

MATTHEW: THE KING WHO SAVES
Empty Rituals & Worthless Worship
Matthew 14:34-15:20
February 22, 2026

Three Characteristics of Empty Rituals & Worthless Worship

1. Human traditions are elevated above God's Word (14:34-15:6).

Rituals protected

Word of God nullified

2. Physical actions are emphasized above spiritual affections (15:7-9).

All the future events in this vision are like a sealed book to them. When you give it to those who can read, they will say, "We can't read it because it is sealed." When you give it to those who cannot read, they will say, "We don't know how to read."

And so the Lord says, "These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And their worship of me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote." (Is 29:11–13, NLT)

Hypocritical worship

Vain worship

They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! (2 Ti 3:5, NLT)

3. External conformity is esteemed above heart renewal (15:10-20).

Uprooted plants

Blind guides

Defiled lives

If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you. (Jas 1:26–27, NLT)

We need more than clean hands –
We need clean hearts