

Scripturalism vs Judaism XIII

Who was in Charge of the Temple?

Fred R. Coulter—May 12, 1993

Who was in charge of the temple in Jerusalem during the days of Jesus? Why should this be an important question? *The reason is because there are some people saying that we should follow the way that the Pharisees had done; we should follow the Pharisaical practice today of keeping the Day of Pentecost on the same day that the Pharisees say we should keep in on. There has been a controversy raging about this for a long, long time. There's even one man who has written an article saying that we are to follow the Pharisees because they were conservative. The Sadducees were liberal. Yet, we showed in this series that that was not so; that Christ put them both in the same category.*

Let's go back to Matthew 16 and let's see what Jesus said concerning the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the chief priests. Then we'll ask the question and do a survey in the book of Matthew: Who was in charge of the temple? During the days of Jesus there is absolutely no question at all that whatever the decree was from the temple in Jerusalem, those were the days that were to be kept, including all of the Holy Days, including Pentecost. That becomes a very, very important key thing for us to understand.

Matthew 16:1: "Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Him, tempting Him and asking Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He answered *and* said to them, 'When evening has come, you say, "*It will be* fair weather, for the sky is red." And in the morning, *you say*, "Today *it will* storm, for the sky is red and lowering." **Hypocrites!...**" (vs 1-3). I want to focus in on that word, because we're going to see this later when we come to Matt. 23.

"...You know *how* to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.' Then He left them and went away. Now when His disciples came to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. And Jesus said to them, 'Watch out, and be on guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' Then they reasoned among themselves, saying, '*It is* because we did not take bread'" (vs 3-7).

Verse 8: "But when Jesus knew *this*, He said to them, 'O *you* of little faith, why are you reasoning among yourselves that *it is* because you did not bring bread? Do you still not understand? *Do you* not remember the five loaves of the five thousand,

and how many baskets you took *up*? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets you took *up*? How is it that you do not understand that I was not speaking of bread *when I told* you to **beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?**' Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, **but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees**" (vs 8-12).

Yet, we find a conflict in the Scriptures. We need to analyze and answer this question, because He's calling them hypocrites and we're told to beware of their teachings. What if they have a teaching that's contrary to what's in the Bible? Is that leaven? Is that something we should follow? *or* Should not follow? And in relationship to Pentecost this becomes a very important question. It comes down to another situation. We need to ask: Who was in control of the temple? *They are the ones who set the Holy Days!* Did the Pharisees control the temple? That's really what it gets down to, because we are admonished by some that because of Matt. 23 that we should follow the teachings of the Pharisees.

If you carry that to its extreme, then we should reject Christ. Think on that! If the Pharisees were so righteous and so good, why did Jesus condemn them?

Matthew 23:1: "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, 'The scribes and the Pharisees have sat down on Moses' seat *as judges*; therefore, every judgment that they tell you to observe, observe and do. But do not do according to their works; **for they say and do not**'" (vs 1-3). This is a very interesting Scripture for us to analyze and look at and to understand. On the surface it does appear that we're to follow what the Pharisees say. But then you look at it closely and it says the scribes who are put before the Pharisees, and sit in Moses' seat.

And it's also very interesting when you understand that the Pharisees were of the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe of Judah; very few were of the tribe of Levi, because they were the priests. If you go back and study the history of the Pharisees, which the Pharisees were in the main *lay* preachers who taught the people from God's Word in the synagogues.

I want you to go ahead and study Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. All I'm going to do today is a survey so we can see how all of these things come together. You will find that the Pharisees have their power, their authority, more in the synagogues, and

very little at the temple. The truth of the matter is, in v 2 it says the scribes and Pharisees ‘sit in the seat of Moses’—it actually means and is translated in the *New American Version* of the Bible, that the ‘scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in Moses’ seat.’ They usurped it! They took it! They placed themselves down in Moses’ seat.

That brings in a very difficult thing saying that we ought to follow them because they sit in Moses’ seat. *NO! We’re to follow Christ!* They sat themselves down in Moses’ seat, but notice what Jesus said, v 3: “Therefore, every judgment that they tell you to observe, observe and do...”

When we go to Matthew 15, Mark 7—where He condemns all of their traditions—what is the only thing that would be obligatory for people to follow, that would be when they read from the book of Moses. God’s Truth is *truth!* That doesn’t change anything! That is right and good! But the Pharisees were placed subordinate to the scribes, so you can’t say that we are to follow the Pharisees only.

Let’s understand something in the Word of God. It has been written [in an article] by a man who says we ought to keep Pentecost on the sixth of Sivan. I’ve gone through a series showing very clearly how the Pharisees counted. But at the time of Jesus Christ were they following the way that the Pharisees did it, or were they following the way that the Sadducees did the counting for Pentecost?

As we have seen and gone through the calendar carefully, there are times when the Pharisaical way of counting is correct in approximately three out of ten years, because of the way that the Holy Days would fall. I’m not going to go into a long dissertation on how to count Pentecost here, but I want to focus in on *who was in charge at the temple*, because those in charge at the temple were the ones who established and set the calendar, set the Holy Days, which everyone had to follow—Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees all alike.

Philippians 3:4: “Though I might also have *reason to trust in the flesh*.... [He’s talking about what he was before he was converted.] ...If any other thinks he has *cause to trust in the flesh*, I *have much more*: Circumcised on *the eighth day*; of *the race of Israel*, from *the tribe of Benjamin*...” (vs 4-5). Paul was not a Levite; he was not a priest. He was a Pharisee. He was a *lay* teacher, as it were. He was a *lay* rabbi as it were. They knew how that he was zealous for the traditions of Judaism, above all of his contemporaries. (Gal. 1).

I want to emphasize that as long as the temple stood, only the priests could decide and set the calendar and the Holy Days—period! That’s why we need to find out who was in charge. Was it the Pharisees? *or* Was it the priests and the Sadducees?

Once we understand that, then we know exactly how to properly count and figure the proper day for the observing of Pentecost.

“...a Hebrew of Hebrews; with respect to law, a Pharisee” (v 5). We are told by this writer that saying he was ‘touching the law, a Pharisee’ therefore, he was perfect.

Notice what it say here, v 6: “With respect to zeal, persecuting the Church; with respect to righteousness that *is* in law, blameless.” Notice the creative leap that takes place in this thinking: Since Paul was a Pharisee, and he was blameless, therefore, he kept the proper Pentecost. Since the Pharisees today say that the proper Pentecost is the sixth of Sivan, therefore, Paul always kept the sixth of Sivan. That’s not what it’s talking about here at all whatsoever. Concerning the law, “...with respect to righteousness that *is* in law, blameless.” That means that he offered the sacrifices; that means he did the washing and the oblations, and as far as the rules of the traditions of the Pharisees, he was blameless. It has nothing to do with when and who set Pentecost. It doesn’t mean that the Pharisees set Pentecost.

You can read in the Septuagint that it does say ‘on the first day after the Holy Day.’ That’s when the Pharisees count. But as I pointed out, the transmission of the Septuagint today, to us, is so much different than what it may have been when it was originally written, that we cannot depend upon it today as the inspired Word of God.

Do you think we can depend upon the *Living Bible* for true doctrine today? *No!* No more than we can depend on the Septuagint today, because of all the things that has happened to it from the time that it was originally written down to this day. If you say and believe that the Septuagint was the inspired Word of God, then you must accept all the Apocrypha, you must except all of those extra writings as also inspired. But the Jewish community rejected those. The ones who were really in charge of preserving the Scriptures rejected those. So, you have to go back and examine every principle, and then go back into the Bible to find out what is so. This doesn’t say one way or the other which day that Paul kept Pentecost on—does it?

He doesn’t say concerning Pentecost that they kept it the way the Pharisees say. When you understand that about one-third of the time that the Pharisaic reckoning of it is correct, because it follows exactly the instructions that are in the Old Testament then you realize that this kind of reasoning is on pretty shaky ground.

Verse 7: “Yet, the things that were gain to me, these things I have counted *as loss* for the sake of Christ. But then truly, I count all things to be loss

for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count *them* as dung; that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is derived* from law, but that *righteousness* which *is by the* faith of Christ—the righteousness of God *that is based on faith*” (vs 7-9). That’s what Paul wanted to have, so likewise, so should we.

Let’s go back and we’ll do a survey; we’ll just use the book of Matthew. I want you to also take your own study and go through Mark, Luke and John. Where were the Pharisees? What influence did they have? I’ll answer most of that right now so you can use that as a target to go by.

In Jerusalem we are going to see at the temple and the capital city the Pharisees had very little influence at all. As you get further and further from Jerusalem out into the countryside where there were more and more synagogues, you find that the Pharisees had greater and greater power and authority.

Matthew 2:2—this is when the wise men came and they wanted to know: “Saying, ‘Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and have come to worship Him.’ But when Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And after gathering together...” (vs 2-4)—the scribes and the Pharisees—NO! it doesn’t say that, does it? Notice:

- who he gathered
- who was in charge
- who are the principle people in charge in Jerusalem at the time that Jesus was born:

Verse 4: “And after gathering together all the **chief priests**... [not the lesser ones, but *chief priests*]: ...**and scribes** of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born. Then they said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written by the prophet’” (vs 4-5)—and they answered correctly out of the Scriptures.

Matt. 2 establishes for us that in Jerusalem and at the temple *the chief priests and the scribes were in charge*. They were the ones who were looked to as authorities concerning Scriptural questions.

Matthew 3—here we have the Baptism of John. Where was John baptizing. He wasn’t baptizing in Jerusalem? *He was baptizing in the River Jordan!* I want you to get a map and look at the River Jordan. You’re going to see that that’s a substantial way away from Jerusalem.

Matthew 3:7: “But after seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism...

[The Pharisees and the Sadducees did come down from Jerusalem to John the Baptist, but they were fewer in number at that particular place, because they would have come down from Jerusalem. They were sent down (John 1) so they could find out what John the Baptist was doing.

Here we have the Pharisees and the Sadducees come to the baptism, and “...he said to them, ‘*You brood of vipers...*’” (v 7). Do we want to follow vipers? Do we want to follow those who are anti-Christ? Think about it! You really need to ask the question, because people are so anxious; that people want to have teachers who teach them things because they have ‘itching ears’ (2-Tim. 4). They want to hear something new, so this comes out as *new doctrine! new Truth!* But it’s not; it’s as old as the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees and all of their arguing. Then He warned them.

Let’s see concerning the scribes and the Pharisees and what Jesus did. In Matthew 9 we’re in the area of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus entered into a ship (v 1); He healed a man (v 2). Verse 3: “And immediately some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘*This man blasphemes.*’... [so, we have scribes there.] ...But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, ‘Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, “*Your sins have been forgiven you,*” or to say, “*Arise and walk*”? But *I speak these words so that you may understand that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins.*’ Then He said to the paralytic, “*Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.*” And he arose and went away to his house. Now when the multitudes saw *it*, they were amazed and glorified God, Who had given such authority to men” (vs 3-8).

Verse 10: “Then it came to pass, when Jesus sat down *to eat* in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And after seeing *this*, the Pharisees...” (vs 10-11).

Let’s understand something about Pharisees: the name means *separatist*. They separated themselves from everyone else so that they would appear righteous! Their successors today are the super-orthodox Jewish leaders of Judaism who wear the funny hats, have the long curls and the beards, and have *their traditions!* They separate themselves from the people. This is what the Pharisees did. That’s why they picked on Jesus and:

“...said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Master eat with tax collectors and sinners?’” (v 11). This was in the area of Galilee; this was not in the area of Judea.

Verse 14: “Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’” They were

comparing with the Pharisees; again, in that area.

Verse 34: “But the Pharisees said, ‘By the prince of the demons He casts out demons.’ Then Jesus went around to all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom...” (vs 34-35).

Matthew 12:1: “At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath day; and His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck the heads of grain and to eat *them*.” Again, we’re still in the area of Capernaum, the area of Galilee, a long way from Jerusalem.

Verse 2: “But after seeing *this*, **the Pharisees** said to Him, ‘Behold, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on *the* Sabbath.’” Then you know the rest of the story, what Jesus told them: *Have you never read...* It’s interesting

Verse 3: “But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he himself and those with him were hungry? How he went into the house of God and he ate the loaves of showbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but for the priests only?’” (vs 3-4). You see what Jesus was really showing and teaching here?

Verse 9: “And after leaving there, He went into their synagogue. And, behold, a man was there who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbaths?’ so that they might accuse Him. But He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who, if he has one sheep that falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift *it out*? And how much better is a man than a sheep? So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbaths.’ And He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and it was restored *as* sound as the other. Then the Pharisees went out *of the synagogue* and held a council against Him *to discuss* how they might destroy Him” (vs 9-14).

Here again we’re still in that geographical area of Galilee. They wanted to destroy Him.

Verse 22: Then was brought to Him one who was possessed by a demon, blind and dumb; and He healed him, so that the one *who had been* blind and dumb both spoke and saw. And the multitudes were all amazed, and said, ‘Is this the Son of David?’ But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, ‘This *man* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebul, prince of the demons.’” (vs 22-24). Then He told them how they were in danger of committing the unpardonable sin.

Verse 34: “Offspring of vipers, how are you able to speak good things, being evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Are we to follow those whom Jesus called, and John called,

hypocrites, generations of vipers—snakes in the grass as it were—and ‘you are of your father the devil’ (John 8). That’s why Jesus said they seated themselves, usurped the authority and seated themselves in Moses’ seat. When they read the Scriptures, you’re to follow the Scriptures, but don’t do their works.

Matthew 15:1: “Then the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying.” There were some schools of Pharisees in Jerusalem; as a matter of fact, there were two schools there—Hillel and Shammai—and they had two opposites in teachings: one believed one way and one believed the other way, but the way it’s presented to us today is that the teachings of Judaism have always been in uniformity down through history. But that is absolutely not the case.

Verse 2: “‘Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of **the elders**? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’ But He answered *and* said to them, ‘Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for the sake of **your tradition**?’” (vs 2-3). There’s the answer back. The oldest and best tradition of the Pharisees means nothing compared to the commandments of God.

Verse 4: “‘For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘The one who speaks evil of father or mother, let him die the death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever shall say to father or mother, ‘Whatever benefit you might receive from me *is being given as a gift to the temple*,’ he is not at all *obligated to* honor his father or his mother.’ And you have made void the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition. Hypocrites!’” (vs 4-7). Do a little study, go through your own Bible and see how many times Jesus called them ‘hypocrites’; see how many times He called them ‘generation of vipers’; see how many times He called them ‘servants of the Devil.’

Matthew 16:1: “Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Him, tempting Him and asking Him to show them a sign...” We read that already, going through and showing the whole thing there with the scribes and the Pharisees.

Now we’re going to see how it begins shifting over the other way, Matthew 19:1: “And it came to pass *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee and came to the borders of Judea beyond the Jordan... [beyond the West Bank today] ...And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. Then the Pharisees came to Him and tempted Him, saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?’ But He answered them, saying, ‘**Have you not read...**’” (vs 1-4).

John 5:38—Again, Jesus was challenged by

them and He said: “And you do not have His Word dwelling in you...” That’s quite a statement— isn’t it? They didn’t have the Word of God abiding in them. They had *their* traditions! They had *their* ways! They read the Word of God! But that’s a hypocritical stance— isn’t it? *That’s exactly what Jesus said they were!*

“...for you do not believe Him Whom He has sent. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think that you have eternal life; and they are the ones that testify of Me. But you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I have known you, that **you do not have the love of God in yourselves.**” (vs 38-42). You think about that! That’s really a strong statement!

You know what the love of God involves: keeping the commandments of God, loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and being. We are dealing with people who were ‘religious’; but *they weren’t following God!*

Matthew 19:4—they came tempting Him: “But He answered them, saying, ‘Have you not read...’” You don’t have the love of God in you; you don’t have the Word of God in you.

Matthew 20:17—this is when He comes to Jerusalem; now we see where it begins to change from Pharisees to priests: “And while they were going up to Jerusalem, Jesus took the twelve disciples aside in the way and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man **shall be betrayed to the chief priests...**’” (vs 17-18). There were priests, but who were the *chief* priests? Why were they *chief* priests?

Example: You have a police force, but you have a Chief of Police, and then you have the lesser ones coming down to just policemen. Who sets the policies and gives the commands? *The Chief of Police!* Likewise, when we come to Jerusalem we’re going to find that it is the *chief priests*, the *scribes* and the *elders*. The chief priests were of the Sadducean party. There were Sadducees who were not priests, but all of the *chief priests* were Sadducees.

Verse 18: “...the Son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death; and they shall deliver Him up to the Gentiles to mock *Him*, and to scourge *Him*, and to crucify *Him*; but He shall rise again the third day.” (vs 18-19).

I want you to read through all the incidents, because I just want to highlight the main important parts in this survey.

After He was healing, Matthew 21:14: “And

the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple... [We’re right at the temple; this becomes very important. Now we begin to see who has the power, or who’s in charge at the temple.] ...and He healed them. But when **the chief priests and the scribes** saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children shouting in the temple and saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they were indignant” (vs 14-15).

Verse 23: “Now when He entered the temple *and* was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to Him, saying, ‘By what authority do You do these things? And who gave You this authority?’”

Let’s think about this! Let’s analyze this a little bit more. Who came to Him? *Not the Pharisees! But the chief priests and the elders of the people!* In other words, the ones who were *in charge!* The elders of the people were the ones who were governing the civil aspect of the government. The chief priests were the ones who were in charge of the temple, governing all of the things to do with the temple and temple worship, the days to be observed, the things to be done on those days.

Why would they be concerned about the ‘authority’ that Jesus had? *They were the ones who were the authorities, so they wanted to know:* “By what authority...” did He do this, because it wasn’t by *their* authority.

Verse 24: “And Jesus answered *and* said to them, ‘I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, where did it come from? From heaven, or from men?’ Then they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say to us, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “From men,” we fear the multitude; for everyone holds John as a prophet.’” (vs 24-26). That shows you how much confidence you can have in politicians. You can apply the same thing today. These politicians today, they speak out of four sides of their mouth, not just two sides, but four sides of their mouth.

Verse 27: “And they answered Jesus *and* said, ‘We do not know.’ He said to them also, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’” In the temple area, the Pharisees are there, but they do not have any authority. The Pharisees were included in some of their councils, but they were in a minority position.

Verse 45: “Now after hearing His parables, the chief priests and the Pharisees knew that He was speaking about them. And they sought to arrest Him, but they were afraid of the multitudes, because they held Him as a prophet” (vs 45-46).

After Jesus went forth and gave a parable concerning them, Matthew 22:15: “Then the Pharisees went and took counsel *as to* how they might entrap Him in *His* speech.... [They were going to entrap Jesus!] ...And they sent their disciples *along* with the Herodians... [those of the party of Herod] ...to Him, saying, ‘Master, we know that You are true, and *that You* teach the way of God in truth, and *that You* are not concerned about *pleasing* anyone; for You do not respect *the* persons of men. Therefore, tell us, what do You think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?’ But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said, ‘Why do you tempt Me, *you* hypocrites? Show Me the tribute coin.’ And they brought to Him a silver coin. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription *is on* this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And He said to them, ‘Render then the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God’” (vs 15-21).

Verse 23: “On that same day, *the Sadducees*, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and questioned Him.” Concerning the Sadducees, because the Pharisees believed in a resurrection, we’re told that they are more righteous than the Sadducees. The Sadducees didn’t believe in a resurrection. Well, the Sadducees, in order to not have to follow all of the things that the Pharisees did, their object was—because we are in charge of the temple—we will only follow the first five books of Moses, which in the first five books of Moses it does not teach a resurrection. In that point they may have been right, technically speaking.

Verse 34: “But after the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they came together *before Him*. And one of them, a doctor of the law, questioned *Him*, tempting Him, and saying, ‘Master, which commandment *is the* great commandment in the Law?’” (vs 34-36). Here they were all trying to trip Jesus up. But we see that it was the priests and the elders and the scribes; the Pharisees were a very little part of it, though they wanted to do Jesus in.

We’ll bypass all of Matt. 23—you can read that how they condemned Him for everything that they did. They weren’t following the things of God at all. I want to remind you to study Mark, Luke and John. When you come to the book of John that there is no differentiation between the Pharisees, as much as we find in some of the others. But it is just in the caption, *the Jews! The Jews* came to Him. There is some reference to the Pharisees, but most of the other references then are to the Jews and the priests.

Matthew 26:3: “Then the chief priests and the scribes and the **elders of the people**...” I want you to watch that very carefully, because this is going to be the thing where the authority lies all the way through the events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ: His arrest, His trial and all the way

through it we do not see any of the Pharisees involved on the inner council of the power circle of the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. That becomes a very key, important point, because that shows that the Pharisees had no power, no authority to establish anything at the temple.

Verse 3: “Then the chief priests and the scribes and the **elders of the people** assembled together in the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas... [The place of the high priest was right there on the temple grounds] ...and *they* took counsel together for the purpose of seizing Jesus by treachery, and killing *Him*. But they said, ‘Not during the Feast, so that there will not be a riot among the people’” (vs 3-5).

Verse 14: “Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests.” It wasn’t the Pharisees. The Pharisees had no authority to do anything, when you come right down to it. When you read and study the history of it, the Pharisees did not even get control of the temple area until about 66_{A.D.}, just before it’s fall.

(go to the next track)

The priests, the Levites, the elders were the ones who had control of the temple. They were the ones who had the authority; they were the ones who established the days according to the calendar, according to the calculation for counting to Pentecost, because *they were in charge!* And it really didn’t matter what the Pharisees thought. The writings of the Pharisees 200 years after Jesus in the Talmud or the Gemara or in any of the Mishnas that the Jews have cannot be trusted at all to be trustworthy.

Even *Josephus* cannot be trusted, because the greatest event—the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh—has been totally ignored by them. Jesus said that they were ‘...of their father the Devil, and he lies...’ That’s exactly what the Jews have done in their histories. They have lied to make it look as though Jesus never came, because they rejected Him.

All of the chief priests and the scribes and the Sadducees at the temple area were destroyed when the temple was destroyed in 70_{A.D.} So, you have no one of the priests that survived. You have no one of the Sadducees that survived to refute any of the things that the surviving Pharisees wrote centuries later.

“...Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, *and* said, ‘What are you willing to give me, and I will deliver Him up to you?’ And they offered him thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought an opportunity to betray Him” (vs 14-16).

Verse 47: “And while He was yet speaking,

Judas, one of the twelve, suddenly appeared, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from **the chief priests and elders** of the people.” He was given authority by them. They were the ones who were in charge.

Verse 57: “But those who had arrested Jesus led *Him* away to **Caiaphas the high priest**, where **the scribes and the elders** were assembled.” You find all the way through this that the Pharisees had little or no authority at all for little affect of things done at the temple. Their way of counting Pentecost—unless it fell automatically the way that the priests and the Sadducees counted Pentecost, was not accepted. It was just by coincidence that it happened that way. As we saw, three out of ten years it happens that way.

Verse 59: “Now the **chief priests and the elders** and the whole Sanhedrin sought false evidence against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death.”

Verse 62: “And the **high priest** rose up *and* said to Him, ‘Have You no answer for what these are testifying against You?’ But Jesus was silent. And the high priest answered *and* said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God that You tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said *it*. Moreover, I say to you, in the future you shall see the Son of man sitting at *the* right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest ripped his *own* garments, saying, ‘He has blasphemed! Why do we need any more witnesses? Behold, you have just now heard His blasphemy. What do you think?’ They answered *and* said, ‘He is deserving of death!’” (vs 62-66).

Who put Jesus to death? *The chief priests, the scribes and the elders!* Not the Pharisees. Nowhere in any of these councils do we find that the Pharisees were sitting there in the council, which tells us—it doesn’t mean they are less guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ—they had no authority at the temple. They had no authority to carry out these laws.

Matthew 27:1: “Now when morning came, all **the chief priests and the elders of the people** took counsel against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death.... [There you have it!] ...And after binding Him, they led *Him* away and delivered Him up to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Now when Judas, who had betrayed Him...” (vs 1-3).

Verse 6: “But the chief priests took the pieces of silver *and* said, ‘It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is *the* price of blood.’ And after taking counsel, they bought a potter’s field with the *pieces of silver*, for a burial ground for strangers. Therefore, that field is called The Field of Blood to this day” (vs 6-8).

When He is brought before Pilate, we find in v 12: “And when He was accused by the chief priests and the elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, ‘Don’t You hear how many things they testify against You?’” (vs 12-13). Again, it was the chief priests and the elders. You see how absolutely overwhelming the evidence is concerning who was in charge of the temple.

We will do our survey in the rest of Matt. 27 and then on into the book of Acts and see what the Jewish authorities now tell us exactly what it was on the day when the Sadducees had counted Pentecost.

Verse 20: “But the **chief priests and the elders** persuaded the multitudes to demand Barabbas, and to destroy Jesus.” It was the chief priests and the elders again! That’s why it’s emphasized here. Whenever you get a doctrinal paper saying, ‘Oh, brethren, I have some brand new truth that you need to examine and we need to do this, that or the other thing’—don’t believe it! Check it out in the Bible to make sure whether that is true or not.

After Jesus was already crucified, dead and in the tomb, then we find the Pharisees coming around and wanting to help cover the bases themselves. Verse 62: “Now on the next day, which followed the preparation *day*, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate.”

The Pharisees came in after the fact. They didn’t have the authority, but they probably came to the chief priest and said, ‘Look, what are we going to do out here in the synagogues, because we have to go out in the countryside where all the synagogues are. We need you to help cover the base for us.’ So they got together and worked out their little treachery there.

Now let’s go to Acts 2:1: “And when the day *of Pentecost*, the fiftieth day, was being fulfilled... [In the Greek it means *during the accomplishing of the 50th day*. That’s what Pentecost means—50th. The verb form is *to count 50*. The noun form is 50th.] ...they were all with one accord in the same place.” You know what happened then, the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3—You know how Peter and John healed the man who lying there at the Gate Beautiful. He looked to them for alms and Peter looked upon him and said, ‘silver and gold I have none to give you, but in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth arise and walk.’ And he arose and walked and everyone was all excited. Then Peter preached how they have to *repent*.

Acts 4:1: “Now as they were speaking to the people, the priests and *the* captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, being dismayed

because they were teaching the people, and preaching through Jesus the resurrection from *the* dead. And they arrested them and put *them* in the hold [prison] until the morning; for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the message believed, and the number of men was about five thousand. Now it came to pass in the morning *that* their rulers and elders and scribes were assembled together in Jerusalem, and Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and as many as were of *the* high priest's lineage" (vs 1-6).

Again, who do we find? *The priests, the rulers, the elders, and, as we will see, the Sadducees!* They were the ones who were at the temple and controlled it. This becomes important, because in Acts 2 we have the Day of Pentecost, which then in the context will inherently tell us which day this Pentecost was kept on, so that we might know which is the proper day for keeping Pentecost. We cannot believe what the Pharisees have said who are now the rabbis of today, their successors.

Then we know what Peter did. He gave them a sermon and said that you can't be saved by any other than the name of Jesus Christ. They were let go, they came back and prayed with all of the disciples. Acts 5—great miracles were done. The disciples were doing all of these teachings; there were multitudes going after the disciples, following Jesus Christ right there at the temple. They had to stop this thing at the temple. Right in the heart and core of the center of Judea; the heart and core and center of Judaism. Right there at the temple with all of the sacrifices and everything that was going on this was flourishing. Miracles were being done. People were being healed. Tremendous things were happening because they were believing in Jesus.

Acts 5:17: "Then the high priest rose up, and all those with him, being of *the sect of the Sadducees*; and they were filled with anger. And they laid their hands on the apostles and put them in *the* public hold. But during the night an angel of *the* Lord *came and* opened the doors of the prison; and after bringing them out, he said, 'Go and stand in the temple, *and* speak to the people all the words of this life.' And after hearing *that*, they entered into the temple at dawn and taught. Now when the high priest and those with him came, they called together the Sanhedrin... [the senate; a greater council including the priests, the elders, the scribes, the Sadducees and, as we will see by this council, some Pharisees. One very important Pharisee who was called Gamaliel, the teacher of Paul.] ...and all the elderhood of the sons of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison..." (vs 17-22).

Verse 25. "But a certain one came *and* reported to them, saying, 'Behold, the men whom you put in the prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.'

Verse 27: "And they brought them in *and* set *them* before the Sanhedrin. And the **high priest** asked them... [not the Pharisee, but the high priest] ...saying, 'Did we not order you by a *direct* command not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, with *the* purpose of bringing this man's blood upon us.' But Peter and the apostles answered *and* said, 'We are obligated to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus Whom you killed by hanging *Him* on a tree. Him has God exalted by His right hand *to be* a Prince and Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel'" (vs 27-31).

Here's the whole council of all of the important people in Judea and Galilee gathered there for this council of what to do about the teaching of Jesus and the apostles and what they were doing. Truly, they did turn the world upside down.

Verse 32. "And we are His witnesses of these things, as *is* also the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey Him.' Now when they heard *this*, they were cut *to the heart* and took counsel to put them to death. But a certain man stood up, a Pharisee in the Sanhedrin... [One! It doesn't say that the Pharisees gathered to give counsel.] ...Gamaliel by name, a teacher of the law *who was* honored by all the people, *and* commanded *that* the apostles be put out for a short while. And he said to them, 'Men, Israelites, give careful thought to what you are about to do concerning these men.'" (vs 32-35).

Verse 38. "And now I say to you, withdraw from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be from men, it will be overthrown; but if it be from God, you do not have the power to overthrow it. *Take heed*, lest you be found to be fighting even against God'" (vs 38-39). Then they had a little peace and rest for a while.

Acts 6:7: "And the Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem was multiplied exceedingly, and a great multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith." Now there were really inroads going on. Then Stephen was preaching. He was arrested, taken before the council. He preached to them. The whole council rose up and went out and stoned Stephen, gnashed their teeth on him and were totally and absolutely angry at him for what he did in convicting them.

Acts 7:58: "And cast *him* out of the city *and* stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man called Saul....

[who was later called *Paul* as we know] ...And they stoned Stephen, who called upon *God*, saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And he fell to his knees *and* cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge.' And after he had said this, he died" (vs 58-60).

Acts 8:1: "Now Saul had consented to killing him. And that day a great persecution arose against the Church that *was* in Jerusalem; and all *the believers* were scattered throughout the countries of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." They really put the heat on them!

Saul was persecuting the Church; he was a Pharisee, but who did he have to go to, to receive his authority to do the things that he did? Acts 9:1 is very revealing: "Now Saul, still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, **went to the high priest.**" Saul did not go to the council of the Pharisees; he did not go to the council of the rabbis; he went to the high priest who was a Sadducee, because the high priest was the one who was in charge and had authority.

Verse 2: "Asking him *for* letters *to take* to the synagogues at Damascus... [so he could take that authoritative letter from the high priest]: ...so that if he found any who were of that way... [men or women] ...he might bring *them* bound, both men and women, to Jerusalem." You know the rest of the story, what happened to the Apostle Paul.

Let's come to the sum of the matter that we have just covered: The *chief priests*, *the elders* and *the scribes* who were the ones in charge at the temple. They established and controlled the things concerning the way the temple worship was handled and, in particular, the way of counting Pentecost.

Now I want to read to you some quotes from the Jewish encyclopedia, *The Encyclopedia Judaica*:

The Sadducees and later the Karaites understood the term Sabbath as we find in Lev. 23 "from the morrow after the Sabbath"... [which then in Hebrew is pronounce 'm mchrth ha shbth'] ...to be the regular weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

That's the way that the priests and the Sadducees counted Pentecost. That is the way that Pentecost was counted the year that Jesus was crucified. That is the way that Pentecost was counted all the way down until the near destruction of the temple in 70_{A.D.} *Josephus* gives the account that in about 66_{A.D.} the Pharisees began to be greater in number and the councils than were the chief priests and the scribes. Of course, at that time then, it's way past the time to establish doctrine for the Church today.

The Sadducees and later the Karaites understood the term Sabbath in these verses... [Lev. 23] ...literally hence from then 'shavoo'ot' always falls on a Sunday.

The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* says:

The Torah provides that the seven weeks up to 'shavoo'ot'... [or Pentecost] ...be counted from the morrow after the rest day.

That rest day is 'ha Shabbat' which is the Sabbath. It is not the high day nor the first day, but the Sabbath.

The Sabbath of the Passover Festival. The interpretation of this Passover became one of the outstanding points at issue between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

But we just saw that as long as the temple stood, the Pharisees did not have that much impact or input as to what really was going on.

According to the Pharisaic point of view, supported by the Septuagint and later universally accepted in the Talmud, the Sabbath in question was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread... [or the first day of Passover] ...hence Pentecost would always fall fifty days later on the sixth of Sivan. The Sadducees however, and later the Karaites, supported by the Samaritans, took the word to mean literally after the beginning of the Passover festival and thus Pentecost would always fall on a Sunday and might vary in the numbered date of the month from the seventh to the thirteenth of Sivan. The Sadduccaical way of reckoning Pentecost is referred to the old Biblical view.

Because they went by what was in Lev. 23.

They [Sadducees] contended that the seven weeks from the first barley sheaf offering to Pentecost should, according to Lev. 23:15-16, be counted from the day after the Sabbath and consequently, Pentecost should always be celebrated on the first day of the week. Which is what we do today.

The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* says the same thing:

It is clear that the power and privilege invested interests played a much larger part in the life of the Sadducees than in the other section of the nation. In one way or another they held control of the temple and, unless in the last few years of its existence the services...

This would include the day determining the wave sheaf offering to count to Pentecost, thereby determining Pentecost.

...were conducted in accordance with their views. So closely were they associated with the temple... [that is the Sadducees and the priests] ...that after its destruction in 70_{A.D.} the Sadducees as a group or party are no more heard of.

Therefore, we have no authentic writings to establish in a counterview to the Pharisaic way what the Sadducees did other than what we have recorded here. We go to the words of the Bible, we go to the New Testament to find the recorded history that was given to us by those who wrote the New Testament to show us who was in charge at the temple.

This proves beyond any shadow of doubt that once you have established that those in charge of the temple—the priests and the Sadducees—were the ones who were in control. Then however Pentecost was counted by them is how Pentecost should be counted by us. It depends not on their righteousness. It depends not upon their sins. But it depends on what the Bible says, and that's what we have done.

So, we should count Pentecost in the way that we understand it now and should continue to do so. Let's not let anyone come around and give us some Judaizing to turn you away from the words and the clear Scriptures of God.

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 16:1-12
- 2) Matthew 23:1-3
- 3) Philippians 3:4-9
- 4) Matthew 2:2-5
- 5) Matthew 3:7
- 6) Matthew 9:3-8, 10-11, 14, 34-35
- 7) Matthew 12:1-3, 9-14, 22-24, 34
- 8) Matthew 15:1-7
- 9) Matthew 16:1
- 10) Matthew 19:1-4
- 11) John 5:38-42
- 12) Matthew 19:4
- 13) Matthew 20:17-19
- 14) Matthew 21:14-15, 23-27, 45-46
- 15) Matthew 22:15-21, 23, 34-36
- 16) Matthew 26:3-5, 14-16, 47, 57, 59, 62-66
- 17) Matthew 27:1-3, 6-8, 12-13, 20, 62
- 18) Acts 2:1
- 19) Acts 4:1-6
- 20) Acts 5:17-22, 25, 27-35, 38-39
- 21) Acts 6:7
- 22) Acts 7:58-60
- 23) Acts 8:1

24) Acts 9:1-2

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Mark 7
- Galatians 1
- John 1
- 2 Timothy 4
- Matthew 9:1-2
- John 8
- Acts 3

Also referenced: Books:

- *Josephus*
- *The Encyclopedia Judaica*
- *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*

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