

Over and over the Pharisees scrutinize Jesus. They probe him with trick questions, trying to trip him up. They accuse him unmercifully and even try to seize him. In several scenes, the Pharisees become angry, *but many people believed*.

Read John 7:30-32, 45-49

I don't know why, but I find this episode rather humorous. I picture these broad-chested Temple guards marching forth to capture Jesus who is sitting unguarded and peacefully teaching the people. They return to the chief priests and Pharisees without their charge. The guards turn to Jell-o as they try to explain why they don't have their "prisoner" with them.

The Pharisees retort back, sounding like little kids who didn't get their way. In essence they ask, "Do you know anyone of importance who believes in him?" What is their gauge for being important in verse 49? _____

On another occasion, Jesus heals a blind man near the Temple. The Pharisees question the man unceasingly. Jesus gives a lengthy discourse. Read the Pharisees' reaction to Jesus' comments.

Read John 10:19-21

Part of the group describes Jesus as _____
The other part of the group asks, _____
Yet many of those who believe, do so in secret.

Read John 12: 42-43

Why would they not confess their faith? _____
What was their heart motivation? _____

Before we grow too critical of the Pharisees, let's examine our own heart motivations. Have you ever found yourself failing to stand up because of fear? Have you refused to help someone because of selfishness? On the other side of the coin, have you done some of your good deeds for the praise of men, rather than for the praise of God? What is your confession?

Jesus came down harder on the Pharisees more than anyone else. Why? Because, of all people, the religious leaders should know better. More is expected of those who teach others. The Pharisees themselves said they were keepers of the law, but rather than imparting meaningful truth, they thought mostly of themselves. Jesus put it this way...

Read Mark 12:38-40

In one phrase, how would you summarize Jesus' accusations?

Read John 11:47-53

Both the chief priests (mostly made up of Sadducees) and the Pharisees have called this meeting. In verse 48, what is their ultimate fear? _____

In verse 53, they no longer want just to seize him or arrest him; what do they want to do? _____

Jesus knows that his time has now come. Very soon he must willingly offer himself in sacrifice for the sins of the world, which includes not only the Jewish people and the religious leaders, but also the Greeks and Romans, and you and me.

On at least two previous occasions, Jesus had told his disciples that he would be condemned to death and would be raised to life on the third day. Now, as they look toward Jerusalem, he tells them again. This is the third time Matthew records Jesus' words about his death.

Read Matt. 20:17-19 (Keep your Bible open)

Can it be any clearer than that? Jesus words are simple and chronological. He outlines each important, essential point. Everything within the disciples rejects the very thought of their master facing death, especially crucifixion. They have ears, but they don't really hear – especially the last sentence. What is it? _____

I'm going to ask you to reread this last passage in Matthew, and then sit in silence for about five minutes. I know it is a long time. It will take you a minute just to clear your mind and allow the Lord to enter your thinking. Fight the temptation to think about all the things you have to do after you finish.

Perhaps you will want to kneel or get in another posture of reverence. Talk to Him only briefly. Mostly let Him talk to you. (Don't forget – reread Matt. 20: 17-19.)

Record the essence of what He told you. _____

Read chapters 17-20 of *Ears to Hear* as Jesus begins His last week in Jerusalem