

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabile.org.

Date: November 23, 2008

Title: The Pharisees Confronted - The Gentiles Included

Text: Mark 7:1-23 (Gospel Parallels - Matt. 15:1-20)

Theme: God desires for both Jews and Gentiles to be His people.

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Introduction:

Chapter seven begins with the small connecting word “and,” thus, continuing the thought with what has gone before by way of contrast. The phenomenal popularity of Jesus with the masses (6:53-56) stood in striking contrast to the hostility of the Jewish leaders.

In verse 1 we are told by Mark that the Pharisees and some of the scribes came to Jesus, coming from Jerusalem. On the surface, this information sounds rather introductory. However, Mark is telling us some valuable information. **First**, we have seen these scribes before in our narrative in the gospel of Mark. If you turn your Bibles back to **Mark 3:22 we will see that it is the scribes from Jerusalem who accused Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebub and casting out demons by the power of demons.** Jesus turned to them and said that they were blaspheming the Holy Spirit by saying such things. Therefore, when we read that these scribes and Pharisees came from Jerusalem, we know that their reason was not to follow after Jesus. They were coming to cause problems. **Second**, we also need to see the length of this journey from Jerusalem to where Jesus is preaching. In Mark 6:53 we see that Jesus is in the land of Gennesaret. **The city of Gennesaret is toward the northern part of the sea of Galilee, approximately 70 miles or more from Jerusalem.** With this in mind, we can clearly know the intentions of these Pharisees and scribes. These men are going far out of their way to go find fault with Jesus, as they have done in the past. As these men would have hoped, something does happen with which they are able to find fault. http://www.westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/articles/mark/mark7_1-23.html

Throughout this section, the authority of Jesus Christ has been and is being exhibited. Mankind’s response to that authority in all of its expressions is still essentially two-fold in nature, unbelief versus belief. The same crowd that confronted Jesus in 3:22 is now at it again. The issue is one of authority and obedience.

THE BIG PICTURE:

- **Strategic Withdrawals from Galilee (6:30 – 9:29)**
 - To the Eastern Shore of the Sea of Galilee (6:30-52)
 - To the Western Shore of the Sea (6:53 – 7:23)
 - To Syrian Phoenicia (7:24-30)
 - To the Region of the Decapolis (7:31 – 8:10)
 - To the Vicinity of Caesarea Philippi (8:11-30)
 - To the Mount of Transfiguration (8:31 – 9:29)

- **The Pharisees Confronted – The Gentiles Included** (7:1-23)
- The Healing of the Gentile (Syrophenician) Woman's Daughter (7:24-30)
- The Healing of a Deaf-Mute (7:31-37)
- The Feeding of the Four Thousand (8:1-9)
- A Sign Demanded in Dalmanutha (8:10-21)

Its Eternal Value:

“[Mark 7:1-23] serves Mark's purpose of celebrating that Jesus made possible the inclusion of Gentiles. He did this by showing that purity laws in relation to food had no validity, thus removing a major barrier between Jew and Gentile.”

“MARK 7:1-23 AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS,” William Loader, Murdoch University, pages 124, 125. <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/Mk7.pdf>

All may come to Jesus who choose to come. No one is excluded because of ethnicity.

The Problem:

It is possible for us as believers to have a bias as to who God chooses and who may come. This thinking is not intentional, but slowly creeps in over time. We must understand that all who come are called and invited to believe in Him.

The Storyline:

The function of Mark 7:1-23 within its literary context

(a) In 7:1-23 Mark portrays Jesus as rejecting the tradition of the elders and effectively declaring purity distinctions in relation to food invalid (thereby **removing a barrier to inclusion of Gentiles**).

(b) In 7:24-30 Mark's account of Jesus' encounter with the Syrophenician woman exemplifies the problem and **portrays Jesus as prepared to cross the boundary**.

(c) In 8:14-21 Mark shows Jesus trying to lead the disciples to understand the meaning of the major events which have occurred over the preceding two chapters, especially the feedings; it is effectively instruction for the hearers. Jesus warns the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees (and of Herod). The leaven of Herod recalls the latter's murder of John the Baptist, recalled as a flashback in 6:17-29. The leaven of the Pharisees is above all their teaching. This recalls 7:1-23, where, according to Mark, **Jesus pits his own teaching, which leads to inclusiveness, against that of the Pharisees, which led to exclusiveness**. In 7:19-21 Jesus calls attention to the numbers in the feedings of the 5000 and the 4000: 12 and 7; **they symbolize the inclusion of Israel and the Gentiles**, made possible in part by Jesus' radical approach to the food laws.

“MARK 7:1-23 AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS,” William Loader, Murdoch University, pages 124, 125. <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/Mk7.pdf>

In the purpose of God for the redemption of His people, worshippers from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation were intentionally included. Many within the Jewish religion excluded Gentiles from a redemptive hope. Jesus forcefully shows how Gentiles were a part of God's plan all along. The gospel in the days of Jesus and the apostles was to the Jews first, then to the Gentiles. Here Jesus shows how the message will go to the Gentiles.

Remember to whom Mark writes. He is writing to a Roman audience, a Gentile audience. He is showing how they are included in the redemptive purpose of God to secure for Himself a people who will love Him and worship Him forever. It is these people who will enjoy the presence of God forever. Although this truth caused the religious establishment to put Him to death, it caused the larger world to rejoice.

Questions:

1. What is ceremonial washing and why was it so important to the Pharisees?
2. According to Jesus, what is essential to true worship?
3. How did the Pharisees give precedence to tradition over Scripture?
4. What traditions do we often place above God's Word?
5. What do Christ's words in this passage establish about the authority of Scripture compared to other writings?
6. Who were those questioning Him?
7. From where did His accusers come?
8. Why the questioning by the Pharisees and some of the scribes?
9. What does "unwashed" mean?
10. Do you think washing your hands before you ate was a bad idea?
11. The response of Jesus in verse six seems strong. Why do you think He responded in this manner?
12. What does the word "hypocrite" communicate to you?
13. Why does Jesus call them hypocrites?
14. According to verse seven what are some consequences of hypocrisy?
15. What two ideas are pitted against each other in verse eight?
16. What are traditions capable of doing according to verse 13?
17. Read verses 14-23. What is Christ's main point here?
18. Can anything outside of an individual make him impure?
19. Where does our impurity come from?
20. Notice the slowness of the disciples (v. 18). What does this say to you?
21. Notice the editorial in verse 19. What might this mean to His audience? Remember, this is long before Peter's vision in Acts 10.
22. Notice Jesus speaks of the heart as being the source for all of our evil. Notice Galatians 5:19 and notice the parallel ideas.
23. What are the foundational ideas behind this passage?
24. What are the practical implications behind this passage as to how we live our lives?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know He is for everyone and all who desire may come.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose the inclusiveness of God for the redemption of His people.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of seeing the purpose of God fulfilled in the redeeming of His people.

As early as Mark 2:16, 18 and 24, the Pharisees were questioning and challenging the Lord Jesus. By Mark 3:6 their desire is to destroy Him. It is the scribes who accuse Jesus of being empowered by Beelzebub (Mark 3:22). It is this same sentiment that exists in chapter 7. This provides the backdrop to our story.

Outline:

I. The reason for the message (7:1-5)

The unbelieving Pharisees demand to know why Jesus does not always observe their laws and regulations for outer cleansing. It is this same issue Jesus brings up in Matthew 23 when He verbally castigates the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy.

²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also” (Matt. 23:25, 26).

It is also brought up when Jesus is invited to dine with the Pharisees in Luke 11.

³⁷ “Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined [at the table.] ³⁸ And when the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal. ³⁹ But the Lord said to him, Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you” (Luke 11:37-41).

The key thought of this section revolves around the idea of “tradition of the elders.” The word “tradition” occurs thirteen times in the New Testament. Five times it is found in Mark and all occurrences are in this passage (vv. 3, 5, 8, 9, 13). Only three of the thirteen times in the New Testament is it ever used in a positive light (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6). What is meant by, “the tradition of the elders?”

“Now **I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you**” (1 Cor. 11:2).

“So then, brethren, **stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught**, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” (2 Thess. 2:15).

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you **keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us**” (2 Thess. 3:6).

Technically, it refers to that body of truth that is passed on from teacher to pupil which originated in the Jewish teacher of the Law of the past whose judgments were regarded as binding and their interpretations diligently passed on to others by the scribes.

Past Teachers of the Mosaic Code + Time + Oral Tradition + Debate/Discussion + Written Down
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The interpretation of the Scriptural text was known as the Mishnah, of which Scribes and Pharisees became the keepers and teachers. The Gemara is the discussion surrounding the Mishnah. This continued to grow until it was codified in the 4th and 6th centuries as the Talmud, which provided until modern times the traditional (and therefore binding) Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament.

Thus, the tradition of the elders is truth embellished. What truth was being embellished; the biblical commands that the priests had to wash their hands and feet prior to entering the Tabernacle (Exo. 30:19; 40:13). What began as a proper principle ended as a damnable duty. Was it a good thing to wash before they ate? Sure it was, but if they didn't, were they damned? Absolutely not. My friends, there are some standards that we maintain that are grounded on proper principles, but let us be sure that we do not turn them into damnable duties. Are they good to do or not to do? Perhaps, but let us not make them the standard for spirituality.

II. The rebuke in the message (7:6-23)

A. The prophecy (7:6-7)

He reminds them of Isaiah's prediction that God's people would honor the Messiah with their lips but hate him in their hearts (Isa. 29:13)!

The word "hypocrite" occurs twenty-seven times in the New Testament. It is always used in a negative sense. It is used extensively of the Scribes and Pharisees by Jesus in Matthew 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27-29.

There are two words used to describe the separation in "but their heart is far from me." They are the same words used in Isaiah 29:13 (LXX). The compound idea is best seen in the *Amplified Bible* where it says, "But their heart holds itself off and is far distant from me."

The word "vain" occurs only two times in the NT. The idea is that of empty, vain, worthless, and unprofitable.

The word "teaching" is the common word for teaching. However, "delivering" is used extensively in the Gospels and twenty times in Mark. It is translated by "put/place" (1:14) and "betray" (nine times in Mark). Except for its usage in 4:29 for the bringing forth of the earth's fruit, it is always used in a negative sense by Mark of delivering

something over to another for harm or destruction. Thus, their “delivering” of the commandments of men was to the detriment and damnation of its listeners.

Notice the strong comparison between the Pharisees of Jesus and the false teachers of Paul.

¹“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; ⁵**holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.** ⁶For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these [men] also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith. ⁹But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, as also that of those [two] came to be” (2 Tim. 3:1-9).

¹³“This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. ¹⁶**They profess to know God, but by [their] deeds they deny [Him], being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed**” (Titus 1:13-16).

B. The parental example (7:8-13)

He quotes from Exodus 20:12 and 21:17. Jesus says the Pharisees twist God's laws to avoid the responsibility of financially supporting their own parents!

It is Corban. Rather, "Let it be a {corban,}" a formula common among the Jews on such occasions; by which the Pharisees released a child from supporting his parents; and even deemed it sacrilege if he afterwards gave anything for their use.

“Jesus engages in a similar exposition in which he subordinates ceremonial washing to the fifth commandment to ‘honor your father and your mother.’”
http://www.ibr-bbr.org/IBRBulletin/BBR_1993/BBR-1993_05_Ellis_JesusOT.pdf

“Laying aside” carries the idea of abandoning or leaving behind. This speaks of their apostasy. The word “hold” is used fifteen times by Mark. It speaks of those who sought to “lay hold of” Jesus (3:21; 12:12; 14:1, 44, 46), of those who Jesus laid hold of to heal (1:31; 5:41; 9:27), when they laid hold of John the Baptist to cast him into prison (6:17), of the pondering of truth within you (9:10), and of those who laid hold of John

Mark at the betrayal of Christ and him fleeing from their clutches (14:15). In each of these cases theirs is the sense of capturing, arresting, seizing, and tenaciously holding on to. These men valued their traditions above the Word of God.

“Reject” is found sixteen times in the NT. It is translated “despised” eight times, “frustrate” one time, and is used in 1 Timothy 5:12 for those who have cast off their first faith.

“[thus] incurring condemnation, **because they have set aside their previous pledge**” (1 Tim. 5:12).

“Keep” is used extensively in the NT, but only one time in Mark. It is used of those being kept in prison (Acts 12:5) as well as that which is found in John 14:15, 21, 23, and 24. The idea is that of persistent observance of a set standard which governs and controls one’s life. “Of none effect” simply means, “To cancel out, to neutralize, to make powerless.”

C. The preaching (7:14-23)

1. The illustration (v. 15)

The word “defile” is used fifteen times in the NT and ten times in reference to this event (Matt. 15 and Mark 7). It speaks of being ceremonially unclean. Unfit to approach God (Acts 10:15; 11:9; 21:28; Heb. 9:13; Rev. 21:27).

Paul reminds his Corinthian audience of this truth in 1 Corinthians 10:23-26.

²³ “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own [good,] but that of his neighbor. ²⁵ Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience’ sake; ²⁶ FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS” (1 Cor. 10:23-26).

The idea that spirituality is obtained by abstaining from the good is a product of “deceitful spirits and [the] doctrines of demons.”

¹ “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” (1 Tim. 4:1-5).

Jesus says defilement has nothing to do with what one eats but rather with what one says and does.

2. The exhortation (v. 16)

Note the doubling for emphasis.

3. The explanation (vv. 17-19)

The intake of supposedly unclean food does not cause defilement (7:17-19). Notice what He says. Those things without an individual cannot defile a man. The word used (cannot) is the negative plus **dunamai**. Those things do not have the energy or power to accomplish that task.

“And as soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, [began] asking Him [about] the parables” (Mark 4:10).

“The context would be clearly implying that eating food cannot make one unclean. Foods are not clean or unclean. Such concerns are not just of lesser significance, as they might be for some Jews and some Christians of the day; **they have no significance**, according to Mark. It is not that they once had significance and have now been abolished; **the argument of the context implies that they never could have validity**. Mark’s Jesus is pointing this out. That is the import of the comment in 7:19c. **By this comment Mark is not indicating that Jesus suddenly abolished purity laws with regard to food, but that he had effectively demonstrated that all food is clean.**

“MARK 7:1-23 AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS,” William Loader, Murdoch University, pages 148, 149. <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/Mk7.pdf>

4. The application (vv. 20-23)

The output of an unclean thought-life-including lust, theft, murder, adultery, deceit, envy, slander, and pride-does cause defilement (7:20-23).

a. The cause of our defilement (vv. 20, 23).

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5).

“The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9).

It is the wickedness of your heart, your old nature, your flesh that generates all this evil. Remember, this is your identity until you come to Jesus. As believers, what we once were, we no longer are, but still have.

b. The character of our defilement (vv. 21, 22).

These things are manifestations of the sin nature, the flesh which dwells within the heart of every human being. No one is exempted from this inherent defilement. This is what makes the new birth so crucial. Apart from it, there will never be acceptance before God. It and it alone removes our ceremonial defilement. It and it alone makes us clean.

It is not what we do that keeps us from God. It is who we are that keeps us from God. Both Jew and Gentile stand defiled and rejected before God until and unless they come to Jesus for the saving of their soul.

Shepherding the Sheep (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. What are some traditions that we have which are outside of Scripture? Are there faiths today that put traditions on an equal plan with the Word of God?
2. Have you been blocking out the Holy Spirit's work in and through the Bible by your refusal to give up your traditions?
3. Who do you believe to be outside of God's redemptive purpose?
4. God's design is for worshippers from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation to glorify Him. How is the church universal going about this task? How is this local church participating in this task?