

Moses and Jesus

Introduction

Whenever Jesus preached He was confronted by the theologians, pastors and priests of that time. In the Bible they are called the “Teachers of the Law.” Jesus wanted to bring new and deeper understanding to many aspects of their spiritual life. He wanted to tell them about God and His plan. Misunderstandings existed and in general the issue was their interpretation of the Scriptures.

Being the “Word of God” and ONE with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus intended, with all His heart, to make an impact. He wanted to change misunderstandings by opening their spiritual eyes to help them see. His plan was to do something good for them. But the response Jesus received was quite remarkable. When He tried to present a new aspect of God or reveal some new facts, their response often included a comment from Moses, Matthew 22:24. They did not take to heart the message from Jesus – but reacted against Him instead. They were not receptive but rather defensive. They had predetermined hearts in other words.

The “WE” Religion

This is a typical human reaction, not a Spirit-led one. They not only rejected the Word of God but also the Spirit of God. They took a stand, which was logical to them, but still quite remarkable. We find an example of that in the gospel of John, where the Teachers of the Law gave a very true testimony concerning their own spiritual situation, when they interrogated the blind man, who Jesus just had healed. Notice how the Teachers of the Law talked about themselves, John 9:28-29:

Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from." (NKJV)

The Holy Spirit who was involved in Jesus Christ’s Ministry was rejected. Jesus’ Words were not accepted. If a teaching of Jesus’ was in accordance with their understanding of Moses, everything was okay. If not, He was counted as a deceiver and sometimes even considered demon-possessed! They were so sure about their understanding of Scripture that nothing could change them. With that attitude they did not realize the truth in their own statement. Jesus wanted them to be “His” disciples but they certainly did not. Instead they clearly told Jesus who their master was. How sad to choose to be “Moses’ disciples” instead of Jesus’ disciples.

Moses

Over hundreds of years the Teachers of the Law had reviewed their interpretation so many times and they were completely sure that they had it right. How could they be wrong, they thought? Why should they be mistaken? They had truly been led by God IN THE PAST! It was their awesome God who had performed all the wonderful acts and redeeming miracles. This information was passed on from generation to generation. This led over time to a change in their attitude; from distrusting God to, “WE are God’s people and WE have the truth.”

You might ask in your heart, “Was that really so bad?” Wasn’t that still the truth? God had given the information to Moses and now they followed Moses – is that not the same as to follow God? Everything had been written down and they had full access to it?

If you consider Moses’ life, he was certainly one of the greatest spiritual leaders in the Bible. He was directly led by God and had an intimate relationship with Him that was without comparison! He was THE LEADER of God’s people. We cannot blame Moses for anything, can we?

Jesus

So, was Jesus then wrong? That seems to be the only option left. No, of course not! When Jesus walked on this earth He was “ONE” with the Father in heaven. He has always been and will always be! Jesus only did what the Father in heaven told Him to do, John 5:19. This is stated many times in the gospels. His whole life was focused on the will of His Father and not on His own. Jesus came to fulfill all that was written about Him. He certainly was The Faithful One!

Jesus’ submission to the Father was quite unique, especially if we consider His identity. In John 1:1-14 we read that Jesus is “the Word of God.” This title is His in Revelation 19:13 as well. This implies that Jesus is the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe! It gives Him power unheard of with undisputable authority. Who would dare object to, or even worse, to reject this power? It also implies that the Scriptures, which the Jews studied, originated from Jesus Christ! He was and is the Word of God so if anyone would understand and know the Scriptures, it would be Jesus. In spite of this, Jesus fully humbled Himself before the Father.

Jesus and the Spirit of God

We know that Jesus at the time of His baptism received the fullness of the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove, it was a symbol of His Father’s approval of what Jesus had done so far. It was also a sign of the course His life would take. Jesus would be led by the Holy Spirit and constantly be filled with and guided by the same Spirit. In order to attain this, Jesus woke up early every morning to spend quality time with His Father in heaven. He surrendered all decisions to His Father with true obedience.

Later on Jesus was very eager to let the disciples know that He was the authority behind the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. According to John 14:26, the Holy Spirit was poured out in Jesus’ name! By this we understand that Jesus was “ONE” with the Spirit as well. Thus, when Jesus walked on this earth He was the “Word of God,” in complete unity with the Holy Spirit and fully obedient to His Father.

The Leaders’ Attitude

Jesus now meets the people with the so-called “truth.” They have “taken care” of the truth for many centuries. With that responsibility the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees have studied and discussed these matters many times. Their conviction about having the right interpretation eventually led to self-exaltation. WE are the people with the truth; WE know how to understand the facts; WE have the correct interpretation of the prophecies, they argued. If someone would disagree, he at least has to be trained in our schools before he can dispute these matters of truth. This seemed to be their thinking, John 7:15:

The Jews were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having studied?” (NIV)

This is still a fact today in any school system including religious institutions. If you do not have the “appropriate” theological training, theologians will not listen to you concerning theological issues! Because they know best! Why waste time listening to someone who has not received appropriate training? This opinion affects spiritual attitude and openness.

The “Word of God” tried with love and rebuke to touch the hearts of the Teachers of the Law. The Spirit of God worked to soften their hearts. But their reaction was remarkable. Jesus was not accepted and later on even rejected. They rebelled against His teachings! They rejected the “Word of God” and the Holy Spirit’s working on their hearts. Instead they quoted Moses to show that they were correct, Luke 20:28:

“Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote for us that...” (NIV)

What arrogance! What self-exaltation! This happened 2,000 years ago. But wait a minute! Could it be that

God's denominated church of today has the same attitude problem? Could you and I be accused of having the same arrogant spirit? I hope not! When this attitude problem exists, we will not be able to grow in our understanding of the "truth." Without this problem, the "light" will shine brighter and brighter.

The Reason

Over hundreds of years the Teachers of the Law had tried to define and clarify the meaning of Moses' heritage. An extraction process as well as an interpretation development took place. Certain issues were more emphasized than others. In some areas a growth in understanding occurred and the truth shone brighter. On the other hand, if recommendations were not clearly explained in the Scriptures, a man-made clarification was needed. After some time these clarifications were accepted as the truth. Standards were developed and systems of interpretation were put in place. This happened with good intentions and purposes.

However, over time this process must have gone wrong and a new picture evolved, which was no longer in harmony with the Word of God! The original source of information was correct. Thus, Moses cannot be blamed for anything either. Still, the end product was not in agreement with the original, at least not in its spiritual context.

No one in particular can be blamed for this evolving process, but the fact still remains that something went wrong. What a tragedy! When the Son of Man came to His own people He was not recognized, understood or supported. On the contrary, the educated rejected and considered Him demon-possessed. And that was especially the attitude by those in charge of the religious system and of "the truth." Jesus was, however, loved and accepted by the common people.

The Religious-political System

Besides this, another problem occurred in the old Israel. The leaders had put significant spiritual pressure on the ordinary people, probably because of what they had experienced in the past. According to Jesus, the "Experts of the Law" placed a heavy load of rules and regulations on the people that they could hardly carry, Luke 11:46. Those higher in the hierarchy made things difficult for the common people, without lifting a finger to help them. The "lower class" served the "upper" as in many systems – which of course is not in harmony with the Kingdom of God, Matthew 20:26:

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. (NIV)

Furthermore, the Teachers of the Law did not wish to have any competition when it came to the interpretation of the Scriptures. It was considered their job and not that of the common people. There was professional pride involved. They felt very comfortable with their status and didn't want any challenges. To make sure opposition was excluded, or at least minimized, a system was put in place. If opposition still happened, the opposer took a risk of being excluded from the synagogue, John 12:42:

*Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But **because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue.** (NIV)*

This is nothing but spiritual "persecution" and it was so effective that it even made the leaders afraid to acknowledge Jesus' teachings. They kept silent rather than taking the risk of losing their position or status. That was the case with Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the council, Luke 23:50 and John 19:38. In many cases, the love for the "Truth" was not the driving force for many of these leaders. What an effective tool the Teachers of the Law had implemented. It was an evil oppressing system similar to the one seen in totalitarian states today. But this was put into practice on a spiritual level and sadly among God's denominated people!

Summary

- In spite of hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament, the people in charge of “the truth” did not recognize the forerunner, John the Baptist, or the Messiah.
- Jesus did not have an education from their educational system and was consequently not an approved interpreter of the Scriptures.
- Besides being the Son of God, Jesus was also the Word of God. When He spoke the Spirit of God worked to soften hearts. But, the Teachers of the Law rejected what Jesus said. To them His miracles and compassionate life meant nothing!
- They rejected Jesus and quoted Moses instead! By doing so they felt comforted in their inner being and believed they pleased God.
- Moses cannot be blamed for their rejection of Jesus, since he was truly led by God.
- Their extraction process of “Moses’ heritage” over time skewed the end result. They were determined not to see any flaws in their own interpretation system.
- The religious-political system put significant pressure on everyone who wanted to follow the “Truth.” The same technique is used in totalitarian states!

Well, as you can see we are building a platform and in the next newsletter we are going to turn the focus to OUR problems. By using specific examples, I pray that you will be able to extrapolate insights that apply to your own attitude and own church.

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