

TRUTH OR TRADITION?

jkroberts_us@yahoo.com
www.pacolethillsbaptist.org

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Mark 7:1-8

1. In last week's message we saw Jesus dealing pointedly with the multitudes of people that were following Him.

2. As He dealt with the particular group referred to in John 6 they became offended by His teaching and eventually withdrew and followed Him no more.

John MacArthur observed, "Jesus was still popular with the multitudes of common people, but it was not because they trusted His as Messiah-Savior but because He fed and healed them. Their interest in Him was selfish and their devotion to Him was superficial. They had no desire to follow Him as Lord but only to get from Him what they wanted. They did not want to serve Him but rather they wanted Him to serve their every whim."

3. John tells us that after the events recorded in John 6, "Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him." John 7:1

4. Disturbed by the reports they were getting from Galilee the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem sent a delegation to Galilee to "get the goods" on Jesus so they would have some legitimate basis for any action they took against Him.

NOTE: Any person who is truly representing Jesus Christ will find that some people will go to great lengths to discredit and even destroy them.

5. They observed some of Jesus' disciples eating their food without first ceremonially cleansing their hands.

6. A failure on the part of a Jew to not observe the, "traditions of the elders," was, in the eyes of the scribes and Pharisees, a serious offense against God. (5-6)

a. This passage is not dealing with washing hands, pots and pans for hygienic purposes.

b. It is referring to ceremonial cleansing that supposedly protected people from inward and spiritual defilement.

7. Thinking they had a real issue they could use against Jesus the scribes and Pharisees asked Him. "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?"

8. According to Matthew Jesus ignored their question and asked them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3)

NOTE: Those who question God had better have the correct answers when He questions them.

9. The Lord used the opportunity to confront:

a. The hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders.

b. The way tradition was used to invalidate the Word of God.

10. He also used the opportunity to:

a. Instruct the multitude.

b. Teach His disciples.

I. The hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders.

A. Jesus called them hypocrites and stated that Isaiah 29:13 referred to them. (6-7)

B. They were guilty of:

1. Honoring God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him.

2. Worshipping God in vain.

3. Elevating their man-made traditions above the Word of God.

C. The third Commandment states, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain." (Exodus 20:7)

1. Usually this verse is applied to various forms of profanity that reference names related to God.

2. We need to understand that it actually refers to superficial, indifferent, insincere, and hypocritical use of God's name—identifying with and honoring God with our lips but not with our lives because our hearts are far from Him.

D. Jesus stated that those who worship God must be true worshippers who worship Him in spirit (from the heart in the Spirit) and in truth.

1. True worship is a spiritual exercise that is dependent upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

2. True worship is based on a true knowledge of who God is.

3. True worship can come only from a renewed heart. Ezekiel 36:22-28

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. 23 "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. 24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 **Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;** and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

E. Worship that is external, legalistic, and not from the heart is detestable in God's sight.

1. Isaiah 1:11-15

"What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle; and I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. 12 "When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? 13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies —I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. 14 "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. 15 "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood."

2. Isaiah 66:1-4

Thus says the Lord, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? 2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the Lord. "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. 3 "But he who kills an ox is like one who slays a man; he who sacrifices a lamb is like the one who breaks a dog's neck; he who offers a grain offering is like one who offers swine's blood; he who burns incense is like the one who blesses an idol. As they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations, 4 so I will choose their punishments and will bring on them what they dread. Because I called, but no one answered; I spoke, but they did not listen. And they did evil in My sight and chose that in which I did not delight."

3. Amos 5:21-24

"I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. 22 "Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. 23 "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. 24 "But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

F. The attractive thing about legalistic, man-made traditions is that, because they are man-made, they can be fulfilled by man without any inward transformation.

NOTE: A person can convince themselves that they are pleasing to God without dealing with the real issues in their lives.

G. Man's tendency is to focus on the outward rather than the inward.

1. Colossians 2:16-23

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) — **in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?** 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in **self-made religion** and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

2. 1 Timothy 4:1-5

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 3 men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; 5 for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

APPLICATION

1. If God has given us a new heart and put a new spirit in us, and if He has put the Holy Spirit in us, then He will cause us to walk in His statutes, and we will be careful to observe His ordinances.

2. I do not believe that any person who does not want to please and obey God can actually be a Christian.

3. A true follower of Jesus Christ is going to be conformed to the image of Christ, and if we are being conformed to the image of Christ we are going to delight in doing the will of God just like He did.

4. We will love and obey God, and we will love and lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

5. Additionally we will be lights in the midst of the current darkness; lights that can guide others to Christ.