

John 7:47-52 "No one from Galilee should be trusted"

JOH 7:45 Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?" 46 "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared. 47 "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. 48 "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? 49 No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law - there is a curse on them." 50 Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, 51 "Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?" 52 They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

It's fascinating to me that just as we alert the body of Christ about deceptive teachers and teachings, those in the camp who are outside of Christ also give their followers the same message. This temple guard who was sent out by the Pharisees and chief priests to arrest Jesus came back empty handed. And despite how the guard was persuaded by words of truth from Jesus, these leaders give no thought to any of it; instead they ask the question, "'You mean he has deceived you also?'"

How many times has a well-dressed duo knocked on your door with what they believe to be a message of truth from their "Watch Tower" literature, and were not willing to budge toward the truth of Christ according to the Scriptures because they were convinced that you were deceived?

No matter how persuasive the argument, no matter how many Scripture passages you shared with them in a coherent way, they simply ignored your words and stayed on track with their understanding of God, albeit a deceived position.

This doesn't mean we can't give them the truth. It only means that if you are going to try and argue them into the kingdom of God you may have a difficult time, because they view you as one who is deceived.

And so, my attitude is that if they are willing to listen to the truth of God's word pertaining to salvation found in the Son of God, then I am willing to spend time with them. If they are not willing to listen to reason then I politely excuse myself and remind them

that they must come to grips with the truth I shared and I pray the Holy Spirit opens their eyes.

When each group believes the other is deceived, then neither is willing to bend. And I for one will not bend or compromise the truth of my Savior because people's eternal destinies are on the line.

But in our text this morning we see that this same perception by the Pharisees is going to have deadly consequences in the future. But what is interesting is that when one of their members, or in this case a group of their members, (the temple guard), shows signs of being swayed, the leaders immediately accuse them of being ignorant. They immediately attack their intelligence.

JOH 7:47 You mean he has deceived you also?

'You mean bright people like yourselves can so easily be swayed by a common man who dazzles you by quoting Scripture?'

The tactic is as old as time. You undermine the foundation and in time it will crack if you allow it. Remember, this was the exact same tactic that was posed to the first woman.

GEN 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

He is calling into question her foundation, which in this case was the very word from God who clearly told her not to eat from a particular tree in the garden. Satan disguises his intention by setting the woman up with a broad statement which suggested that God said she couldn't eat from any tree in the garden.

And what this first deception does is to get his foot in the door so that she must engage him with an answer.

GEN 3:2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

In her response she gives him the truth. But anyone who knows anything about undermining the truth is that you don't stop with someone's response, you cut a little deeper into the foundation.

GEN 3:4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.
5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

And so, this tactic can be very effective if the person being approached is willing to let such tactics sway them. But this tactic can work two ways. It can turn people from the truth they've already embraced, as it did in the case of Eve, but it can also keep people from the truth, which is what the enemy is attempting in the case of the temple guard.

Probably for the first time in their lives these temple guard had to come to grips with what they had been taught since childhood as it related to the kingdom of God, because Jesus was saying that to enter into the kingdom of God people must place their faith in the One the Father sent them, and that is Jesus Himself.

So, to put a stop to that, the Pharisees call into question the loyalty and the intelligence of the temple guard; in a way they embarrass them into reality. It's a peer pressure thing. And this is why it is so important for Christians to be standing on the solid ground of God's word, because deception comes from both without and within the body of Christ.

Those outside of the body include people who are blatantly against Christ, but it also includes those who seduce Christians with teachings that appear to be godly and biblical. And if our foundation is not set on the solid rock of Christ we are susceptible to every wind of doctrine that comes our way.

But this also applies to those inside the body of Christ at large who have agendas of their own which are not consistent with the truth of God's word. Some of these people are out and out deceivers, like some of the convicted con-men who have swindled gullible people into giving them their money with promises of healings or blessings from God.

But there are also sincere believers who have bought into bad teaching and continue to promote it without being the kind of teachers who consider the whole counsel of God's word. Their handling of the word is less than diligent and attentive.

2TI 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

This is why every believer needs to be on guard against the kind of teaching that can be destructive. And this is why every believer needs to be studying the word of God. Every believer should ask the Holy Spirit to teach him or her as they open the word for themselves or listen to the word from someone else.

ACT 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

But back to the temple guard. The Pharisees were not content to imagine that only their temple guard could have been deceived, they also include other potential people who could be deceived.

JOH 7:48 Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?

It's one thing for a guard or soldier to be deceived, after all they're just grunts, but when fellow leaders are deceived then we have a situation. And the question posed to the temple guard is really one which is designed to keep this situation from getting out of control.

In asking the temple guard this question they are seeking to know any intelligence which would lead the Sanhedrin to individuals who might undermine their position and of course to persuade them from pursuing this Jesus who has deceived them.

In other words, the wisdom and knowledge these Pharisees thought they possessed did not take into account the wisdom of God Himself who sent Jesus Christ to them with the truth.

Of course, God has something to say about such wisdom.

1CO 1:20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

By the way, this question, "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?" was a valid question in their minds since there was the possibility that some might have spent time listening to Jesus, either as a curiosity, or as people desiring to learn the truth.

And so, the sooner you can get to them and deprogram them, the better.

Now, there are always going to be people you might expect to be deceived. There are those who are not grounded, who don't have a sense of what the Scriptures teach, and quite honestly they are disasters waiting to happen. At least this is the way these leaders felt about an entire group of people under their care.

JOH 7:49 No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law - there is a curse on them.

What did these Jewish leaders mean by this? Well, we need to keep in mind that in Israel at this time, there were basically two classes of people: those who were the elite, which included Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and other leaders and then the rest of the people.

In other words, the educated versus the non-educated. The non-educated would include any and all of the Jews who were just common people eking out an existence. And what this verse shows us is that these religious leaders who were supposed to be the shepherds of Israel were not shepherds at all, but hired hands who had their hands in the coffers for their own advantage, while dismissing the "common" man.

They looked with disdain on the common man. And this contempt actually kept many of these leaders from putting Israel's spiritual best at the forefront. Instead of practicing compassion, they were leaders who were judgmental. Instead of leaders who saw themselves as being placed there by God specifically to instruct and show mercy to the masses of Israel, they saw themselves as belonging to an elite group who distanced themselves from the common man.

We get a glimpse of this relationship when Jesus healed a man and then this former blind man told the leaders what he thought of this Jesus.

The leaders opened up their argument in JOH 9:29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

JOH 9:30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could

do nothing." 34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

This is how these leaders felt about all the commoners in Israel; steeped in sin at birth. Nothing will convince these elites. They have a man standing in front of them who only hours before was blind and had been blind from birth. He can now look them in the eyes and testify that God has used Jesus to accomplish this and yet they will not listen to him and they throw him out.

But the reason they will not listen to him includes the fact that he is a "nobody." He is just a common man who was not educated in the schools in Jerusalem. He has no influence, he has no money that can entice these leaders. The only thing he has is the truth, coupled with the fact that he personally met a man sent from God who not only claims to be the Messiah, but also proves it with signs and wonders.

He is the recipient of a miracle, and instead of rejoicing with this man he is thrown out of their presence because they can't compete with this Jesus from Nazareth who is also a "nobody" in their eyes, and is just a common man who had no formal education and yet can teach circles around these leaders.

And so, part of the point is that when such leaders see themselves as higher and holier than the ones they are supposed to be serving, they will never serve, they will only expect to be served.

There is no one higher and holier than Jesus Christ, who is infinitely higher than all men and yet He came into this world not to be served, but to serve. And He is the supreme example of what it means to be a shepherd.

And yet, the shepherds of Israel, who were placed there by God, would not shepherd; they would not protect Israel, they would not feed Israel, and the Lord had some things to say to such people, who unfortunately had been leading Israel long before Jesus ever comes on to the scene.

EZE 34:2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? 3 You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock.

ISA 56:9 Come, all you beasts of the field, come and devour, all you beasts of the forest! 10 Israel's watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they love to sleep. 11 They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain.

And by the way, the Lord's attitude hasn't changed concerning His shepherds today. There are many who fleece the flock. There are many who are only concerned with what they can get out of the church instead of taking seriously their duty to shepherd the flock and serve the flock and feed the flock the whole counsel of God's word.

Each of us will stand before our God and I pray that we can say, Lord we served You as we served those in the body, Your church.

JOH 7:50 Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, 51 "Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?" 52 They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee." 53 Then each went to his own home.

Nicodemus asks a very interesting question of his peers. In fact, only Nicodemus seems to be interested in the very law these leaders profess to adhere to. And what Nicodemus is saying is that if we are to condemn someone our own law says we must first get the testimony of the one being accused.

According to F.F. Bruce, "the rule to which Nicodemus appealed is formulated in Rabbinic literature, [which states], flesh and blood may pass judgment on a man if it hears his words; if it does not hear them it cannot establish its judgment."

Nicodemus was basically saying that despite how you feel about someone you can't just make a legal judgment on them without using the legal system. That would not only be ungodly, it would be unfair.

But of course, fairness and righteousness was not what these leaders had in mind. And for one of their own to bring up this issue of fairness in a legal setting only cast suspicion on Nicodemus. It made him look like he was sympathetic to what Jesus was saying and doing. And in one sense he was.

Remember, that it was Nicodemus who came to Jesus at night to learn more of this remarkable person who claimed to be the Messiah.

JOH 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

And so, when Nicodemus recommends that this ruling council slow down this legal process, which was acting without due process, he is not only applying fairness to the circumstance, he is also considering that they may be condemning a man sent from God, and that would be a bad thing, not only for himself, but for all of Israel.

But notice their response.

JOH 7:52 They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

This is not an endearing response from his peers. Nicodemus is being accused of coming from Galilee in the sense that since Jesus is from Galilee Nicodemus is acting as though he is from there and therefore is a follower of this Galilean.

In other words, this council is saying, you're not one of us. In a condescending way they say, you must be a disciple of this Jesus whom we despise. And so, Nicodemus is being cast as an enemy of these leaders and therefore an enemy of Israel itself.

And in sort of a backhanded rebuke they add, "Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

What they mean by this is that they are accusing Nicodemus, who is an educated Pharisee, a teacher of the law, a respected member of this council, of being a fool who has swallowed the lies of this Jesus.

They are saying that Nicodemus hasn't done his homework. If he had he would know that there would be no biblical reason to consider Jesus to be one sent from God, a prophet, because the Scriptures clearly show that there are no prophets who come out of Galilee.

Unfortunately, these leaders didn't get the memo about, not just a prophet coming out of Galilee, but a King, and this King is the one they are dismissing.

Isaiah 9:1-7 ^{NAU} But there will be no *more* gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on ***He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.*** ² The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them. ³ You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; They will be glad in Your presence As with the gladness of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil. ⁴ For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. ⁵ For every boot of the booted warrior in the *battle* tumult, And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. ⁶ ***For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*** ⁷ ***There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness. From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.***

Nicodemus has met the son of David who is to establish the Kingdom of God forevermore, and yet he is treated as one who has no wisdom, no understanding.

This is a slap in the face to Nicodemus, but it also reveals the ignorance of people who don't want the truth. They will attempt to use God's word to justify their position without knowing what God's word says.

It's like people who quote that verse found in the bible which says, "God helps those who help themselves."

If you ever find that passage I'd love to see it. But the point is that you can make stuff up, or twist the truth to make it say whatever you want and support a position which God doesn't hold to.

In this case, they claim to know that God's word that says no prophets come out of Galilee, therefore Jesus, who came out of Galilee, cannot be God's prophet. But it wasn't Nicodemus who forgot to do his homework on this subject.

2KI 14:25 He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant *Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher*.

Gath Hepher is about five miles north of the town of Nazareth. Guess what area Nazareth is located in? Galilee. Jonah was a Galilean, if you will. In fact, he was a pretty important prophet from this region. But, these Pharisees probably had selective memory here because Jonah was a Jew who went to warn, not Jews, but Gentiles, about the coming wrath of God on them.

Maybe for that reason they didn't consider Jonah a prophet, despite the fact that God's word calls him God's prophet.

But Jonah was not the only prophet from this area. What about Elijah?

1KI 17:1 Now *Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead*, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word." 2 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah:

Gilead is located about 15 to 20 miles south of the Sea of Galilee. So much for prophets coming out of Galilee. But again, the issue is not a biblical one for these leaders who hate Jesus. The issue is destroying Him so He doesn't jeopardize their political position in Israel.

This happens all too often in the church-at-large today. Issues come up and instead of letting the word of God address it, there are leaders who decide to twist the Scriptures, or simply say that the word of God needs to be a book that changes with the times. And so, you can't reason with such people because their issue is greater than the God who gave us His word.

ISA 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.

And may I add to that that we will stand as long as we stand on God's word. It's when we become wishy washy on the truth where we begin to falter and end up being blown here and there by every wind of doctrine.

In the case before us, these rulers of Israel were making up their own doctrine as they excluded other teachings and truths. And

when you exclude the only word that stands forever what else can you stand on?

How about sinking sand? They have excluded the only one who can save them. They have excluded the One sent from the Father. And in excluding Christ they can simply walk away and give Him no further thought.

As far as these people were concerned the discussion was over and there was only one right way to look at this situation; their way. I might add that there was a Pharisee who finally came around to accepting Christ, after the Lord Jesus literally, but graciously, struck him to the ground, and who would later write about such an attitude of those who reject Christ.

1CO 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

But it's Nicodemus who should also give us hope. Because if God can change the heart of a person like him then He can change the heart of anyone. If God can change the heart of another Pharisee like Saul, then He can change the heart of anyone. You and I know people whose hearts are cold toward Christ.

They are content to reject Christ. Pray for them and ask God to open their eyes. He can do it.

And don't ever forget that though we are at home with Christ by faith in Him alone, this world is not our home. May we look forward to that city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

2PE 3:13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.