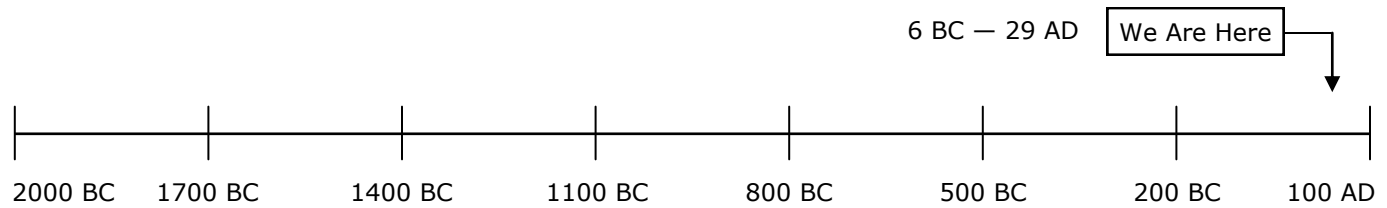


He Who Has an Ear

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Week 40: October 1-7 — *The Gospels*

76.4% Complete — 85 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

Map of Palestine in the Time of Christ (p.119)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

We are in our second week of the life of Christ. He began His ministry by touring around the sea in the province of Galilee. He also made a few stops in and around Jerusalem and even crossed over into the forbidden land of Samaria. All along the way Jesus healed the sick, the lame, the blind and deaf, and even raised the dead. As a result, multitudes of people followed Him wherever He went. More and more were beginning to see that Jesus was the Messiah.

Although Jesus was well-received by the general masses, He found pockets of opposition, especially from religious leaders. While most people believed Christ was whom He said He was, these leaders weren't so sure. In fact, they considered Jesus a threat and even discussed how to rid themselves of Him. Who were these people anyway? Perhaps if we look a little more closely, we can understand how they thought and why they had such problems with Jesus.

Pharisees: These "separated ones" were descendants of the Inter-testament Hasidim (pious ones), whose goal it was to protect the Jewish culture from harmful outside influences (i.e. Greeks). They separated from the people and from pagan practices to study and teach the law. In effect, they transformed Judaism into a religion of traditions and legalism. They controlled the synagogues, served as religious authorities, and exerted influence among Jews.

Sadducees: These "righteous ones" claimed to be descendants of Zadok, the High Priest under King David. They consisted of the High Priest and his staff, and they managed the Temple and the sacrificial system, supported the ruling power and the status quo, and exerted influence through the Sanhedrin.

Sanhedrin: Referring to the High Council of 70 select members from leading elders, scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees with the High Priest ruling over them all. Its origin was the 70 judges of Moses, as advised by Jethro. The Sanhedrin combined all leaders into one political body and acted as a high court of appeals. However, it mainly focused on eliminating dangerous enemies.

Jesus said, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees..." (*Matthew 16:11*). Their legalistic, works-based religion would lead to self-centered, hard-hearted unbelief.

A Sabbath Situation (Matt. 12:1-13; Mark 2:23-38; 3:1-6; Luke 6:1-10; John 5:1-17)

An example of the Pharisaic legalism is the run-in Jesus had with them about the Sabbath Day. The Pharisees had taken the laws of the Sabbath and interpreted them in very strict measures, so strict that God's blessing was turned into a heavy burden. Christ put the Pharisees and the Sabbath in their place when He said that "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath; and, the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath." We should never place a tradition over doing good. We should be careful not to tamper with God's words.

We will look later at specifically why each group would have wanted to destroy Jesus.

- Prophetic Passages
 1. **Salvation to Gentiles** (Matt. 8:11, 12): Jesus prophesied that scores of Gentiles would recognize Him as the Messiah, but few of His own Jewish nation would see the light.
 2. **Resurrection** (Matt. 12:39, 40): Not only did Jesus confirm the story of Jonah, He linked His death and resurrection to it, claiming He would live again after three days.

- Personal Application
 1. **The Words and Ways of God** (Matt. 5-7): A large portion of our reading this week was dedicated to the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest sermon ever preached. As such, we could spend the year soaking in all that it contains. However, it is always convicting just how unique that message really is. One can recognize quickly that Christ thought much differently than we do. His ways are not our ways and His words are not our words. We have our moments, but the way Christ thought about issues went against the grain of the masses. It is this anti-humanistic message that is most convincing that the Bible is not from the mind of man. The words in the Bible must be the words of God.
 2. **Simple Stories, Terrific Truths** (Matt. 13:33-35; Mark 4:11, 12): Much of our reading consisted of parables, earthly stories with heavenly meanings. Their purposes were really two-fold — both to reveal and to conceal truth simultaneously. "Parables revealed the sacred truth by the power of analogy and illustration. However, they concealed the truth from him who had not the key to their hidden meanings. To such a one, parables were riddles or tales; and so, our Lord could give to His disciples the deepest secrets of His kingdom, while the others heard without understanding" (Merrill Unger). Those who were supposed to hear and understand Jesus' teaching did. Those who weren't supposed to understand didn't. He who had an ear to hear, heard the words of God! Do you?
 3. **Who Loves Jesus the Most?** (Luke 7:36-50; 8:1, 2): The answer to this question is not the pastor, the missionary, or the Church teacher. No, the person who loves Jesus the most is he who has been forgiven most. What deep dark secrets of your past has God erased? Are you grateful for that which He has forgiven you? Does it show?

The Bottom Line

Satan keeps people, even you, *distracted* so that they *miss* God's *will* and *words*.

Questions to Consider

1. Are you so tied up with church activities that you are missing Christ? Are you in a fog?
2. What did you learn from the Sermon on the Mount? Did God remind you of any truths?