

Episode #817 Matthew 15 Part 1-The Trouble With Traditions

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had just proven His power over nature by coming to His disciples walking on the sea. They worshiped Him as the Son of God, which He is. Now, we read what happened when they arrived at the other side.

III. Healed by a Touch. Matthew 14:34-36.

- A. Verse 34. “Crossed over” means to the other side of the sea. Gennesaret is another name for the Sea of Galilee, see Luke 5:1. It was also a name for a fertile region next to the sea, which is where He now arrived. Bullinger says it was at the northern end of the lake and to the west of the Jordan. The Talmud identifies it with Chinnereth in the O.T. Josephus says it was 4 miles long by 2.5 wide. Gennesaret means “Harp.”
- B. Verse 35. In this case the “men” are *andres*, males. These were particularly the leaders, because they sent out an official call for people to come, *apostello*, commissioning messengers to gather the sick. They cared about the health of the people in their jurisdiction, which is very good.
- C. Verse 36. “Begged” is *parakaleo*, meaning they encouraged Him to do so. It did not matter what the disease or infirmity was. Whatever it was, the touch of His garment healed them. We might say they were saved through-and-through, completely, of whatever bad case they were in.

IV. Tradition and Truth. Matthew 15:1-9.

- A. Matthew 15:1. “Came” is the word *proserchomai*, to draw near or approach, and seems to be a particularly royal word (as approaching the king), since it is used 49 times in Matthew, 5 in Mark, 10 in Luke, and 1 in John. It is like approaching the throne. The scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem considered themselves to be a very special class, being from the capital and location of the temple.
- B. Verse 2. Notice they realize full well it was never a question of the actual law of God, but only their traditions. Yet to the Pharisees, these were all-important. They actually claimed these traditions had been given orally by Moses and so were just as binding as what was written! “Elders” is the first occurrence of the Greek *presbuteros*, from which we get the Presbyterians. This was not sanitary cleansing, but a ceremony, dipping the hands in water and then shaking them off. Bread was a staple of their diet, and so is put for food of all kinds.
- C. Verse 3. The Lord uses the same word, “transgress,” against them as they had used. How much more important is a command of God than a tradition of men? Theirs was by far the greater violation! This tradition that they valued so much actually led them into disobedience and sin.
- D. Verse 4. This is from the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:12, part of God’s covenant with them. To “curse” is to speak badly of, and thus to dishonor. Put to death according to Exodus 21:17; see also Leviticus 20:9.
- E. Verse 5. The YOU here is emphatic. The Greek for “gift” is *doron*, which means it is dedicated to God. These scribes and Pharisees had one-way pockets. When their parents were in need, they would just claim their money was dedicated to God and He

might ask for it anytime. Of course they well knew that God was not going to come and ask for it, but they got around God's Word that way.

F. Verse 6. They "by no means" honor their fathers and mothers, the Greek being the strongest possible Greek "no," *ou me*. Their traditions rendered God's word void!

G. Verse 7. Hypocrites are actors or empty pretenders.

H. Verse 8. The people of Isaiah's day were also a great example of hypocrisy. The Pharisees were nothing new in Israel.

I. Verse 9. "In vain" means "fruitlessly." Doctrines are just teachings, "teaching as teachings." Men are the Greek *anthropos*, humans. This is from Isaiah 29:13.

V. True Defilement. Matthew 15:10-20.

A. Verse 10. To understand means to put together in the mind.

B. Verse 11. In other words, if one would eat without washing his hands and some little thing went in, that is not going to defile him. It is that which comes out that defiles.

VI. Conclusion: The Pharisees complained that the Lord's disciples were not following their traditions. Yet the fact was their traditions were causing them to violate God's commands! Do we have traditions that are likewise opposed to Scripture? What really defines our beliefs: God's word, or the teachings common around us? Let us take care to cling to what God has said, to be real Bible-believers, and not just followers of tradition.