

Encounters With Jesus

Traditionalists

(Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23)

- Introduction:
1. Traditions are often loved by some and despised by others.
 2. Because of that, traditions are often at the center of religious division.
 3. The longest discussion of traditions is found in Matthew 15 and Mark 7, when Jesus was forced to defend his disciples for breaking traditions, but not the law of God.
 4. It's not always easy to avoid extremes when it comes to traditions, but the words and actions of Jesus should serve as a model.

I. **The Encounter (Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23)**

- A. Jesus was confronted with a group of Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 15:1).
1. They came all the way from Jerusalem and John tells us that Jesus was in Capernaum (John 6:17).
 2. Distance – approx. 120 miles.
 3. Remember, they were seeking excuse to kill him (John 5:18).
- B. Their accusation was: Your disciples break the tradition of the elders by not washing their hands (Matthew.15:2).
1. Tradition means to “hand down.”
 2. But note who it is that is handing this down.
 3. They believed that Moses gave a written law along with an oral law, and these unwritten oral expectations were just as binding as the written law (Mishnah and Talmud).
 4. These traditions were originally meant to be a “hedge” but these rules multiplied into the thousands.
 5. Understand, there were laws about ceremonial cleanness (Leviticus 11-15), but none of them said one had to wash his hands before eating.
 6. Mikvehs.

II. **Jesus' Response (Matthew 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23)**

- A. Jesus begins with their inconsistency in practice (Matthew 15:3-9).
1. If they had been sincere, he probably would have answered their question, but he knew their hearts.
 2. He exposes the sinfulness of their traditions (Matthew 15:3-9)
 - a. (Mark 7:9) All too well... you are experts... you are good at.
 - b. The tradition of “Corbin” versus Exodus 20:12).
- B. Then he answered their question (Matthew 15:11).

III. **Applications Concerning Modern Traditions**

- A. Be aware that not every tradition is good; some are bad in form (doctrine) as well as function (expediency).

- B. Don't elevate tradition to the level of doctrine (Matthew 15:8-9).
- C. Learn to distinguish between tradition and doctrine.
- D. Don't judge or despise those who differ with you on tradition (Romans 14:1-3).

- Conclusion:
1. In this brief encounter Jesus had with these Pharisees, the one thing that stands out the most to me is his elevation of God's word and offense with anyone attempting to elevate the traditions of men to the level of the doctrine of God.
 2. Knowing how Jesus feels about God's word, how does he feel about you today?
 3. Have you obeyed it, or substituted something else for it?