

TRADITIONS OF MEN OR THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD?

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 15:1-20

LESSON 95 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 15:1-20 (KJV)

¹ Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
² Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.
³ But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?
⁴ For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.
⁵ But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;
⁶ And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.
⁷ Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,
⁸ This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.
⁹ But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.
¹⁰ And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:
¹¹ Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.
¹² Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?
¹³ But he answered and said, Every

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Faultfinding

Certain Pharisees and scribes went to Jesus because His disciples were not obeying the traditions of the elders. The Pharisees were a religious people who worshiped with many ceremonies, and they criticized Jesus' disciples for not doing likewise.

Jesus' answer to them was a question concerning their own behavior. Some people are quick to find fault with others when they, themselves, are not doing the right thing. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (**Matthew 7:3 (KJV)** ³ And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? **Matthew 7:5 (KJV)** ⁵ Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye) Upon another occasion (**John 8:3 (KJV)** ³ And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, **John 8:11 (KJV)** ¹ She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more) the scribes and Pharisees took to Jesus a woman who was caught in the act of sin. They said that according to the law of Moses, the woman should be stoned. Jesus told them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Those words condemned them because of the sin in their lives, and they left. Jesus forgave the woman and told her to sin no more. God is not pleased with a person who finds fault with others and tries to have them punished, when the accuser has sin in his life at the same time. Traditions of the Elders

The Jews claimed that these traditions were the spoken words of God on Mt. Sinai - the verbal law of God as compared to the written law which God gave Moses (**Exodus 31:18 (KJV)** ¹⁸ And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God). The traditions were not written but were told the sons by the fathers, and handed down for many generations. There were times when the wording was changed a little to suit the person, and soon the meaning was changed. Thus, the law of God was perverted and the worship corrupted.

The Pharisees were very zealous in obeying the customs and traditions of men but they did not regard the commandments of God. They thought that they were spiritually benefited by the washing of the hands in a certain manner and at a certain time (**Mark 7:3 (KJV)** ³ For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders). They were not concerned about cleanliness but about their

plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

¹⁴ Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

¹⁵ Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

¹⁶ And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

¹⁷ Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

²⁰ These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

ceremony of washing hands.

A Pure Heart

It takes more than the washing of water to cleanse a person from sin and to make him clean in God's sight. In Jeremiah 2:22 we read: "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much sope, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord **GOD**."

"What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus; What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

In Psalm 24:3, 4, we find the qualifications for a person to stand with the Lord in His holy place - "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." When a person repents with godly sorrow and asks forgiveness, the Blood of Jesus washes the sin and its stain from his heart and life. A person's actions show that the heart is cleansed. We say that the work done on the inside shows on the outside.

The religion of the Pharisees was only on the outside - not on the inside, where the Bible teaches it should be. "Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved" (Jeremiah 4:14).

Sincerity Insufficient

The scribes and Pharisees were very careful to live by the traditions of the elders. But the Word of God teaches that one must worship God according to His plan. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I Corinthians 13:1-3). These gifts are great, but it is most important for one to have the love of God in his heart,

In no place in the Word of God do we find that Jesus commended the Pharisees for being sincere. Instead, He pointed that one did not need to honor and care for his parents if he w eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it" (Proverbs 30:17). "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (

Lip Worshipers

Jesus called both the scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites," for they were not true worshipers. Isaiah spoke of them when he said that they worshiped God with the lips but not with their heart (Isaiah 29:13). They did not worship God because they wanted to, but they went through the motions of worship because they had to do so. There are some people today who go to church and go through the motions of worshiping God, but it is not true worship. Perhaps they sing the songs and even kneel as though they were praying,

QUESTIONS

- 1 All religious people are not Christians. Why?
2. What must one do to become a Bible Christian??
- 3 What does sin in the heart cause?
- 4 What can wash away that sin?
- 5 What defiles a person?

but their hearts are not in the worship. It is vain worship. God pays no attention to them, and their worship does them no good. God looks on the heart, not on the outward appearance (**1 Samuel 16:7 (KJV)** ⁷ But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart*). How do you worship God? - from your heart, or just from your lips?

Doctrines of Men

In place of God's Word, the doctrines of men are sometimes taught today as they were in the days of the Pharisees and scribes. This is called false doctrine, because it is not according to the Bible. Jesus spoke of the teachers of false doctrine when He said that they were not planted by the heavenly Father and they would be pulled up. He said that they were as blind people trying to lead the blind, and that they would fall by the wayside instead of getting to Heaven.

A Defiled Heart

The disciples asked Jesus to explain what He meant by His parable of the blind leaders. Jesus was showing them that it is more important to have the commandments of God in the heart than the doctrines of men on the outside. Sin in the heart causes evil thoughts, thefts, deceit, pride, and foolishness (**Mark 7:20-23 (KJV)** ²⁰ And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; ²³ All these evil things come from within, and defile the man).

Some religious people will eat only certain foods; but Jesus said that not the things that go into the mouth but the things one says prove whether he has the love of God in his heart.

Searching the Heart

In Jeremiah 17:9 we read: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Search your heart to see if there is any sin or disobedience there. If you ask God, He will give you a new heart, spiritually, and take away the old sinful heart (**Ezekiel 36:26 (KJV)** ²⁶ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh).

The Psalmist David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24). "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

In order for one to receive the blessings and rewards that God has for His people, a person must abide by the commandments of God rather than the doctrines of men. "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).