

QUESTIONS FOR JESUS: "TRADITION?"

THESIS: Worship The Lord

TEXT: Mark 7:1-23

OPEN: *Quote from Lorne Sanny:* "I can give you three reasons why you are important to God: first, because you're made in His image; second, because of what you cost Him (sacrifice of His Son); and third, because of what you can become (like Christ)." In **Mark 7:1-23** let's discover what it means to worship God any place and any time.

Mark 7:1-4 *"The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and ²saw some of His disciples eating food with hands that were 'unclean,' that is, unwashed. ³(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴When they came from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)"*

Historical: Pharisee means "separated one." This Jewish sect originated during a period of captivity many years prior to Christ's birth. Initially their goal was to preserve the culture, OT laws, and tradition of their people amidst heavy pagan influence. By Jesus' time, the Pharisees had become hypocritical, rigid, and self-righteous. They considered their tradition and teaching as authoritative as Scripture, if not more so (*Matthew 15:1-3*). They put more stock in mere outward appearance than they did a changed heart. The Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus (*Mark 3:6*).

Historical: Ceremonial washing had nothing to do with physical hygiene. This rinsing purpose was to remove the ritual defilement caused by having touched something "unclean," such as a dead body or a Gentile (pagan). Some of the rabbis even taught that a certain demon named Shibtah attached itself to people's hands while they slept and that, if he were not ceremonially washed away, he would actually enter the body through the food handled by defiled hands. The value of ceremonial rinsing was held so high that one rabbi insisted that "whosoever has his abode in the land of Israel and eats his common food with rinsed hands may rest assured that he shall obtain eternal life." Another rabbi taught that it would be better to walk four miles out of the way to get water than to eat with unwashed hands. It's said that a rabbi who was imprisoned and given a small ration of water used it to wash his hands before eating rather than to drink, claiming he would rather die than transgress the tradition...The water was first poured on both hands, held with the fingers pointed upward; and it must run down the arm as far as the wrist and drop off from the wrist, for the water was now itself unclean, having touched the unclean hands. And if it ran down the fingers again it would render them unclean. The process was repeated with hands held in the downward direction, the fingers pointing down. And finally, each hand was cleansed by being rubbed with the fist of the other. A strict Jew would do this before every meal and between every course in every meal (*MacArthur NT Commentary, Matthew 8-15*, p. 452-453)

Mark 7:5 *"So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, 'Why don't Your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?'"*

Historical: The Jews held in reverence two basic sets of teachings: the law of Moses, and the accumulation of explanations and applications of the law which they called the "tradition of the elders." These had been handed down from generation to generation, gathering more reverence and greater legal weight along the way. With time, the traditions of the elders were granted as much respect, if not more so, than the law itself (Leroy Lawson, *Matthew*, p. 191). After the Babylonian exile, the Jewish rabbis began to make meticulous rules and regulations governing the daily life of the people (*Archaeological Study Bible*, p. 1586). The burden for keeping their traditions became intolerable. One of the Pharisee writings opens with the saying: "Make a fence for the Law." This means protecting it by surrounding it with cautionary

rules and interpretations of which some were known to contradict God's Word. Jesus made plain that the teachers of the law failed to understand God's power and Word (*Matthew 22:29*).

Matthew 23:1-5a "Then Jesus said to the crowds and to His disciples: 'The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Everything they do is done for men to see...'"

What does God say real worship is and where?

Mark 7:6-8, 20-23 "Jesus replied, 'Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: *'These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. ⁷They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'* ⁸You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men...*What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.'* ²¹For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

Unclean (Greek: *koinos*) means common, impure, or unholy.

Colossians 2:12, 20-23 "Having been buried with Christ in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead...Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!' These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence."

Historical: The trouble at Colossae and elsewhere was syncretism—the tendency to introduce ideas from philosophy and other religions on the level with Scriptural truth. This is a challenge to the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ and throws man back on himself which already proved a failure (*Eerdmans Handbook of Bible*, p. 611)

There were also some false religious types in the days of the early church who believed they had "perfect liberty." Therefore, they did what they wanted—thinking their actions had no bearing on their salvation or their relationships.

1 John 4:21—5:4 "And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves His child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out His commands. This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."

Worship the Lord by understanding true religion works from the inside out and restrains sinful indulgence. Beware of those who promote self-abuse, self-neglect, or self-indulgence in the "name of God" or human religion/philosophy.

Application: Here are some ways to help you to decide whether something is good to do or not: "Does this honor God? Will it encourage someone else or cause them to stumble or stress? Can I do this with the conviction of faith or does it bother my conscience?"

Romans 12:1-2 “I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Contrary to what some say about Christianity, it’s not a religion that calls people to check their minds at the door or bury their heads in the sand.

Quote from W.E. Vine: “(Offering our bodies to God as instruments of right living) is to be intelligent, in contrast to those offered by ritual and compulsion.”

Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

Did you get that? Christ’s sacrifice on the cross to make up for our sins is to have an earthly effect on our lives now. It’s not just about a heavenly reservation in the future.

Illustration: (*The story behind the song: “The Heart of Worship”*)

The Story Behind Matt Redman’s song: “The Heart of Worship”

(crosswalk.com/1253122)

The song “The Heart of Worship” dates back to the late ‘90s. It was born from a period of apathy within writer Matt Redman’s home church in England. The congregation was struggling to find meaning in its musical outpouring at the time. Redman recalls: “There was a dynamic missing, so the pastor did a pretty brave thing. He decided to get rid of the sound system and band for a season, and we gathered together with just our voices. His point was that we’d lost our way in worship, and the way to get back to the heart would be to strip everything away.”

Reminding his church family to be producers in worship, not just consumers, the pastor asked the congregation: “When you come through the doors on a Sunday, what are you bringing as your offering to God?” Matt Redman said the question initially led to some embarrassing silence, but eventually people broke into a cappella songs and heartfelt prayers, encountering God in a fresh way. Before long, the church reintroduced the musicians and sound system. Redman said they gained a new perspective that worship is all about Jesus, and He commands a response in the depths of our souls no matter what the circumstance and setting. “The Heart of Worship” simply describes what occurred.

When the music fades, all is stripped away, and I simply come / Longing just to bring something that's of worth that will bless your heart / I'm coming back to the heart of worship, and it's all about You, Jesus.

Redman remembers writing the song quickly in his bedroom soon after the church’s journey together, with no grand intentions for it to become an international anthem. He viewed the words simply as his personal, subjective response to what he was learning about worship. “The Heart of Worship” has become a new standard of the modern worship music movement. It’s sung by recording artists, choirs, and church families alike. Redman says it’s encouraging when others express how God has used the song to take their congregations through a situation similar to the one his church experienced.

CLOSE: Worship the Lord any place, any time by obeying His Word—all the time with all your heart, soul, & mind.