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RELIGION vs. JESUS

Weekly Bible Study Schedule

Tuesday, April 12, 7:00 AM in HHR #5
(breakfast provided)

Tuesday, April 12, 8:30 PM in Office #225
(Sen. Wayne Wallingford's office)

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non-denominational**

The Galilean campaign continues, crowds pressing Jesus, to hear Him teach. He calls Simeon Peter to follow Him, He tells the Leper, he is healed, and He heals and forgives the paralytic man. Notice a pattern, with Jesus it's all about helping people—taking them on a spiritual journey to reveal who He really is.

Luke 5:27: After this he [Jesus] went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth and he said "Follow me."

Perhaps, his tax collection booth was analogous to a toll road exchange on a U.S. highway. As people passed by, he collected tax on their merchandise. In the day, The Romans controlled the tax system, they hired out regional tax collectors, Levi, was one of them. A percent of tax went back to Rome, any remaining amount stayed with the tax collector. Tax collectors charged more than The Romans required as a way to personal gain. The Jews despised tax collectors, because of their excessive tax; also, they viewed Jewish tax collectors as traitors of the faith. Levi was that kind of a guy, a despised - traitor.

Many years ago, I delivered a Federal Express package to Hollywood producer, Steven Spielberg's estate, on the coast of Long Island. His mansion included five large garages, each with high-end cars, i.e. Bentleys. Perhaps, Levi had a few Bentleys in his garage. Ok, an exaggeration, but point is made.

Levi was the same person as Matthew, the Gospel writer. Jesus looked passed the tax collector booth, to the person in the booth.

It reflected a new day in Israel. Religion didn't pass by the tax collector booth, Jesus, the person, passed by Matthew. Religion has its limits it weighs people down with "must do's", Jesus, offers people grace and freedom, opportunity to abundant life. Matthew realized only Jesus could fill the vacuum areas of his life. When Jesus called him, he got up, left everything and followed Him.

For Matthew, there was no going back. No fishing boats or fishing nets. He gave up his "old" life and followed Jesus all his days. Decisively changed, he threw a party at his house for his friends, and Jesus, the guest of honor.

Strong criticism is prompted at Matthew's party. Controversial questions and answers ensued. **The juxtaposition of Jesus and religion is revealed.**

1. Q and A - Eating and Drinking

- The first question is by the Pharisees and Scribes. 5:30, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink."

Their question stemmed from a rule they set up that a Jew is not to eat at the same table with an unclean person. In the day, as it is today, there were religious and non-religious Jews to Judaism. The religious Jew kept the law and teaching of the rabbis. Non-religious Jew was connected to Judaism via ethnicity and culture, not Faith. Non-religious Jews saw Rome as the seat of power and rejected the rules set by Pharisees and Scribes. Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating with the unclean...tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinner's et.al. To them He became ceremonial impure. If He was a teacher from God, He would know whom He is eating with, was their thought.

- The first answer is by Jesus. 5:31-32, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."



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In other words, Jesus is saying that He came for people that recognize they need a doctor – those that need God in their life. Yes, He will go to where the spiritually sick are and eat among them, but not partake in any sinful activities, rather, to offer spiritual healing to them right where they are. He doesn't go to the sick to become sick. He goes to the sick to heal the sick, to cure the soul.

2. Q and A - Marriage and the Wedding Cake

- The second question by the Pharisees and Scribes: 5:33, *"The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink."*
- The second answer by Jesus: 5:34-35, *"Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days."*

In the day, the wedding ceremony was followed by a week of festivities. Guests were happy, rejoicing, dancing, laughing, etc. The spirituality of Jesus is one of true joy, of completeness, unity, one of love.

The Bible teaches that the bridegroom is analogous to Jesus and the bride to His followers. The day will come for His disciples to commence fasting, is the day when the bridegroom is no longer with the bride...it's the day of Jesus' crucifixion. When Jesus no longer walks among the faithful.

Christianity is the celebration of life, not dutiful religion. Pharisees communicated dead religion Jesus communicated a living spirituality connected to the Holy Spirit of God.

- **Jesus continues His answer with a parable in 5:36-39:** *"No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will*

burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'

In other words, He tells the Pharisees and Scribes that the 2000 or so laws and regulations are beyond capability for one to keep. They conceal Jesus, not reveal Jesus.

*"Let them alone; they are **blind** guides. And if the **blind** lead the **blind**, both will fall into a pit."* (Matt. 15:14)

Their brand of serving God is not the brand of Christ. One of the major reasons people don't follow Christ is they misjudge the authentic Christ. Religion cancels Jesus, Jesus reveals God, the Father, the way to God and the ways of God.

Jesus is the "new" that came to fulfill the Old Testament law, not destroy it. The Old Testament sacrificial system called for shedding the blood of animals as atonement for sin - a temporary covering of the people's sins. Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross was a **final sacrifice**. All the sins of humankind were placed upon Jesus, while on the cross of sacrifice, so that you don't have to carry the weight of your sin – it's all forgiven in Christ.

*"He has no need, like those high priests, to offer **sacrifices** daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself".* (Hebrews 7:27)

The Pharisaic mantra is "you're not good enough", Jesus' mantra is "I'll make you good enough".

[Jesus] said, **"It is finished,"** and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30)

