

June 19

Scriptures: Read John 12

Key Verse: “... they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” (John 12:43)

Overview

The Sanhedrin was the ruling council of Jerusalem. They were Pharisees of high education, wealth, and reputation who acted as judges, or rulers, over the Jewish people. Under the high priest, they acted as a sort of “Supreme Court”, meeting from time to time as the situation warranted. In this chapter we read, “many even among the rulers believed” in Jesus. But they did so secretly, because their political survival depended upon “the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

Jesus warned these secret yet timorous believers, “when a man believes in Me, he does not believe in Me only, but in the One who sent Me. I have come into the world as light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness. As for the person who hears My words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day: (vv.44-48 NIV). No doubt, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, both members of the Sanhedrin, were listening.

These two men must have gone through months of soul-searching. Like Christian politicians of today, they must have debated within themselves, or perhaps even together, as to whether they should outwardly vote with the party against their hearts in order to remain in apposition to influence the system slowly and subtly, or whether they should openly declare their convictions and risk being voted out of power, thus nullifying their “salt and light” influence.

Nicodemus and Joseph finally decided to be “salt and light” outside of the political arenas. For it was they who, just a few days later, publicly identified with the crucified Christ—lovingly taking Him down from the cross, anointing His body for burial, and laying Him to rest in Joseph’s own family sepulcher. They lost their earthly power, but gained a heavenly kingdom.

Prayer

O God, forgive us for any attitudes, which love the praises of men more than, Your commendation. By the working of Your Spirit and Your Word in us may we someday hear You say to us, “Well done.”