

Lesson 36

Hypocrisy

Icebreaker:

Why in some parts of the American culture do people call what is really good ... “bad”.

Reading The Scripture:

Matthew 12:22-45 and Luke 11:14-36

The Unpardonable Sin

Matthew 12:22-37, 43-45 and Luke 11:14-26

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible,
authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: “Follow Me: A Message from God”, a Journey with Jesus)

Then there was brought to Him a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb, and He healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed, and began to say, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." And knowing their thoughts He said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by **the finger of God**, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder. He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters. Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes, and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation. Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come. Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil. And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."

The Finger of God. “The Spirit of God”.

The One Who is Blessed

Luke 11:27-28

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And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed." But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it."

The Sign of Jonah **Matthew 12:38-42 and Luke 11:29-32**

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Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves **for a sign**; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as **JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER**, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation. The Queen of the South shall rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

A sign. A miracle that only God could do. It is interesting to note that Jesus had just finished healing a man who could not see or speak.

JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER.

Jonah 1:17

Parable of the Lamp

Luke 11:33-36

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"No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar, nor under a peck-measure, but on the lampstand, in order that those who enter may see the light. The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Then watch out that the light in you may not be darkness. If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays."

Introduction:

When Jesus concluded His instruction on how to pray, He intimated that the best thing the disciples could ask for would be more of the Holy Spirit. Then, as if to showcase the importance of the Holy Spirit, Jesus cast a demon out of a man who was both blind and dumb. At that point the Pharisees accused Him of working the miracle by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. Jesus reply to their accusation would begin an ongoing firestorm of opposition from the Scribes and Pharisees that would last until His crucifixion six months later.

In order to better understand what Jesus was preparing to teach the disciples, it will be helpful to develop some background information on the events leading up to the lesson and the individuals who were in opposition to Him.

Opposition to Jesus arose from three major groups within Israel: the Scribes, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. Lets take a brief look at each group.

The Scribes were a group of individuals who were experts in the Law of Moses. The Scripture sometimes refers to them as "lawyers" as their primary functions were: **1)** theoretical development of the law, **2)** teachers of the law and **3)** jurists or judges who passed sentences according to the law. During the time of Jesus they were called the Tanaim (repeaters) because of the way they taught the Law to their students. They had them orally

repeat it over and over until they knew it. Many of Scribes were members of Israel's ruling body, the Sanhedrin and most, strongly supported the Pharisees. The Tanaim period of Scribes lasted for more than five hundred years from 300 BC to 220 AD.

The Sadducees were a religious party that arose in Israel during the second century BC during the reign of the Maccabees. The name itself basically means, "the Righteous". The Sadducees were few in numbers but were primarily made up of an aristocracy who associated themselves with the priesthood. They tended to accentuate man's **free will**, while the Pharisees accentuated man's **predestination**. Their influence came through politics. The Sadducean party died out shortly after the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD,

The Pharisees were also a religious party that arose in Israel during the second century BC during the reign of the Maccabees. The name itself basically means, "Separated". The term was derived from the idea that that its members separated themselves **from** the "common" people and separated themselves **to** the Law of Moses. The Pharisees numbered about 6000 at the time of Jesus and were generally held in high regard by the people. Whereas the Sadducees power and influence came through politics the Pharisees derived their's from religion. Although this party no longer exists, we might consider the ultra-orthodox Jews of today as being closely associated with them.

The Pharisees did not have a stellar record among the Jews as many people think. Although they set a high ethical standard for themselves, not all lived up to it. According to the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds there were eight kinds of Pharisees:¹

1. The **shoulder** Pharisee, who ostentatiously carries his good deeds on his shoulder so all, can see them.
2. The **wait-a-moment** Pharisee, who wants you to wait while he performs a mitzvah (good deed).
3. The **bruised** Pharisee, who runs into a wall while looking at the ground to avoid seeing a woman.
4. The **reckoning** Pharisee, who commits a sin, then does a good deed and balances the one against the other.
5. The **pestle** Pharisee, whose head is bowed in false humility, like a pestle in a mortar.
6. The Pharisee who asks, "**What is my duty so that I may do it**" as if he thought he had filled every obligation already.
7. The Pharisee from **fear of consequences** if he doesn't perform the commandments.
8. The Pharisee from **love** – either love of the rewards God promises for performing the commandments, or love of Torah² itself [no matter which, he is understood here to be the one good kind of Pharisee].

The events leading up to the lesson began when the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebub. Then through a series of responses Jesus began to expose the hypocrisy³ of His opposition. They claimed to be godly men but their words and actions proved otherwise.

Jesus' first response dealt with the issue of blasphemy or speaking against the Holy Spirit, the unpardonable sin. Essentially this sin consists of calling what is good ... evil or what is evil

¹ David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Commentary (1992) pages 69-70.

² The word Torah means teaching and refers to what we refer to as the Law, the Pentateuch or the first five books of the Bible.

³ See Lesson 11 for more on the subject of hypocrisy.

...good and is directly referenced in Isaiah 5:20. *Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*

From a Biblical mindset the idea of calling “what is good ... evil” takes on a much greater significance than we tend to think of in our modern society. According to the Scripture there is only one who is truly good ... God. Jesus referred to this in His conversation with the rich young ruler. *And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what **good thing** shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is **good**? There is **only One who is good**; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”* (Matthew 19:16-17)

So when the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out a demon by Beelzebub (a good thing which can only be done by the power of God) they had in fact said, “The Holy Spirit is evil and Beelzebub is good.” By this it was evident to Jesus that His opponents were not of God. If they had been then, they would not have been able to speak against the Holy Spirit because a house divided against itself cannot stand. Jesus quoted another familiar idiom to make the same point, a tree is known by its fruit.

Jesus went on to say that the Pharisees were a brood of vipers. By this He was implying several things:

- That their father was Satan, the serpent of old.
- That being Satan’s offspring they were liars and deceivers just like him.⁴
- And not only were they serpents, but vipers, which are deadly serpents. Hence they cause destruction of people through their lies and deceptions.
- Satan was lifted up in pride against God and so were they.
- Satan blasphemed against God and so did they.
- Since they are Satan’s offspring they to are evil.
- And since they are evil how can they speak⁵ what is good.

After that, the Pharisees asked Jesus to show them a sign, completely ignoring the fact that He had just got through performing a major miracle; casting out a demon and restoring the eyesight and speech of an individual. Jesus declined their request, called them an evil and adulterous generation and told them that the only sign that would be given to them was the sign of Jonah.

Then one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to lunch. While dining with him Jesus pronounced three woes upon the Pharisees and three woes upon the Scribes. Many Christians think that when Jesus spoke the woes that He was condemning the Scribes and Pharisees, but He wasn’t. The word “woe” means lament or sorrow. So Jesus was simply stating that because of their actions, sorrows would come their way.

⁴ John 8:44 - *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.*

⁵ A parallel to this can be found in the culture of American Indians. When a person lied they described it as “speaking with a forked tongue”. This allusion was drawn from the fact that snakes have forked tongues.

Reading The Scripture:

Luke 11:37-12:3

Woe to the Pharisees

Luke 11:37-44

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Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table. And when the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal. But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you. But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the front seats in the synagogues, and the respectful greetings in the market places. Woe to you! For you are like **concealed tombs**, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it."

Concealed tombs. Jews who came into contact with a grave became unclean for seven days (Numbers 19:16). Jesus equated the Pharisees with concealed tombs implying that they made people impure.

Woe to the Scribes

Luke 11:45-54

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And one of the lawyers said to Him in reply, "Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too." But He said, "Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs. For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.' Woe to you **lawyers**! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered." And when He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, plotting against Him, to catch Him in something He might say.

Lawyers. Another term for scribes.

Jesus Teaches His Disciples

Luke 12:1-3

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Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

The Command:

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

The Lesson:

Shortly after rebuking the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus resumed His duty of teaching the disciples. He began the lesson with this command, *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy.”*

In an earlier account Jesus had cautioned the disciples about the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees.⁶ On that occasion it was connected with placing the **traditions** of men before the word of God. *But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.* This time He deals with the issue of their **hypocrisy**.

Although the Pharisees had the Scriptures and lived by them they were **devoid** of the Spirit of God. Jesus knew this by the words they spoke. The Pharisees did not recognize Him as being from God or accept the miracles He performed and even went so far as to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. On one occasion Jesus even told the Pharisees that, *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. (John 5:39-40)* And later He told them, *“If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 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.**” (John 8:42-47)*

Jesus recognized that the Pharisees were **practicing a form of religion** but **without the power to live it**, which was the Holy Spirit. On the outside they appeared righteous but on the inside they were not. Therefore He cautioned the disciples about following men such as these and giving heed to their teachings. The reason for this is that what people are taught affects them for a lifetime. As leaven permeates every part of the substance in which it is placed, so too does teaching.

It is imperative that we, as Christians heed Jesus’ instruction concerning people such as these, who teach about righteousness but are devoid of the Holy Spirit. For many it is difficult to imagine that these kinds of people actually hold places of authority within the Church. But we shouldn’t be surprised. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said. *But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.** (2 Timothy 3:1-5)*

⁶ Lesson 27.

Before leaving them, Paul also cautioned the Ephesians about the same issue. *I know that after my departure **savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert.*** (Acts 20:29-31) And if that is not enough, Jude the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ devoted a whole book to that subject.

Jesus closes the subject of hypocrisy with two sobering statements. *But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.* Hypocrisy cannot be hidden from God!

Group Discussion:

In what ways can a Christian be guilty of hypocrisy?
Do you think a Christian can speak against the Holy Spirit?
Why or why not?

The Point Of The Lesson:

Test the spirits.

Application:

Meditate on 1 John 3:23 – 4:7

This is His commandment, that we **believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ**, and **love one another**, just as He commanded us. The **one** who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. **Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God**, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. **By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God**; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; **he who knows God listens to us**; he who is not from God does not listen to us. **By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.**