

Purposes of Man and God

Harmony M.B.C., July 4, 2010 (Morning)

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Luke 13:31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

Luke 13:32 And he said unto them, **Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.**

Luke 13:33 **Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.**

In a world filled with people having so many different agendas, the conflict between the purposes of God and the aspirations of carnal man have always been present. Wherever people follow carnal passions and purposes they weave a complex pattern of trouble. In our text we find the Pharisees intent on persuading Jesus to get out of town. They told him that Herod was planning to kill him. Whether this was true or not, we do not know. We do know that this Herod's grand-dad had tried to kill Him when He was an infant. We also know that the Pharisees of the day kept close tabs on what government was doing. These men could have inside information about Herod's plans, and could have actually been told to inform Jesus that Herod was planning to kill Him. Propaganda has always been used both by organized religion and by governments which wanted to stifle the work of Christ or subject the populace.

But regardless of whether Herod really planned to kill Jesus or not, these Pharisees wanted Him to leave because He was teaching the people the truth about organized Jewish religion of the day and it was exposing them and their agenda. Further, they knew that the government (represented by Herod) had animosity toward Jesus' teachings; after all, they knew that Herod had killed John the Baptist. So, in that respect, they had something in common with the corrupt government of Herod; they all hated Christ. But, the real offense caused by our Master was that his teachings condemned their false religion. In truth, human-centered religious teachings can never stand up to the light of the Word of God. In our text, Jesus gives these hyper-religious teachers of the law a little sermon about that truth. So, within the framework of this encounter between Jesus and the Pharisees we want to notice three things that scripture teaches us.

I. Government May Oppose The Legitimate Business of Christ - what signs?

- ❖ Openly hostile (against any Christian activity) governments: North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia, Maldives, Yemen, Laos, Mauritania and Uzbekistan (there is a watch list kept by a Christian persecution activist group that lists the 50 most anti-Christian nations of the world - OpenDoorsUSA.org).
- ❖ Intent of government to oppose the business of Christ may not be as obvious as was suggested by the Pharisees in our text. See **Mat. 2:1-8**
- ❖ Any animosity by government toward representatives of Christ is a good indicator that government is moving toward or supporting anti-Christian policy:
 - NOTE: This Herod was Herod the First, then Archelaus was Herod the Second and Herod Antipas (the Tetrarch) who killed John the Baptist was the third Herod mentioned in the bible; he was the one the Pharisees in our text were talking about.

- Enacting policy or law that puts the squeeze on any Christian group, denomination, or organization; or making policy or law that is aimed at stifling speech or expression of Christian beliefs. Examples: banning Ten Commandments in public places; making it illegal to preach or witness in certain areas of a state, city, or county.
- Canceling or altering Christian holidays or observances- Examples: abolishing or ignoring the national day of Christian prayer.
- Favoring other religions over Christian religions - examples: inviting Muslims to government activities, but not Christians. Allowing Muslims to have a national day of prayer on government property; allowing Muslims to build a house of worship on a national monument site (such as the site of world trade towers in NY). Declaring the U.S. to be a Muslim nation.
- Participating in or condoning hate mongering or defamation of Christians or groups which promote Christian conservative ideals - examples: allowing government officials to publically bash Christians or Christian groups; government officials making official speeches in which they say that Christians in certain parts of the country cling to their bibles and their guns.
- Claiming to be Christian in orientation, but equating Christianity as “just another viewpoint in the arena of ideas”

II. Organized Religion May Be Aligned With Government

- ❖ Organized religion may knowingly or unknowingly bow to another king than King Jesus: **John 19:15** But they cried out, Away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.
- ❖ All that is religion, even “Christian” religion, is not pro-Christ
- ❖ Organized religion aligned with government will parrot anti-Christian government rhetoric as facts: (see the Pharisees trying to incite Jesus by pretending to know that Herod is planning to kill Him (they may not have been pretending, by the way). Notice also: **John 19:12** And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. (This is posturing by the Jews to threaten the lesser government official by invoking the power of the higher government official. It is meant to defame Christ and put anybody who seems to do Him a favor in the same camp with Him. It is anti-Christ rhetoric).
- Example: This U.S. administration’s spiritual advisor, Jim Wallis, has stated that Jesus taught social justice, a constant theme in our current government. What Wallis means by social justice is this: that government should have the power to redistribute wealth. He has replaced the true meaning of social justice with the definition for socialism or communism. While Jesus really did teach social justice, it was never about government passing and enforcing laws to redistribute wealth. It was never about government having any role in establishing social justice! In Jesus’ teaching, a believer is taught to have a concern for his brother’s need and to help a brother in need. But the power to do or not to do this is left with the believer. Wallis, as a religious leader in mainstream Christianity is not even close to what Jesus taught! One blogger at <http://christiantheology.wordpress.com/2010/03/27/what-evangelicals-can-learn-from-the-glen-beckjim-wallis-debate/> said it well concerning the kind of social justice taught

and sought by Jim Wallis, mainstream Christian, and this government. He said, “The motivation is greed, the source is envy, the means is institutionalized theft and the force of the State, and the end is the accumulation of wealth and control over the freedom of others.”

- ❖ Organized religion that aligns with government will be respected, or at least feared, by the society it is in, and will wield great power
 - Example: no one wielded more power in Israel in the days of Christ than the Jewish Sanhedrin; yet we can see that they cared more about control and pretended association with Caesar (than about spiritual things) in order to stay in power.
 - See **Mat. 27:20** regarding the issue with Pilate about releasing one prisoner to the people - “But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.”
- ❖ The business and objectives of Christ will be brutalized and misrepresented by organized religion that aligns with (and gets power from) government: See **Mat 27:24** (and remember that this is the same group of people who in **John 19** had warned Pilate that if he released Jesus he would not be a friend of Caesars) “When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye *to it*.” (Pilate gave authority to the dissenting Jews [literally to the mob of apparently religious fanatics] to execute Jesus).
 - Also remember that Saul the persecutor in Acts was operating under the authority of the Jewish government...the Sanhedrin when he persecuted the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Objectives of Christ Will Not Be Contravened By Plots By Government or Organized Religion

- ❖ God has a message for corrupted, deceptive, and manipulative government: “...go ye and tell that fox....”
- ❖ The plans of God go forward: **Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.**
- ❖ Nothing can hasten or delay the final day of God’s great plans, and every intent of Christ will be fulfilled: **Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.**