

Mark 7

Friday, April 11, 2025 8:00 AM

FOLLOW GOD OR TRADITIONS OF MEN

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.” **(Mark 7:5-8)**

This was another official delegation of religious leaders from Jerusalem, coming to evaluate the ministry of Jesus. We saw a previous delegation in **Mark 3:22**, and they pronounced a harsh condemnation against Jesus. This delegation from Jerusalem already made up their mind about Jesus and looked for something to confirm their opinion. The concept of evaluating Jesus’ ministry was fine. In outward appearance, these men protected Israel from a potential false prophet or false messiah. But the way they actually evaluated Jesus was all wrong. First, they already made up their mind about Jesus. Second, they did not evaluate Jesus against the measure of God’s Word. They evaluated Him against the measure of their religious traditions. **(Guzik)**

These washings were commanded by tradition, not by Scripture. The religious leaders knew this, yet they still criticized the disciples for not obeying these traditions.

It’s easy for us to think these religious leaders, or this whole religious culture was really stupid and phony for their emphasis on traditions like this. But we don’t realize how subtly these things emerge and how spiritual they seem to be, especially in the beginning. Many rituals or traditions seem to be built on unshakable spiritual logic:

- Doesn’t God want us to honor Him in everything we do?
- Didn’t God command the priests to wash their hands before serving Him?
- Shouldn’t every faithful follower of God have the same devotion as a priest?
- Isn’t every meal sacred to God?
- Shouldn’t we take every opportunity to make ourselves pure before the Lord?
- Doesn’t God say, Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart **(Psalm**

24:3-4).

When the questions are put this way, it's easy to say, "Yes, yes, yes," until you have agreed with the logic supporting the tradition. But if in the end you have a word of man, a tradition of man, a ritual of man, that has the same weight as the Word of God, you're wrong. Your "spiritual logic" doesn't matter. You are then wrong.

Lord, help us to read and follow your word and not the traditions of men, even our family traditions. We need to come to you with a humble heart because there must be a cross before a crown, suffering before glory, and a sacrifice before reward.