

More Information on the Pharisees

by Bill Crews

Seven Classes

According to the Jewish Talmud “there were said to be seven classes of Pharisees: (1) the ‘shoulder’ Pharisee, who wears his good deeds on his shoulders and obeys the precept of the Law, not from principle, but from expediency; (2) the ‘wait-a-little’ Pharisee, who begs for time in order to perform a meritorious action; (3) the ‘bleeding’ Pharisee, who in his eagerness to avoid looking on a woman shuts his eyes and so bruises himself by stumbling against a wall; (4) the ‘painted’ Pharisee, who advertises his holiness lest anyone should touch him so that he should be defiled; (5) the ‘reckoning’ Pharisee, who is always saying, ‘What duty must I do to balance any unpalatable duty which I have neglected?’; (6) the ‘fearing’ Pharisee, whose relation to God is one merely of trembling awe; (7) the Pharisee from ‘love.’ In all but the last there was an element of ‘acting,’ of hypocrisy.” (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, pp. 2364- 2365) Bear in mind that the Talmud was written after the time of Christ on earth, its contents being in oral form only before that. These seven “classes” are nowhere referred to in the New Testament, but they certainly fit the picture of the Pharisees given in the New Testament. Let no one think that the Pharisees were ever condemned by Jesus for any of their insistence on obeying the commandments of God or for any of their own successful and genuine obedience to God’s commandments. Nor were they charged with what some today call “a keeping of the letter of the law while neglecting the spirit.” They were often charged with failing to obey the commandments of God.

Characteristics of the Pharisees

The following are the points made and developed by James W. Adams in an article in **“Truth Magazine,”** April 3, 1975:

1. The Pharisees were characterized by a partisan attachment to and rigid practice of the “traditional law.” (Referred to in the New Testament as “*the traditions of the fathers*” or “*elders.*”)
2. The Pharisees were characterized by an inordinate reverence for learning and human reason.
3. The Pharisees were conservative traditionalists. They were characterized by what has been called “excessive meticulousity.” (They confused their own opinions, deductions and inferences with God’s requirements and bound these on others.)
4. The Pharisees were characterized by militant partyism. (Proselytized to promote their party.)
5. The Pharisees were lovers of ostentation, position, preeminence, and adulation.
6. Inconsistent teaching and practice was another characteristic of the Pharisees.
7. The Pharisees exalted the external and ceremonial above the inward and spiritual.
8. Finally, the Pharisees were rabid persecutors of all who differed with them.

Editor’s Note: If you’d like to refresh your memory on past articles by bro. Crews on the Sects of the Jews, they will be found in past issues #43 and 44.284703