - c *They were not scribes, or priests - Acts 4:5–6*
 - d *They were related, in function, to the elder’s work of leadership over the people - Acts 4:8 5 On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; 6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.*
- G. It is possible that they were a created class of leaders in Judaism designed during the Intertestamental period.
- “They formed the local Sanhedrin or tribunal,”¹
- H. The point is that these men had investments into leadership of Israel.
1. As Leaders, they were working with the Pharisees (if they weren’t one of them, like Nicodemus), Sadducees, and others.
 2. Therefore, for them to announce agreement with Jesus Christ is to severely betray their loyalties and they would immediately be outcasted, or worse.
- I. “...but they did not confess because of the Pharisees, in order that they would not become unsynagogued.”

¹ Alfred Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1889), p.100.

1. “Confess” = “to speak the same thing as someone/something”²
 - a *It is agreement, submission, and belief.*
 - b *The rulers would have to believe an antithesis system/person from their own system and other co-leaders.*

 2. They would have to weigh out the options.
 - a *“Do we believe Jesus?”*
 - b *“Do we continue to believe our synagogue?”*

 3. They knew the cost/the heavy price to pay in this life for confessing Jesus as true.
- J. Jesus is right: following Him will force a person to weigh out the cost.
1. The disciples of Christ knew this as well.
 2. Jesus told them.

Matthew 10:17–18

17 “But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues;

18 and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.

Matthew 10:24–26

24 “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.

25 “It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

26 “Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

² See Romans 10:9-10

- K. They knew that it would cost them dearly to follow Him.
- L. They were willing to identify with Him, nonetheless.

a Luke 14:25-35

- M. Remember, the Pharisees had announced:
 - 1. If anyone sees Jesus, they must report to the Pharisees: John 11:56–57

56 So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?”

57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

- 2. There was, no doubt, rumoring that the Pharisees were going to kill Jesus the Nazarene.
- 3. So, although they believed in Him, they did not confess Him in front of people.

- N. What does it mean to be “unsynagogued”?

- 1. It means to be marked out in the community as rejected by the most respected men in the village—the Rabbi’s.
- 2. It means that you would bear the shame of rejection by them in business, schooling, family, social structure, etc...
- 3. To be removed from the synagogue is to be removed from the very heart of life in the village.

- O. This was a normal tactic in the life of the village.

- 1. John 9:22-23
- 2. It was so normal as to be predictable, that Jesus warned His disciples of the surety of this reaction.
- 3. They must brace for it.
- 4. They must be willing to bear the shame of this excommunication.

John 16:2–4

2 “They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

3 “These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.

4 “But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

- P. But, following Jesus Christ demands this kind of reaction.
1. Their system excludes God.
 2. Their system destroys men.
 3. Their system ruins the conscience.
 4. Their system elevates men to the place of generation.
 5. Their system burdens the weak, helpless, and poor.
- Q. It is not wonder that Jesus would suffer excommunication, as well as His disciples.
1. He gives free access to God.
 2. He creates new men.
 3. He heightens the conscience.
 4. He lowers men to servanthood.
 5. He makes the weak strong, the helpless victors, and the poor rich.
- R. He is the antithesis of all that the Jews held to be commendable to God.
1. How?
 2. How could they venerate such a system as this?
- S. It is simple: the entire thing is built upon the motive of the approval of men.

III. V. 43 "Because, they loved the glory of men instead of/greater-more than the glory of God."

- A. Here is the real reason why anyone refuses to publicly associate with the Biblical Jesus and create their own.
- B. Matthew 23:23–28
- 23 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.*
- 24 *“You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*
- 25 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.*
- 26 *“You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.*
- 27 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.*

28 *“So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

- C. Seeking the glory of men in worship is the height of blasphemy.
 - 1. IT seeks to replace God with man, purposeful or not.
 - 2. Jesus had just finished speaking about this in vv. 23-26
 - a *He was telling them to despise their allegiance to Judaism, Synagoguism, and Pharisaism.*
 - b *If they could not do this, they cannot be His disciple-belief notwithstanding.*

- D. Jesus willingly assaulted Judaism of the day because of this very issue.

1. See John 5:39-47

 - 2. Any system of belief that poises people for performing for men is the very antithesis of what Jesus is doing.
 - a *He is calling men to His kingdom-not their own.*
 - b *He is calling men to follow Him-not one another.*
 - c *He is calling men to reject this life-not embrace it.*
 - d *He is calling men to serve one another in true, Spirit-given love-not hypocritical, reciprocated love that is from the flesh for approval.*
 - 3. Therefore, you and I must tenaciously hang on to Christ.

IV. Conclusion

Romans 12:1–2

1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.