

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ Traditions of Men

Last time...the conclusion of the Bread of God teaching by Jesus (John 6), resulting in

- betrayal and abandonment of most
- a revelation to a few
- the zenith of His Popularity
- the beginning of the Hostility

A radical teaching and a radical result

John 7:1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him.

The hostility of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes is murderous because

- of His miracles, particularly those performed on the Sabbath
- of His assertions of Deity (they understood what He was saying)
- He publicly exposed their hypocrisy
- of envy

This time...a confrontation with some Pharisees and scribes regarding the traditions of men

Another radical teaching

We will be in Mark 7 and Matt 15

Mark 7

v1-5 Pharisees...scribes...unwashen:

Religious leaders and “Law-yers” from Jerusalem come to Jesus in Capernaum after His Bread of God teaching

The self-righteous legalists find a bone to pick with Jesus about His disciples (and not doubt with Him too):

Jesus’ disciples were eating food with unwashen hands, not in keeping with the tradition of the elders

Traditions are behaviors and beliefs passed down from generation to generation

- Family traditions: “Because my daddy always did it that way and his daddy before him and his daddy before him....”
- Corporate traditions: “We’ve always done it that way.”
- Religious traditions: Attire and lifestyle of Orthodox/Hasidic Jews (black coat, fur hat), Amish, Muslims, others

Traditions are very powerful

On a side note:

- One of the easiest things to do is find fault with someone else
- Fault finders are hypocrites...because they too have faults
- Fault finders should examine their own faults before pointing out the faults of others

These fault finders were not saying the disciples were filthy and unsanitary, they were not talking about hygienic or sanitary washing of hands, but ceremonial hand washing

Ceremonial hand washing: After a hard scrubbing to remove the defilement caused by touching an unclean thing or person, “baptizing” their hands

- water is poured up over the right hand as far as the elbow
- the water is to drip off the wrist
- water is poured down over the outstretched right hand
- steps repeated for the left hand

Can observe the Orthodox Jews doing this at Western Wall in Jerusalem

Where is this process for ceremonial hand washing found in the Word of God?
It isn't in the Word of God

It is described/taught by the oral traditions, oral interpretations of the Law by rabbis passed down from generation to generation

The purpose of these oral traditions was to be a hedge around the Law to prevent the people from breaking the Law...

but the oral traditions were more detailed and more burdensome to keep than the Law of God

So the effect of the oral traditions/interpretations was to build a man-made barrier between man and God (revealed in His Word)

About 150 years in the future to this point in Jesus' ministry, in 185 AD, these oral traditions/interpretations would be written in what is now known as the Mishna...traditions kept to this day by orthodox Jews

So...the disciples were not “properly” washing their hands in the minds of the religious leaders and they “ask” Jesus why that is

Now let's flip over to Matt 15 to hear Jesus' response

Matt 15

v1-3 transgress the tradition...transgress the commandment:

The Pharisees and scribes confront Jesus regarding His disciples
transgressing/violating the tradition of the elders...
as if doing so was a sin against God

Jesus shoots right back, answering their “question” with His own question:
Why do you transgress/violate the Commandment of God (which is sin!)
with your tradition?

In our Reading (Ps 119:9-16), these are equivalent:

- Word of God
- Commandments of God
- Statutes of God
- Judgments of God
- Testimonies of God
- Precepts of God

It is the Word of God whereby we cleanse our way before the Lord that we sin not
against Him

So Jesus’ question re-stated: Why do you violate the (written) Word of God with
your (oral) traditions of your religion?

Which violation is more serious, which is sin and which is not?
Where does Jesus stand relative to the traditions of man?
Opposed and offended when they violate His Word

Let’s resume the conversation in Mark 7

Mark 7

v6-9 Isaiah prophesied...hypocrites:

Citing the written Word of God (Is 29:13), Jesus publicly calls out the religious leaders for their brazen hypocrisy and pride

By teaching the people in the tradition of men (rabbis, elders are mere mortal, finite and flawed men), the religious leaders are leading the people in false/vain/worthless worship of God by

- equating the traditions of men with the Word of God
- building a wall between man and (the revelation of) God

The True God must be worshipped the right way...in spirit and in truth...
as revealed in the Word of God, not by the flawed opinions and biases and agendas (man-made barriers) of flawed hearts

That which comes from the perfect and pure heart of the Holy, Infinite, Almighty Creator is not, nor can ever be, compatible with that which comes from the flawed, sinful, defiant, corrupt heart of unholy, finite, and fragile creatures

There can be only one Final Authority in all matters

2 Tim 3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

2 Peter 1:20-21 no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost

The traditions of man cannot hold a candle to the Word of God!

Yet the Jews are holding their tradition as that Final Authority, superior to the Word of God...
and the Word of God that was made flesh and standing right in front of them is greatly offended

To observe such traditions of men is to violate the Word of God because the two are not compatible

For example...

v10-13 Honor...father...mother...Corban:

Jesus quotes the Word of God...

- a. Ex 20:12 (written in stone by His finger, 1st on Table 2)
- b. Ex 21:17

which was violated/broken by the tradition of men known as Corban

Corban means a “gift” or “offering” that is dedicated to God,

as if it were placed on the altar...untouchable, off-limits to man

According to rabbinic interpretation/tradition, such a gift to God allowed the giver to say anything he wanted to another...

to sin with impunity, like an indulgence (later sold by RCC)

In the example referenced by Jesus, a man could through this tradition of Corban

- offer a gift unto God
- curse his parents rather than caring for them in their old age

Corban was a legal loophole created by Law-yers to circumvent the Law!

As my kid's would say, “That's jacked up!”

God's sentiments exactly

Jesus tells these Law-yers that they make the Word of God of none effect with their traditions that

- violate the Law
- annul the Word of God
- usurp the authority of God over their lives

Prov 28:24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, *It is no transgression*; the same *is* the companion of a destroyer.

Neither ignorance nor defiance will be tolerated by the Holy God

Jesus in no uncertain terms condemns the traditions of men and rightly calls the religious leaders hypocrites:

- pious outward appearance covering corrupt hearts
- false devotion to the Lord God of Israel
- giving God lip-service but not their hearts
- mechanical religion vs vibrant relationship

Always teaching, Jesus then turns to the common folks listening to teach them God's truth as the antidote to man's traditions

v14-16 Hearken...understand...defile the man:

Jesus corrects the false teaching (tradition) of the false teachers,
and He expects every one to understand (all are accountable to know)

What defiles a man?

Not anything from the outside that enters into the man

Note: Context is eating, therefore nothing eaten defiles the man

Matt 15:10-11 says “mouth” vs “man”

But that which comes out of the man defiles the man

Real defilement is moral/spiritual (of the heart)

Another radical teaching because of...the dietary law (Lev 11)

Another “But I say unto you” as in SoM

Deut 18:18-19 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren,
like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he
shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it
shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto
my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require
it of him.

John 5:39

John 6:29

Matt 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the
prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil

Col 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against
us, which was contrary to us (not to save but to condemn),
and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross

Rom 10:4

Heb 10:1a For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and*
not the very image of the things

All who heard the this radical teaching are now accountable to understand and
obey

Now let's jump over to Matt 15 for a part of the account that is not in Mark

Matt 15

v12 Pharisees were offended:

The disciples accused by the Pharisees and scribes of violating the traditions of the elders approach Jesus with what they think is a news flash – the Pharisees were offended by Jesus' response and teaching

- His publicly calling them hypocrites
- His very strong rebuke to them
- His usurping their teaching office again
- His "Law-breaking" teaching

I would imagine the disciples were a bit uneasy because the Pharisees and scribes were very powerful people and they had been raised to respect them... and their Master bluntly busted them in the chops!

btw, this was not a news flash because Jesus knew the hearts, motives, and thoughts of men

So He responds to His disciples

v13 Every plant...Father has not planted...rooted up:

Every plant not planted by the Father:

- false teaching and false teacher/prophet
- is planted by the devil the destroyer/liar/slanderer

The Parable of the Tares should come to mind

Matt 13:36-43

v14 Let them alone:

Do not listen to them (the Pharisees and scribes)

Do not fear them

Do not pay any attention to their traditions that violate the Word of God

Do not argue and strive with them (Follow Me)

leaders of the blind:

The religious leaders of Israel are blind (due to unbelief in, and disregard of, the Word of God) leading the blind (fellow unbelievers not wanting to see)

Both the unbelieving leaders and their unbelieving followers will fall into the ditch

v15 answered Peter:

Mark 7:17 says, “His disciples asked Him concerning the parable”

But here in Matthew, their spokesman is identified – Peter

Who else?

On the heels of the previous radical teaching, John 6:68-69

Peter was a very courageous man

So radical was Jesus’ teaching about what defiles a man

(the spiritual truth of the Law vs the letter of the dietary law)

and so clear was the accountability to understand it

(If any man have ears to hear, let him hear)

that the disciples needed an explanation

v16-20 yet without understanding:

Jesus begins his explanation of the teaching with...a rebuke

How long have they been with Him?

How many miracles have they witnessed?

How many teachings have they heard?

And...are we any different?!

Note: None of them understand it, even after Jesus explains it to them now

Acts 10:9-15, Acts 11:1-18

Does not defile a man:

What he eats...what goes into the mouth, is digested in the belly, and the waste is carried away with indoor plumbing (in our case)

Does defile a man:

What comes out of the mouth...that which is in the heart will find its way to the mouth

1. evil thoughts: any thought contrary to the heart of God
2. murders: SoM
3. adulteries: SoM
4. fornications: any sexual immorality, including fantasies
5. thefts
6. false witness: lying
7. blasphemies: toward God (or slander toward man)

Q: Is v3 and making the Word of God of none effect
blasphemy, misrepresentation of God?

In Mark 7:22, Jesus also includes

- 8. covetousness: idolatry
- 9. wickedness
- 10. deceit: mislead to entrap
- 11. lasciviousness: no self-restraint
- 12. an evil eye: greed or envy
- 13. pride: a haughty, arrogant spirit
- 14. foolishness: any moral failure

The Problem

- is not what we eat or whether or not we keep a tradition of men (such as ceremonial washing)
- is the heart of man
Jer 17:9-10

Sin

- begins in the heart
- defiles within and works its way out
- does not start without and work its way in to defile

What is needed is

- satisfaction of God's justice
- a new heart for man
- a new nature for man...the nature of God in man

1 Cor 6:9-11

2 Cor 5:17

For all us violators of the Word of God...
hypocrites who easily find fault with others

Application

Every religion (system of traditions of men) is offended by Jesus Christ.
Conversely, Jesus is offended by every religion.

This is a contemporary word for Christianity, too: Word of God vs traditions of men
I'm not finding fault with people, but finding fault with doctrines of men that are
not compatible with the Word of God

Thyatira: The traditions of men easily become dogmas of the Church, just as they did in Judaism

[New American Bible] my 1st Bible

"WRONG!" on pgs 13-14

RCC today is no different than the Pharisees and scribes then!

Traditions of man that make of none effect the Word of God

The Lord God Almighty is opposed and offended!

The effect of these “sacred traditions” is to

- be a hedge around the Bible to prevent the people from...
reading the Word of God
- build a man-made barrier between man and God...
to control/lord over them

Note: a common sentiment when a Catholic is born-again is to take on Rome,
to try to enlighten and transform RCC
Jesus teaches against that in Matt 15:13-14
Do not take on Rome, leave Rome!

Sardis: Is it sufficient to memorize and recite man-made creeds and liturgies handed down over
the centuries vs 2 Tim 2:15?
Apostle's Creed, The Creed of Nicea, etc

Laodicea: As opposed to tasting and seeing that the Lord is good by eating the Word of God,
how tasty, satisfying, and spiritually nourishing are the words of men?

Last weekend: us in Seattle and Matt here
Yuck!

How commonplace is the pastor who reads a verse or two and then launches into
personal stories, personal opinions, and “life applications” of his own
concoction that are all man-centered vs Jesus-centered

Where Scripture speaks, they are silent (not wanting to offend anyone)
Where Scripture is silent, they speak (to attract and keep a big congregation)

Can a young man/woman cleanse his/her way to not sin against God with

- traditions of men?
- man-made creeds and liturgies?
- words of man?

No!

All of those are incompatible with the Word of God
ONLY by the Word of God can a person cleanse their way!

Where Scripture is silent, we are silent (not teaching what the Lord does not teach)
Where Scripture speaks, we speak (teaching what the Lord teaches, whether hearers are
offended or not)

The traditions of men: bondage...very powerful forms of
The Word of God: freedom
John 8:31-32
[Iraq 1200 photos]