

Review

In Matthew chapter 14, we saw the disciples returning to the Capernaum/Gennesaret area of Galilee. Jesus joined them in the boat about halfway across, and now they have landed onshore. The guys are all once again very busy with ministry, for...

Matt. 14:35 ...when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent word into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick

15:1 Pharisees And Scribes Confront Jesus Regarding Tradition

The Pharisees and Scribes came from Jerusalem to where Jesus was at Gennesaret, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. This was a trip of more than 125 miles.

15:2 Hand Washing

They traveled this far simply to confront Jesus for breaking the tradition of the elders. You see, by this time in the Jews' history, the Word of God was no longer the only authority. For on top of the Word of God, they had the ancient rabbis who had written commentaries and clarifications about the commandments contained within the Law. These interpretations and practices became the standard for the Jews. At times, this was even to the point of negating the original Word of God.

In this case, they were hassling Jesus about not insisting that His disciples go through the ceremonial washing of hands before eating food. Understand that they weren't concerned with the disciples not practicing good hygiene. They didn't have a parental complex, insisting on clean hands before dinner. They were upset because their tradition taught that before every meal, hands were considered unclean and had to undergo a laborious ceremonial cleansing.

The hands had to be pressed together and held upright, while one and a half eggshells of water was poured over them. The water had to then drip off of the wrists, otherwise the person's arms would become unclean. It was actually quite involved.

Needless to say, the disciples didn't have time to do this. They were

grabbing a bit of bread as they could, for the ministry was taking up so much of their time.

15:3-9 Jesus' Response

Jesus was not apologetic in the slightest. He pointed out that while His disciples were merely transgressing pointless tradition, the Scribes and Pharisees were transgressing the commandment of God.

Mark gives us the entirety of Jesus' conversation with the Scribes and Pharisees here. He told them,

Mark 7:8 "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."

Mark 7:9 He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."

Mark 7:13 "...invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down..."

This is the three-step process that people follow to replace God's Word with man's religion:

- They add a tradition to the faith, which causes them to begin to neglect the Word of God.

- Then, when that tradition contradicts the Word, they have to set aside the Word to keep their tradition.

- Ultimately, the Word of God is entirely invalidated as that tradition is handed down through the generations.

This is why God says of religion,

Matt. 15:9 ..."IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN."

Honor Your Father And Mother

Jesus gives them a perfect example of tradition nullifying the Word. He reminds them that the Law of God clearly states,

Ex. 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you."

Ex. 21:17 “He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”

God’s intention of honoring our parents is to make sure that they are provided for in their old age.

But the Pharisees practiced the tradition of Kor-BAN (Mark 7: 11). This was the practice of designating anything as being “devoted to God.” Now, when something was named as Kor-BAN, it didn’t have to be donated or given away. The owner could continue to use it, but it was considered as devoted to God.

By exercising the tradition of Kor-BAN, many of the Pharisees were failing to take care of their aging parents by saying,

Mark 7:11 ...”Whatever I have that would help you is Corban...”

They were using the tradition of Kor-BAN to avoid having to obey the commandment of honoring their parents. This was only one example, for Jesus said to them,

Mark 7:13 ...”and you do many things such as that.”

We like to think that this kind of thing is no longer present in the church today. However, there are people who won’t attend Calvary Chapel because they don’t believe guitars and drums are “Christian.” Others believe it is wrong for us not to be dressed up in suits on Sunday. I’m sure that if everyone found out we play card games at the pastor’s house during the Couples Fellowship, some would believe that to be sinful as well. But none of these things are mentioned in the Bible at all.

At the same time, it is not uncommon for these same people to have no problem at all with gossip, judgmentalism, pride, bitterness, and other sins clearly forbidden in the Scriptures. They neglect the command of God, while holding fast to their tradition.

15:10-14 Jesus Calls The Crowd

While the Pharisees and Scribes were still standing there, Jesus called the crowd together and made the statement,

Matt. 15:11 “It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this

defiles the man.”

Jesus’ disciples were nervous. “The Pharisees were really offended when you said that, Jesus!” But Jesus wasn’t concerned with whether or not He’d offended the Pharisees. What He was concerned with was the respect they got from the people. They were viewed as spiritual leaders. But Jesus warned the disciples to leave them alone. They were leaders all right, but blind ones, leading whoever followed them right into a pit.

15:15-20 Defiled By What Comes Out Of The Mouth

Although the disciples knew that what Jesus said had offended the Pharisees, they didn’t quite understand why. What did He mean when He said that a man is defiled only by what proceeds out of the mouth?

Just this: the Pharisees were upset and bothered about the disciples having unclean hands. When the disciples ate, they would be causing the food to be unclean, which the Pharisees considered would go in and defile the man. But Jesus had said, “It’s not these guys who are defiled, it’s you Scribes and Pharisees. My disciples aren’t being defiled by what’s going into them, but you are defiled because of the horrible things in your hearts that are coming out.”

Matt. 15:18-20 “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

Saints, this is the key to understanding the right way to be a Christian. Forget the religion. Throw it all away. God is wanting from us only that which is in the Word. Any time anyone tries to say, “A good Christian is supposed to do this, or not supposed to do that,” simply and sincerely respond by asking, “Where is that in the Bible?” If they can show you, then incorporate it into your life. But if it’s not in there, then it shouldn’t be in your Christianity, either.