

The Journey

Series 05: Cross

Week 39: The Religious Reject Jesus

We are indebted to [Ethnos360](#) for providing the basis of these lessons

Review (Where We Have Been)

We've been discovering the **true** identity of Jesus as God.

Because Jesus is God, He...

- **Teaches with Authority** (because He perfectly *knows* God's Word and *is* God)
- **Forgives Sin**
- **Demonstrates Power over the Physical Realm** (heals people)
- **Demonstrates Power over the Spirit Realm** (power over the enemy)
- **Calls People to Be Born Again** (provides the way to new and eternal life)
- **Provides Eternal Life to those Who Come to and Believe in Him**

John 6:35 (ESV) Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

Jesus has been given authority to forgive sin, call people to be born again, and provide eternal life; however, man must respond to God's offer of these things.

Some respond on a surface level (behavior modification), but God's desire heart change that leads to life change.

BIG Idea

Today, we'll be looking at the difference between **behavior change** (for man's/God's acceptance) and **heart change** (that leads to true life change).

Behavior Change – rooted in me doing what I can to impress God (or others)

Heart Change - rooted in God's mercy that leads to life change

Information (What We Need to Know)

Contrast Between Behavior Change and Heart Change ...

- **Behavior Change** – *The religious leaders did not worship God from their hearts*
"We've already learned that the Jewish religious leaders added their own rules to God's Law and enforced them on the Jews, *teaching that these rules had to be strictly followed for a person to be accepted by God.*" – Firm Foundations

✓ Religious leaders added their own rules to God's Word

Mark 7:1 (ESV) Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, **2** they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. **3** (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, **4** and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) **5** And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”

- Religious leaders disapproved of Jesus' disciples because they didn't follow their man-made guidelines (tradition of the elders)
- Religious leaders were self-righteous because they followed their rules

✓ Jesus condemns the Pharisees

Mark 7:6 (ESV) And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; **7** in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ **8** You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

- Jesus agreed with Isaiah that “religious” people outwardly appear devoted to God, but inwardly did not love, obey, or believe in Him
- Their worship was empty because it didn't come from God or their heart
“God rejected the worship of those who did not acknowledge their sin before Him and trust in His promises regarding the Deliverer.” – Firm Foundations

✓ Jesus teaches that behavior change is not enough

- Following outward rules can't change God's acceptance

Mark 7:18 (ESV) And He said to them, “...Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, **19** since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

- God sees evil hearts, which ALWAYS condemn a person before God

Mark 7:21 (ESV) “For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, **22** coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. **23** All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

“The religious leaders put great emphasis on following certain food restrictions. They thought this would make them more acceptable to God. Jesus made it clear that God never rejects us because of a food we eat; what He hates is sin which comes out of our evil hearts. – Firm Foundations

▪ Heart Change – *The Tax Collector worships God from the heart*

✓ The heart of the Pharisee – self-righteous, judgmental, showy

Luke 18:9 (ESV) He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: **10** “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’”

How the Pharisee viewed himself before God...

- Saw himself as righteous
- Thought he was better than everyone else
- Took pride in his outward behavior

Although the Pharisee’s works were *good*, none of them made him acceptable to God or gain his entrance into Heaven.

✓ The heart of the tax collector – recognized sinfulness and his need of mercy

Luke 18:13 (ESV) “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’”

How the Tax Collector viewed himself before God...

- Saw himself as unworthy (did not lift up his eyes to heaven)
- Saw himself as sinful and deserving of judgment
- Saw his only way of being forgiven was to ask for God’s mercy

The contrast is clear...*the Pharisee* believed his works made him acceptable to God while the *tax collector* believed his works made him unacceptable to God.

Application (What We Need to Do)

Who did Jesus say was justified (made right with God) – Pharisee or tax collector?

Luke 18:14 (ESV) “I tell you, this man [*the tax collector*] went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

“Jesus taught that the Lord is merciful to those who realize they need Him. God responds in grace to all who admit they are helpless sinners and realize their need of Him, but God rejects all who are self-righteous, thinking their own goodness will get them into Heaven.” – Firm Foundations

Ephesians 2:8 (ESV) God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. **9** Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.