

From God or Men? Matthew 21:23-27

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Jesus once asked the _____ whether John's baptism was from God or men. Today, we're asking the _____ question, "from God or men?" God's Word in Scripture can _____ us distinguish right and wrong, what comes from God and what comes from the minds of men. We must understand God and mankind are not _____. God sees and knows a multitude of things that we will _____ know. We need His _____.

Read Phil's comments about the work of SEARCH.

The source of an idea does matter because _____ matters. Whether our _____ come from God or from the imagination of men determines their validity. God tells us the truth, but the devil has told many _____ to distract and lead us astray. Men may think they know and yet still be deceived. Many people, sadly, deceive themselves with what they _____ to believe rather than what they _____ to believe. God reveals what we _____ rather than what we _____. His Word reveals that He truly is, rather than what some imagine Him to be. That is, we know what He's _____ like. One of the reasons that we search the Scriptures is to _____ the truth that comes from God. We're determined to _____ the Lord's way; we want nothing less and nothing more. The Lord Jesus has the words of _____ life. He is the _____ of every good thing. We want the Lord.

Today's reading is from the life of Jesus in the Gospel According to Matthew 21:23-27.

The differences between God and man are enormous. God is omniscient; that means He knows _____. But men don't know everything and have _____ much. God has lived throughout all eternity, but man has only existed a _____ time. God wisely _____ the world and watched human _____ from the beginning. He knows everything about everything, and nothing _____ His notice. If we _____ what God told us in the Bible then we're left with myths, legends, assumptions, and opinions. People use the word "scholar" or "science" and assume that their reasoning, dating, and theories must be _____, only to find that some scholar or scientist changes our minds just a few years later.

God is not like man. He doesn't tease or tempt us with a fabrication. Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that He should _____, Nor a son of man, that He should _____." Isaiah 65:16 calls Him "the God of _____," and 2 Timothy 2:15 calls Scripture "the _____ of truth." God declares in Malachi 3:6, "I am the Lord, I do not _____."

God doesn't think the way men think. People trust their judgment and often find their judgments are _____. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to _____." He may think he is doing the right thing when, in fact, he is

opposing what is right and good. **Read the Lord's prediction and Peter's response in Matthew 16:21-23.** Though Peter was zealous and loved the Lord, he was actually opposing, in that statement, the _____ of God.

It's easy to pursue our lives and _____ God's truth. Jeremiah saw it in his day, and it's true today! Jeremiah 10:23 says, "I know, O LORD, that a man's _____ is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his _____." God's thoughts and judgments, however, are true and they're dependable. God said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Man by his own _____ will never fully know the Lord. Paul wrote, "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the _____ preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21)

Many people assume that the _____ of their hearts are truer than anything else, but the heart can lead us into great trouble. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). People frequently _____ to themselves and convince themselves that what they want is what is right. The song says, "It can't be wrong when it feels so right"; but God may not think that way.

Some are so ingrained in their man-made traditions that they _____ that these traditions came from God. The Pharisees believed their human traditions even _____ than they did the written Word of God. They thought following their traditions meant that they were _____ to God, but their human traditions found fault with Jesus when His followers didn't wash their hands according to the tradition. The Lord Jesus, speaking of the Pharisees, said, "'This people honors me with their _____, but their heart is far away from me. 'But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men'" (Matthew 15:8-9). He clearly predicted, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be _____ up" (verse 13).

Some think if the _____ believes it, then millions of people can't be wrong! But God said, "You shall not _____ the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to _____ justice" (Exodus 23:2). The crowd is not always right. Remember Noah against the whole world. Noah was right but the _____ was not. Remember Joshua and Caleb, the two spies that came back and said that they should take the land. Then there were the opposing ten cowardly spies and all the weeping Israelites in Numbers 13. Joshua and Caleb stood with God and they did not follow the _____. The Lord Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are _____ who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are _____ who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). The crowds may think that they're doing well and yet be going the _____ way. This is why we must ask, what does the Lord want from us?

Some feel they must please _____, so they forget pleasing the Lord. Paul asked, “For am I now seeking the _____ of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). Sadly, many of the Jews chose not to follow Christ, because they wanted to please their _____. John 12:42-43 says, “Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.” They would rather keep their _____ among the Jews than to enjoy the approval of God. How sad! How mistaken!

Zeal for God is important, but not if that zeal arises from misunderstanding. Sincere zeal does not _____ God’s teaching in the Word of God. The Jews were zealous for their faith but they _____ their Messiah, Jesus Christ. Paul said, “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to _____. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not _____ to God’s righteousness” (Romans 10:2-3). Convictions and zeal in the wrong things will not lead you to the righteousness of God. You must come to Jesus for that.

Some folks think following their conscience will _____ them to do the right thing, but your conscience may be trained in the ways of the world rather than in the teaching of God. The apostle Paul said, “Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly _____ conscience before God up to this day” (Acts 23:1). Even when Paul was Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the church, he thought he was following his conscience! **Read what he said in Acts 22:4-5.** One can conscientiously _____ God and His ways and think he’s doing the right thing.

Some people follow whatever their _____ believes, never evaluating whether the family is following the truth. The Lord Jesus said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37). You may love your family, but you cannot put them first and still _____ the Lord. Though your mother and father were wonderful people, they do not _____ with Jesus. Put Jesus _____!

Just because someone claims to be a _____ doesn’t mean he is God’s prophet. There were people in Jeremiah’s day who _____ that they had a dream or the Lord said this or that, but the Lord never spoke through them. They just dreamed it up in their _____ imagination. **Read Jeremiah 23:16-18.** They were dreaming up prophecies rather than really listening to God’s _____ prophets. We have people who claim to be prophets today who dream up calamities and ideas from their _____ imagination. First John 4:1 says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many _____ prophets have gone out into the world.” We must _____ everything by the Scriptures. False teachers will always go astray from God’s Word.

Some people trust the _____ of men. The apostle John spoke of a false belief about Jesus that people held in the _____ church. They did not believe that Christ came in the

_____. **Read 2 John 9-11.** People who hold false doctrines about Christ have no _____ with God the Father.

You cannot _____ a corrupt gospel and not be accursed according to Galatians 1:8-9. You cannot teach a divisive and unscriptural doctrine and stay in _____ with God according to Romans 16:17. You cannot teach some man-made _____ and expect to please God. When you stop believing what Christ teaches or start substituting your own thinking for the Bible, you stop believing in Christ himself. If you _____ someone who teaches a false doctrine, you are participating in his “evil deeds.” False teaching is an “evil deed” because it _____ people to believe a lie. False teaching is _____ because believing a human fabrication leaves little room for belief in God.

We need the gospel truth, the _____ truth, and nothing but the truth. You cannot hold fast to one passage of Scripture and then _____ the others. For instance, we need faith to be saved is clearly taught in Scripture; but to say faith _____ saves ignores the need for love, for repentance, and for obedience, which are also necessary to salvation. Paul said, “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the _____ purpose of God” (Acts 20:27). Many today _____ they can pick and choose what they like and ignore what they dislike. Don’t be deceived. We must _____ to ourselves and to our ways, so that we can _____ for Christ and His ways. We must lovingly hear His voice and take up our crosses daily to _____ Him. The Lord Jesus said, “Everyone who is of the truth _____ My voice” (John 18:37). Ultimately, all spiritual _____ resides in Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). He speaks with _____ authority. No human council can overrule or edit what He says. They cannot vote Him out or stand in His place. No one has more authority or power than the Lord Jesus. Jesus has spoken in His written Word, and what He says will stand to the very end of time. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” (Matthew 24:35).

Do you believe in Jesus? Many trust their opinions and experiences _____ all else, even the revealed will of God in the Bible. They believe if it works, then it must be all right. They _____ that what pleases people may not please the Lord. In the end, we are _____ accountable to Him. Our judgment is often faulty, and our experiences too few to be without flaw; but God’s Word is flawless and true. That’s why we must listen to God’s Word.

To become a Christian place your _____ in the Lord Jesus and in what He teaches. The gospel of Christ has God’s power to save. If Jesus died for your sins, and God raised Him from the dead, you have the hope of salvation. Turn from your sins in repentance and humble your heart before God. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be _____ into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. When you’re baptized, God will _____ away your sins and make you His child. When you’re baptized God will give you newness of life and add you to His church. Don’t let anything keep you from giving yourself to Christ Jesus. Once you become a Christian, stay _____ as long as you live. Make your commitment for life. Since Jesus died for you, why not live for Him and serve Him faithfully to the very end!