

When People With an Agenda Slander You

“They sent to Him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians to trap Him in His words. When they came to Him, they said, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true and swayed by no man. For You do not regard the person of men, but truthfully teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay, or should we not pay?’ But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, ‘Why test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it’” (Mark 12:13-15a).

We live in a time of “gotcha” attacks. Anyone in political or spiritual leadership faces this all the time. People with an agenda are out to get you, to smear the totality of your life by trapping you over one item they think will do you in.

That is what was happening to Jesus. First, the chief priests and others who were part of the temple ruling establishment—dominated by the Sadducees—attempted to trap Jesus on the question of authority. Failing at that, they sent the Pharisees and Herodians with a question over which they themselves were divided.

Their purpose was not to learn or to get the question settled. Their intention was to trap. What a shame! They had so much to learn from Jesus. He could tell them about the Father, about creation, about heaven, about eternity, about God’s great love. He could unfold for them so much they did not know, could not know and would not know.

They were only interested in stumping Him and tricking Him so they could bring an accusation against Him.

When you’re determined to destroy someone you bring in unlikely allies. The Pharisees, unlike the Sadducees, believed in the resurrection, angels and a life of separation from

worldly culture. The Herodians, as their name indicates, were allied to the political interests of Herod. Earlier the Herodians and Pharisees had plotted to kill Jesus early on in His ministry (Mark 3:6).

It's amazing even today how many people of different perspectives all come together around one thing: opposing Jesus. Many can "swallow" Him as a teacher but not as Lord, not as King, not as Savior.

In this passage we see the blatant hypocrisy of those who opposed Jesus. They didn't believe at all in the three compliments they give Him. They only wanted to lure Him into a false sense of security by flattery. But what they said about Him is true.

First, Jesus is a person of integrity.

That term comes from a word used in mathematics, integer and is used to describe a whole number, an undivided number. Jesus is not one thing today and another thing on a different day. There is no difference between what He is in private and public. His person and persona are the same. Truly we can find no moral fault or fault of any kind in Him.

Second, Jesus is not swayed by public opinion. He doesn't take a poll in order to frame His position. He is not political or trying to score points. He treats the high and low, the rich and poor, the minority and majority exactly alike. He is no respecter of persons, yet He does respect each person.

Third, Jesus teaches the way of God in truth. If you want truth, then listen to Jesus. He said of Himself, "I am the truth!" He has the truth because He is the Truth!

A Prayer: Lord Jesus, I embrace You today as the One whom I trust. Help me to follow in Your steps by being a person of integrity, not a respecter of persons, and living truthfully as Your follower.

Excerpted from Dr. Wood's book, Fearless: How Jesus Changes Everything, available from Vital Resources.