

Those Who Claimed to Know the Law Tried to Kill the Law Giver

Scripture: John 7:16-24

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I. Introduction

Those who are doing the will of God are the ones who will be able to tell clearly whether Jesus' teaching is from God or whether it is false. It is by obeying God that we are able to test Jesus' truth, and by obeying God, He will make it clear to us the role Jesus plays in our lives. Too many people can inspire and motivate large crowds. The real test isn't what someone says, but what he/she does. We cannot be perfect as Jesus is perfect, but we can be willing to be used by God to bring the Word to others or by showing others the way to God.

In the Old and New Testaments, prophecies were made about the coming of a Messiah, Jesus Christ Himself, who would bring forth justice to the Gentiles (Is. 42:1). Even before Christ appeared in the flesh in the New Testament, the Old Testament foretells that Christ will be rejected by the very people He had come to save (Is. 53:1-5). Jesus' lack of respect for the traditions of the religious leaders incensed them and made them plot to put Him to death. It was Jesus' disregard for their traditions concerning the Sabbath that caused the most outrage. The Jewish leaders added many restrictions to worshipping on the Sabbath, making it difficult, if not impossible to observe.

II. Those Who Claim to Know the Law tried to Kill the Law Giver

1. vv. 16-18

Some people look like really good people but they are not pursuing God. The answer Jesus gave to the Jewish leaders was simple and straightforward (John 7:16-17). They did not believe Christ because they did not want to believe. Jesus did not point to His credentials but to His doctrine. If the Jewish leaders listened carefully to the doctrine of Jesus, they would have known that it was rooted in the Scriptures and that it was from God. Jesus was a gifted teacher. His authority was not from any man but from His Father. Jesus contrasted Himself with the one who speaks for Himself and seeks his own glory. Jesus was different. Jesus sought the glory of God. Jesus is true. Jesus has no unrighteousness in Him. In a sense, Jesus gave us two measures of a true teacher. Does the teaching come from God? That is, is it according to the revealed Word of God? Does the work give glory to God?

Those who know or seek the truth quickly recognize what teaching comes from God and what does not. One means of discerning this is whether the individual is speaking from his own wisdom and authority or from God's. A person who is speaking what is from God will seek God in what he says and how he says it. Those who speak for themselves want to gain personal glory. Many modern day religious or cult leaders will name ministries or churches after themselves. In addition, some will even charge exorbitant fees for what they do. Jesus elaborated on this point in **Verse 18**.

When Jesus came to earth, He voluntarily laid aside His glory that He shared with the Father, took on the role of a servant and became obedient even to death on the cross (Phil. 2:6-8). While He was on earth, Jesus' aim was to obey and glorify His Father. Jesus never promoted Himself. When He was accused of doing so, it was simply the projection of the accusers. Jesus always sought the glory and approval of the Father and taught only what the Father revealed. He is truth and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

To choose to do the will of God is not just a matter of moralistic values; rather, it is a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a seeking first the kingdom. Such a heart is open to God, committed to Him and His ways and willing to act on what He reveals to us. If our hearts are God-centered rather than self-centered, then we will be able to recognize God's voice in His divine call to us.

2. vv. 19-23

The Pharisees and the scribes constantly studied the Law. They believed that they obeyed the Law, but Jesus said that they were not obeying the Law. The Jewish leaders were observing the letter of the Law but did not understand what the Law was really about. They accused Jesus of being demon-possessed. The Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus which the Law forbade. Jesus contrasted His attitude and the attitude of the Jewish leaders to the Sabbath. He referred to the healing of the man on the mat in John 5:1-18 on the Sabbath. He told the man to take up his mat and walk. To the Jewish leaders, this was work. However, the Jewish leaders worked on the Sabbath. First Jesus reminded them that the law of circumcision predated Moses and went back to the practice of the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 17:9-14). To obey the Mosaic Law, they had to circumcise boys on the 8th day after their birth (Gen. 17:9-14; Lev. 12:3). They always did this even if the 8th day was on the Sabbath, for which they made an

exception. But they could not make an exception to the rules in order to make a sick person completely well on the Sabbath.

Jesus showed also that Jewish leaders were using the Law to suit themselves. They emphasized the rules (Ex. 20:8-11) about the Sabbath. And they emphasized how it was important to obey this law. But they did not care about one of God's ten most important rule (Ex. 20:13) because they were plotting to murder Jesus. If the leaders were consistent, they would have seen that they were breaking the Law for performing a medical procedure on the Sabbath.

3. v. 24

Jesus concluded His assessment about what they were doing and challenged them to correct it, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). The same religious leaders had rejected the teachings of Jesus because they were judging Him by man-made traditions. The appearance of something is not always what it seems. We must be careful about judging one another by appearance. There is often much more than meets the eye. We must learn to pursue the truth wherever it takes us even when we do not like it. When we judge, our judgment is to be righteous, not superficial. Our judgment is to be based on the truth of the Scripture, not our feelings or prejudices.

III. Conclusion

The religious leaders wanted Jesus dead for a number of reasons; none of the reasons were righteous. Above all, it was the lack of respect for their religious traditions that caused the religious leaders to desire to kill Jesus. This was particularly true of Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath. When Jesus broke their human made traditions by healing on the Sabbath, this was more than they could stand. Immediately, they began to plot His death.

For those of us who have yet to place our faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation from our sin, this is a challenge for us to properly consider Jesus' claim. Are we striving to find our own way to heaven and reject Jesus' statement that "I am the way, the truth and the life and that no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6)? The only hope of having forgiveness of sin and to be a heavenly citizen is by faith in the Person and Work of the LORD Jesus Christ.