

Mark 7:1-23 TRADITIONS + DEFILEMENT

PRELIMS. Our **cursory**, not in-depth, study of Mark. Christ has fed 5,000+, walked on the water, and performed more miracles, so the scene is, Christ is doing wonderful things and amazing everyone!

Mark now **has** to record some **sad** facts. Despite the glory of X's work, Phars and Scribes can only 'see' a breaking of human tradition! For them the great works of X are not to be considered wonderful, when at the same time, some trivial but common practices are ignored! The Jews had a **habit** that they would always wash their hands before eating. **Not** because of **hygiene**, but **custom!**

The word 'fist' is in the Greek. It may mean that they had to wash their hands right up to the wrist, else it was not properly washed or some mss "*baptized*"! It was a **rule** set up by "*the elders*"[3c] It was not only hands that were washed, but **also** "*cups...pots...copper vessels...dining couches*"[4c]! They **had** to keep these **traditions!**

Now traditions are set up for **good** reasons! Every **culture** - and **church** has traditions! Society **cannot operate** without traditions! Everywhere you go, every institution, every club, every organisation has traditions. Traditions are **not** evil per se, but good per se, because they provide **order/form**. Our Judiciary and Courts have a far more rigorous system of traditions than the Church. The wigs and gowns, the standing for the judges, the bowing, the language, terminology!

Apostle Paul makes **three positive** statements about church traditions: "*Now I **commend** you **because** you remember me in everything and **maintain the traditions** even as I delivered them to you*"[1Cor 11:2] "*So then, brothers, stand **firm** and **hold** to the **traditions** that you were **taught by us**, either by our spoken word or by our letter*"[2 Thes 2:15] "*Now we **command** you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you **keep away** from any brother who is walking in idleness and **not in accord** with the **tradition** that you **received from us***" [2 Thes 3:6] Traditions are **necessary!**

But **changes in circumstances** can **negate** their **purpose** and **usefulness!** In fact traditions can become detrimental and harmful!

Once the original purpose for the tradition has been removed, then tradition can become burdensome/awkward. **Problems** arise when **more consideration** is given to the **form** rather than to the **function** of a thing! If a tradition is not doing any good, or actually doing harm, and people start wondering and asking ‘Why do we do this?’, then there might not be any need for it to continue. As someone else has said ‘If your horse is dead, for goodness sake, dismount’!

But losing its purpose was **not** the main and only reason why our Lord here broke with tradition. What troubled the Lord was that the tradition **conflicted** with and **contradicted** God’s law. By keeping the tradition they were also “ *rejecting the commandment of God*” [8]. More than that, they were actually **teaching** that the human traditions were **God’s** commandments “*teaching as doctrines the commandments of men*”[7]

APP It is so easy to **slip into thinking** that church **procedures**, especially about the Lord’s Supper, is **sacrosanct** and **God’s** unchangeable appointment. It was the NT Church, not Jesus or the apostles, who gave most of the order and circumstances of **administrating** the Lord’s Supper! The days of preparation, the tokens, minister’s collars, the white tablecloth, the fencing, the silver cups, etc, etc were completely **unknown** to the Apostles! They **became** traditions over time - and **custom!** To think of changing some of **these** things today would still cause near heart attacks!

No one likes change. Especially Xns and church order! Changing a tradition creates problems. People have a **fear** of change - they find it **threatening** because it disturbs and disrupts the **status quo!** If the status quo changes, it means those who hold the reigns of power are **losing control.** You see, traditionalism has **pride** at its root. Changing a tradition means we have not been doing things right! It suggests we have been wrong! In a sense, one needs **humility** to change a tradition - it is not easy to do it! Its **uncomfortable!**

There is a big difference between tradition and traditionalism! Putting an ‘ism’ at the end of a word **changes** its **significance!** An ‘ism’ takes the subject to an **extreme!** Feminine/feminism!

Jesus now introduces an example of a **tradition** in His day - an evil tradition which greedy and unkind children used in Jesus' day. If parents became poor, and their children had 'means', very often the parents would come to their children and ask for help, specifying some money they knew they had or for some other commodity they knew their children had. The selfish and unfeeling sons would simply say to their parents, 'Oh, that is Corban, that is set aside for God, for the church, I'm sorry but I cannot give you that' - **when it actually wasn't** for the God at all! Saying 'It is Corban, a gift' was just a means whereby the children **escaped** their **responsibility** to honour their parents and giving them support in their time of need! Jesus said, such behaviour was **breaking** the **5th commandment!!**

Jesus refers to this tradition **because** the Phars and Scribes were actually **encouraging** such practices among their own congregations! Saying 'Corban' was a common practice and an established tradition in Jesus' day. The Phars would have understood exactly what Jesus was saying although we might find the passage confusing! The Phars knew fine that this tradition **contradicted** God's commandment!

*Jesus now called the crowd towards Himself "**Hear Me, all of you and understand**"[14] Now you/I might find it surprising that the disciples were **so dim** on subjects that **we find** so simple and easily understood. But that is because we have a **build-up of years and years** of Bible teaching on these very subjects. One generation's theological discoveries are built **on top of** the previous generation's theological discoveries! What was new to one generation **became commonly understood** for the future generations.

Well, Jesus here told them the simple **lesson** that **physical pollution** does **not** contaminate **moral character!!** The food we eat does not make us **more** virtuous or **less** virtuous! Morality has to do with the **heart** and **soul** of man. It is what we feed our **soul** on that **affects** our **moral** character! At the Fall, Adam's soul was **corrupted**. We the children of Adam, are **born** with that **corrupted** heart! We **cannot accurately discern** truth and righteousness. Our judgments are perverted because our **compass pointer** has been **tampered** with!

It is the **thoughts** and **desires** and **intentions** of the **heart** which are polluted - and which **ruins** our character. That is why you do not need to teach or train a child to **lie** or **deceive** - it comes **naturally** to them. The 'nature' within us, is to **love ourselves** and to **protect ourselves**, and to **elevate** ourselves **above truth** and righteousness. We are willing to **suppress** truth and honesty rather than suffer humiliation! **Self-centeredness** manifests itself as soon as we are **able** to communicate. All **vices** are **inbred** in our natures! *"All these evil things come from **within**, and **they** defile a person"*[23]!

We now have Mark, under inspiration, giving us a **theological lesson** in Biblical studies! He makes a comment on what Jesus had just said *"Thus He declared **all foods clean**"* [19c]

Mark, like all good Xns, **thinks** about, and **applies** the teaching of X to life. You see, many theological doctrines are **not** taken directly from a **verse** in Scripture! They are taken from a **deduction** or an **interpretation** or a **reasoned argument** of **several verses** and passages of Scripture! Mark here is concluding that the Jewish Laws regarding Kosher food is now redundant - all foods are now clean!

The doctrine of the **Trinity** cannot be taken from one verse of Scripture. But by gathering together the teachings of several verses of Scripture, one cannot escape the **conclusion** that there **must be** a Trinity! The same can be said about **women** at the **Lord's Supper**. There is no record of women at the Lord's Supper or a command. But by considering **all** that the Scriptures say about the Lord's Supper and what it **means** and what it is **for**, we can **conclude** that women **ought** to be at the Lord's Supper. In many places we need to **apply** our 'theological system' in order to discover a truth. Much is left to **interpretation**! Bible provides '**principles**' to govern our understanding of a subject. It could possibly mention everything!

God has ensured that the **most important** part of His Word, the **gospel**, is very **clearly** articulated in the Bible. He says clearly we all have a corrupt heart - the only solution is a **new heart!** *I will **give you a new heart**, and a new spirit...And I will remove the heart of **stone** from your flesh and give you a **heart of flesh**"*[Ezek 36:26]