

A Study of the Book of Matthew: Chapter 15 v. 1-9

Traditions and Commandments

- **“Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,” (15:1)**
 - Jesus' fame and influence over the people has grown to the point where the religious leaders are concerned about Him.

- **“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” (15:2)**
 - Previously, Jesus was accused of breaking the law in chapter 12 (without success).
 - Now he's being accused of breaking tradition.
 - Are all traditions wrong?
 - The Pharisees pick the issue of ritual hand washing to confront Him.
 - Was this the real issue?
 - The Pharisees believed traditions were revealed to Moses by God, then orally passed on to the elders from one generation to another.
 - They were considered equal to the Law.
 - The current religious leaders honored the elders' wisdom by practicing these additional rules as if they were commands of God.

- **“He answered them, ‘And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?’” (15:3)**
 - Their challenge is so hypocritical that Jesus doesn't even bother to answer it, at first. Instead, He immediately fires a question of His:
 - **“And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”**

- Basically, why do they break the actual command of God for the sake of tradition?
- **“For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God, “he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.” (15:4-6)**
 - The Pharisees criticize Him for ignoring tradition in favor of God's actual intent, while they ignore God's intent in favor of tradition!
 - Example:
 - The first phrase is from **Exodus 20:12**.
 - The second phrase is from **Exodus 21:17** (not a part of the ten commandments).
 - Although they may not have been guilty of the second quote, they were sneaky in the way they were treating their parents was just as bad as cursing/reviling them. That is why Jesus speaks these consecutively.
 - What did it mean to “Honor your father and your mother?”
 - Honor is a word which carries more meaning than we ordinarily ascribe. When we teach our children, their idea of honor is “to do what they (their parents) say.”
 - This word is not “obey.”
 - The word is “honor,” and means not only to obey, but to possess an attitude of willingness to obey, to submit to the desire of the parents. God requires these commands throughout life.

- Here we see adult men breaking these commandments! They were to honor their mothers and fathers for as long as they lived, caring for them in their old age and/or difficulties.
 - The account of this in **Mark 7** uses the word “corban”
 - Given to God = “corban.” Corban is a key word in the book of Leviticus.
 - The scribes and Pharisees taught the younger people that there was a way for them to avoid God’s commands to care for their parents’ needs. All they had to do was to claim that whatever the parents asked for in the way of aid was “Corban” or consecrated to God.
 - According to their tradition - not God’s Law - this released the children from their God-given obligations.
 - To summarize - The Pharisees and scribes believed that traditions were equal to the law. Jesus counters that they broke the Law of God to obey traditions. Jesus says these traditions stand opposed to the Law of God.
- **“You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me...’ (15:7-8)**
 - Jesus quotes **Isaiah 29:13**
 - Jesus calls the Pharisees hypocrites for allowing this to happen.
 - They pretend to be righteous, but their hearts are full of evil intentions. They were manipulating God’s commands for their own benefit.
- **“...in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” (15:9)**

- Sidenote but also applicable - According to the scriptures there are three types of worship.
 - There is vain worship as discussed here.
 - There is ignorant worship as in **Acts 17:23** - we discussed this Sunday night.
 - There is true worship, **John 4:23-24**. That is in spirit and truth.
- The word "vain" means empty, useless.
 - One might as well not be worshipping at all because it means nothing.
 - God spoke regarding in **Isaiah 1:13-15** .
 - In contrast **Micah 6:6-8** describes worship in a different way.
- What does this teach us about proper worship?
- What are the "Commandments of men"?