



A just weight
and balance

are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- **Matthew 15:1**

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

- **15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.**

- **Which were of Jerusalem.**

- There were **Scribes** and **Pharisees** throughout the land, **but these were chiefs from Jerusalem**

- Considered the experts in their **religion** and **customs**:

- Sent by the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, or came of themselves;
- Taking it upon themselves the authority to examine and correct this wayward carpenter.
 - (Matthew 13:55)

- **15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?**

for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

- Note the **tone** of the question, which has something of an **official air about it.**

- This is a most important passages.
- It represents a head-on clash between Jesus and the leaders of orthodox Jewish religion.
- Having come all the way from Jerusalem to Galilee to put their questions to Jesus.

- There had been previous accusations.
 - Of blasphemy in forgiving sins (Matthew 9:3),
 - Of eating and drinking with publicans and sinners (Matthew 9:11),
 - Of disregarding fasts (Matthew 9:14),
 - Of casting out devils by Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24),
 - Of Sabbath-breaking (Matthew 12:2;10).

- It is here we find a clash between Jesus and the Pharisees that is far more than personal.

- It is something far more critical.

- It is the collision of:

- Two views of religion

- Two views of the demands of God.

- Nor was there any possibility of a compromise between these two views of religion.
 - Inevitably the one had to destroy the other.
 - Here then is one of the critically supreme religious contests in history.

- To understand it we must try to understand the background of Jewish Pharisaic and Scribal religion.

- In this passage there meets us the whole conception of clean and unclean.

- We are not dealing with with hygiene.

- It is entirely a ceremonial matter.

- For a man to be clean was for him to be in a state where he might worship and approach God;
- To be unclean was to make worship to God impossible.
- This uncleanness was transferable; it was, so to speak, infectious.

- There was nothing moral about this.
 - The touching of certain things produced uncleanness;
 - And this uncleanness excluded men from the presence of God.
 - It was as if some special infection hung in the air about certain persons and things.

- We may understand this a little better if we remember that even in western civilization this idea is not completely dead.

- There are still those who find in:
 - A four-leafed clover,
 - A good-luck charm,
 - A black cat,
 - Something which brings good fortune or bad luck.

- The laws of **cleanness** and **uncleanness** had a wide area of application.
- They laid down **what a man might eat,** and what he might not eat.
- Broadly speaking all **fruit** and **vegetables** were clean.
- But, in regard **to living creatures,** the laws were strict.
- These laws are in **Leviticus 11:1-47.**

- Religion had gotten itself **mixed up with** all kinds of **external rules** and **regulations**;
- And, since it is much easier both to observe **rules** and **regulations**
 - **And to check up on** those who do not comply.
- These rules and regulations **had become religion** to the orthodox Jews.

- It was clearly impossible to avoid all kinds of ceremonial uncleanness.
 - A man might himself avoid unclean things,
 - But how could he possibly know when on the street he had touched someone who was unclean?

- This was further complicated by the fact that there were Gentiles in Palestine,
 - And the very dust touched by a Gentile foot became unclean.

- To combat uncleanness an elaborate system of washings was worked out.
 - These washings became ever more elaborate.
 - At first there was a hand-washing on rising in the morning.

- Then there grew up an elaborate system of hand-washing whose use was at first confined to the priests in the Temple.
- Later these complicated washings came to be demanded by the strictest of the orthodox Jews for themselves and for all who claimed to be truly religious.

- The question of the Jewish orthodox leaders to Jesus is:

- "Why do your disciples not observe the laws of washing which our tradition lays down?"

- To the Jew the Law had two sections.
- There was the written Law which was contained in scripture itself;
- And there was the oral Law which had been worked out through the generations.

- And all these developments were the **tradition of the elders,**
 - And were regarded as just as much, if not more, binding than **the written Law.**

- To the orthodox Jew all this ritual ceremony was religion;
- This is what they believed God demanded.
- To do these things was to please God.

- All this
ritual washing
was regarded as
just as important
and just as binding
as the
Ten Commandments.

- Religion had become identified with a host of external regulations.
- It was as important to wash the hands in a certain way as to obey the commandment: "Thou shalt not covet."

- Keep in mind that the Pharisees honored their traditions above the written Word of God.
 - **“It is a greater offense to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis, than to contradict Scripture itself,”**
says the Mishna
(a collection of Jewish traditions).

- To the **Scribes** and **Pharisees**
worship was ritual,
ceremony law;
- To **Jesus** worship was the **clean** and **pure** heart.
- **Here is the clash.**
 - And that clash
still exists.
 - What is **worship**?

- Even today there are many who would say that worship is not worship unless it is
- Carried out by a priest or vicar ordained in a certain succession,
 - In a building consecrated in a certain way,
 - From a liturgy laid down by a certain Church.
- And all these things are externals.

- One of the greatest definitions of worship ever given by mortal man was by William Temple:
- Let us take note!

- **"To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God,**
- **To feed the mind**
with the truth of God,
- **To purge the imagination**
by the beauty of God,
- **To open the heart**
to the love of God,
- **To devote the will**
to the purpose of God."

- When some people attend church, they have often been “**beaten down**” by the world.
- In the world they have found **no answers**.
- They have been **depleted** of their **emotional** and **spiritual** energy.

- Like a car that is about of gas, it sputters and struggles, then dies.

- As a last resort they coast into the church community on “empty”.

- It is under the sound of the gospel that they will hopefully find a purpose in life.

- Hebrews 12:12
Wherefore lift up
the hands
which hang down,
and the feeble knees;

- Worship can never be founded on any ceremonies or ritual;
- Worship must always be founded on personal relationships between man and God.
 - Above all worship must be as Jesus defined it, “In spirit and in truth”.
(John 4:24)

Matthew 15:3

**But he answered
and said unto them,
Why do ye
also transgress
the commandment of God
by your tradition?**

- These Pharisees could see clearly enough what they thought was a "mote" in the eye of Jesus.
- They must be made to feel the "beam" that was in their own eye.

- Matthew 15:3.

Why do ye also transgress
... by your tradition?

- The “also”
must be noted.
- Jesus admits that
there was
some kind of transgression
on the part of His disciples
- Although it was
a transgression
of a human tradition.

- Ye accuse my disciples of transgressing the traditions of the elders.

- I accuse you of transgressing the commands of God.

- He accused the Pharisees of putting their commandments on a level with the divine requirements, and so rendering the whole of Israel's worship vain.

- The **fatal** mistake of many is that they think of nothing but:
- The **pomp** and **circumstance**,
 - The **emotion**.
 - The mere **externals** of religion.

- Thus, with all their religiousness,
they have no religion,
and no hope with Christ.

- Jeremiah 18:12

**And they said,
There is no hope:
but we will walk after
our own devices,
and we will every one
do the imagination
of his evil heart.**

- That they were only sham holy,
our Lord made clear enough
by his searching question to them.
 - They cared for forms and ceremonies,
 - They cared little
or nothing for truth.

- Now Jesus explains
what what
defiles a person
- Matthew 15:10
And he called
the multitude,
and said unto them,
Hear, and understand:

- For a Jew
what Jesus is about to say
was the most startling thing
Jesus ever said.
- For he does not only condemn
Scribal and Pharisaic
ritual and ceremonial religion;
 - He actually wipes out
large sections
of the book
of Leviticus.

- His words were not only a contradiction of the tradition of the elders alone;
- This was a contradiction of scripture itself.
- And the Jewish leaders are appalled!
 - This ignorant “carpenter’s son” must go!

- This saying of Jesus **cancels all the food laws** of the Old Testament.
- These laws might still stand as matters of **health** and **hygiene** and **common-sense**;
 - But they could never again stand **as matters of religion.**

- Once and for all
Jesus lays it down
that what really matters
is not the state of
a man's ritual observance,

- But the state of
a man's heart.

- Matthew 5:8

**Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God.**

- No wonder the Scribes and Pharisees were shocked.
- The very anchor of their religion was cut from beneath their feet.
- This statement was not simply alarming;
- It was revolutionary.
- It simply must not be permitted!

- Jesus was right,
their whole theory of religion
was wrong.
- They identified religion
and pleasing God
with the observing of
rules and regulations
- Which had to do with
cleanness and uncleanness,
- With what a man ate
 - And how he
washed his hands
before he ate it;

- Jesus now introduces a new and radical thought that has to do with the state of a man's heart.
- Jesus said that the Pharisees were blind guides who had no idea of the way to God.

- And if people followed them all they could expect was to fall into the ditch with them.

- Matthew 15:14
And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

- We have still not fully learned this lesson.
- To go to church regularly,
- To give liberally to the church,
 - To read the Bible daily
 - Are all external things.
- They are means towards religion; but they are not religion.

- If religion consists in external observances, it is quite misleading.
- One may a faultless life in externals
- But bitter and evil thoughts within his heart.

- The teaching of Jesus is that not all the outward observances in the world can atone for a heart filled with pride, bitterness, lust.

- As startling as it may be it is Jesus' teaching that the part of a man that matters is his heart.
- "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

- It is a teaching which condemns every one of us
 - No one can call himself/herself good because they observe external rules and regulations.
- And the reason why every one of us can only pray, **"God be merciful to me a sinner."**
(Luke 18:13)

- The Pharisees failed to see that a corpse cannot stand on its own.
- And their religion was a dead corpse.

- How many
are attempting
to worship God
this very day
but fail to realize
they are but corpses
with no life.

“ ... true worshippers
shall worship the Father
in spirit and in truth:
for the Father seeketh such
to worship him.”

John 4:23

**The doors of the church
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride
Say
“Come”.**

Revelation 22:17



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