

Prophecy: It's Time the Church Recognized and Renounced Its Political Pharisees

When Jesus responded to the ongoing threats and accusations of the Pharisees in His day, He wasn't focused on the particular rules or laws they espoused. He cut to the heart and challenged the spirit behind them.

The practices designed to establish a holy people had become a list of endless restrictions and regulations. It was their selfish ambition and lifeless ordinances that Jesus rebuked and renounced.

"Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, 'Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!' Jesus replied, 'And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ... You nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.'" (Matt. 15:1-3, 6b-9, NIV)

Jesus was always focused on the heart knowing that any law was only as good as the Spirit behind it. He continually challenged any counterfeit spirit that sought to nullify the life-giving power of God, and it's this same demonic spirit that believers must confront today.

Our Pharisees are now cloaked as politicians and public servants, and instead of defending tradition, they are defending science and their political agendas. Their endless

list of protocols and mandates is fueled by a spirit of greed and corruption aimed at immobilizing and emasculating the people of God. The only way we will overcome their self-righteous rule is to recognize the demonic motivation behind their agenda and renounce it—just as Jesus did.

“Then the Lord said to him, ‘Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? ... And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them!’” (Luke 11:39-40, 46).

Lest you think our priority should be the Golden Rule right now, remember how Jesus stood up to the robed regulators of His time. Not only did He confront the religious elite, but He also confronted anyone who gave in to the fear of man instead of the fear of God—even His best friend, Peter.

“‘Get behind me, Satan!,’ He said. ‘You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men’” (Mark 8:32-33).

Instead of focusing on our measure of compassion for the weak or our ability to submit to authority, we should be much more concerned with the spiritual forces at work behind the ongoing political propaganda created by the Pharisees of our day. Our efforts at being peace-loving people and benevolent servants are being manipulated by a spirit that seeks to destroy us. Rather than defending a conviction for wearing masks or challenging others to submit to the law out of fear, we should be recognizing the religious spirit still at work.

We may have thought we broke free from religion years ago, but it always recreates itself. Presenting itself as a benefactor to the poor and defender of the law, the religious spirit convinces us that if we keep the rules, all will be well. It uses fear and manipulation to make us dependent on its

oversight—for safety's sake.

But in the end, it's not about keeping each other safe. It's not about keeping the rules, because the rules will always change. True freedom from the religious and political spirits are about living by the Spirit of the law and not the letter. It's holding fast to a standard of truth that puts politics and science in submission to the living Word. It's about walking in a power that is supernatural and defies the odds of man. And it's about recognizing the enemy, even when veiled as the purveyor of truth.

"Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while He was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him. 'By what authority are you doing these things?' they asked. 'And who gave you this authority?'" (Matt. 21:23)

The religious spirit is still trying to silence our voice and challenge the kingdom authority we carry. Today's political Pharisees are seeking to shut down our gatherings and charge us with blasphemy when we worship.

It's time we recognize these taskmasters for who they are and refuse their demands. It's time to call out the demonic powers at work and rebuke their interference in our God-given mission.

Our obedience to Scripture and pursuit of righteousness require us to take a stand. This is not out of defiance to authority, but in deference to our King. {eoa}

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