

**READ MATTHEW 15**

Matthew 15:1-20 involves another serious and important confrontation between Yeshua and the Pharisees. Recall that the Pharisees are the theological ancestors of today's Rabbis. A major issue for all people is how to interpret and apply Scripture to one's daily life. The Pharisees developed the concept that when God promulgated the Torah to Moses that he also issued a series of oral rulings to assist Moses and the people to correctly apply the law. These rulings were carried down from generation to generation through the ruling elders of Israel. These alleged rulings were later codified by the Rabbis in 200 CE, known as the *Mishna*, and later elaborated upon and codified in 500 CE, known as the *Talmud*. Rabbinic Judaism is based upon the Talmud and other Rabbinic writings. These writings together are known as *Oral Torah* and are considered sufficiently authoritative to give the final word on interpretation of the written Torah.

It is probable that many unwritten customs were carried down among the generations to assist the people in living unto the Lord. A problem occurs, however, when the customs negate the intent of Scripture. A greater problem arises when the customs assume authority that equals or exceeds Scripture. Those are the issues Yeshua deals with in this passage.

Interestingly, the Pharisees believed that all Jews were priests unto the Lord. Yeshua's apostles later claimed the same thing for all followers of Yeshua. The Pharisees also believed that everytime one eats he is participating in a sacrificial meal (also interesting in light of the Apostle Paul's admonition to always remember the Lord's death when we eat.) As a priest participating in a sacrificial meal, one must wash his hands as the Levitical priests of the Torah. Otherwise, he would be considered unclean and thus be disqualified from performing the sacrifice. From the question the Pharisees ask Yeshua in Matthew 15:2, it's clear that Yeshua's disciples did not sacrificially wash their hands before eating.

Q - In arguing against the "Oral law," Yeshua uses another tradition to show that the Pharisees were usurping the written Word of God. What was the example?

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Q - How did the tradition usurp God's commandments?

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Reread Matthew 5:17-20. Remember Yeshua came to fulfill the law, i.e., to bring the law to its fullness. Part of that role is to clarify God's laws, which he is doing in this passage. Yeshua quotes from the prophet Isaiah in condemning the Pharisees' methods of serving God. Read Isaiah 29:9-24.

Q - How does Yeshua seem to fulfill Isaiah 29:18-19?

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Q - How does Yeshua define clean and unclean?

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Q - How does Yeshua define the essence of Torah?

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Q - List some ways in which you measure your right-standing with God by the things you do.

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Q - According to Yeshua's statements in Matthew 15:16-20, do those things help you get right with God?

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In some traditional Jewish circles, it will be said that Yeshua is the god of the Gentiles, but the Jews don't need him.

Q - After reading Matthew 15:21-28, how would you respond?

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Notice the daughter who was delivered was from Canaanite descent. We read earlier that the Canaanites were to be destroyed because of their gross idolatry and immorality. If you recall, such activity brings on demonic possession. Here is a case in point: a Canaanite is demon-possessed. Yet, the Lord heals her, even after Yeshua declares he's come for the Jews only.

Q - Why?

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## **GROUP QUESTIONS**

**1. Based on Yeshua's confrontation with the Pharisees over the traditions of men, discuss some common believing dos and don'ts that are not necessarily directly from Scripture. Are they valid and why or why not? Could at times they become traditions of men?**

**2. Yeshua reveals that many of man's problems originate with the heart. Are there areas locked away into your memory or thought life that cause you trouble? Read out loud James 5:13-16. Note confession of sin and subsequent prayer by others can release one from all kinds of bondage. For those who wish, take turns in confessing such problems. Have others lay hands on you to be healed. You may be surprised at the results.**

**\* AN IMPORTANT NOTE: Personal sharing such as this is very difficult and at times painful. Anything shared at these times is not to be repeated outside of the meeting.**

**Memory Verse: Matthew 15:18**