

## Pharisees

Linville Dunaway, Corinth Christian Church

From the first mention of the Pharisees in the gospels they are condemned, although they thought themselves the best of the best as worshippers of God. Their form and theory sounded good in that they carefully gave tithes of all that they possessed. The problem was in the way they looked at themselves and at other people. **Luke 18: 11,** "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." He thought very well of himself, but his opinion didn't count, what God says it what counts.

Besides the pride in himself, he looked down on anyone who was not a Pharisee. In his words he mentioned that he was better than other men, especially this publican. He thinks that he is telling God that he is a good man, but others are not as good. How many modern day Pharisees feel the same? There are so many that think that if a person

is not following them and doing everything that they do, then that person is not even saved. The Pharisee attitude says, in effect, that if you don't listen to and follow them, you have no chance to reach heaven.

Of course such a person would never think that he is doing such a thing, nor admit it, but they are. Read the gospels and see who gave Jesus the most opposition and it is clear that it was the Pharisees and other religious leaders. In Acts, who gave the apostles the same opposition and persecution? Once again the Pharisees stand out as proud defenders of the law. The trouble is that they didn't keep the law, except in form and they knew nothing about love and faith. The Pharisees of old, and the modern Pharisee, have much in common.

While singing, "Oh, how I love Jesus," they look down on people that they don't like and shun them. Whether they mean to, or not, they sometimes discourage and destroy the ministry and faith of those who do not meet their approval. Preachers are ignored and mocked by those in their special groups, because they don't have the education or credentials that the "In crowd" thinks that they should have. I have had several individuals over the years tell of how they were met at the door of churches and told to go somewhere else. Then the hypocrites

go inside to "worship the Lord." I have had a few people in times past ask me if it was alright if they came to Corinth, or wherever I was preaching at he time. It makes you want to cry to think of people being treated like that by those who were calling themselves church leaders.

I have always heard that **Isaiah 65:5** is the creed of the Pharisees. It says, in part, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou." Reading of them in the gospels, I don't doubt it, for they looked down on Jesus and on his followers. Back then, or today, you can tell when people think little of you. When you are treated like that just remember that they treated Jesus that way, too, and he said that his people would be treated the way that they treated him.

Was the Pharisee as good as he thought himself to be? No, not even close. Here is what Jesus said in **Luke 18: 13-14,** "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

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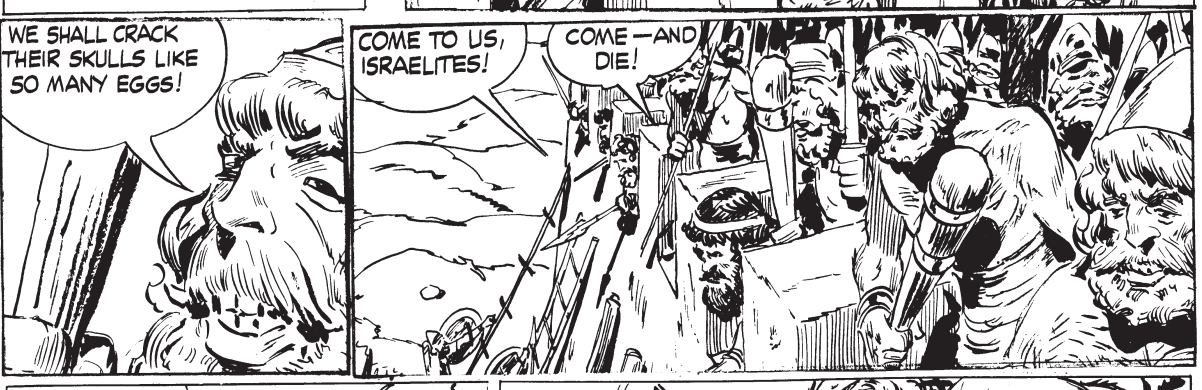
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