

MYSTERY & MAJESTY

– 11 –

By Whose Authority?

All scriptures use the English Standard Version (ESV) except where indicated

Matthew 15:1-2 Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.”

- Pharisees and Scribes come from Jerusalem to Galilee.
- 70 miles.
- Probably travelled several days.
- Jesus is no longer an unknown carpenter from Nazareth.

- Jerusalem was the religious centre of Jewish life: the temple, the priesthood, major religious authorities operated there
- Torah (first 5 books)
- Tanakh entire OT.
- Tradition of the elders - Oral laws, man-made rules, and regulations passed down over time.
- The Pharisees used these traditions to create additional righteousness outside of Scripture.
- “You wash your hands before you eat or you have sinned.”
- The question is not: Tradition or no tradition? It’s: Does the tradition faithfully serve God’s Word, or has it begun replacing God’s Word?
- Paul says to follow apostolic traditions.
- Mark 7 gives more detail, explaining that some Jews observed ritual washings before meals and after contact with potentially defiling environments.
- Priests were commanded to wash in certain circumstances before serving at the sanctuary.

- Legalism: taking something biblical, mishandling it, expanding it beyond its context, and burdening people with it as though God commanded it.

Matthew 15:3 He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?

- They ask: How well are your disciples following our rules?
- Jesus is asking: How well are your rules following God’s Word?

Matthew 15:4-6 4 For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ 5 But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” 6 he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God.

- This isn’t a ceremonial preference.
- This is the 5th commandment.

- Punishable by death in ancient Israel.
- Adult children had responsibilities toward aging parents like caring for them.
- Corban – dedicated to God.
- In principle, dedicating possessions to God sounds extremely spiritual. But the practice was manipulated.
- We create our own corban laws; ways of circumventing the word of God.

Matthew 15:7-9 7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: 8 ““This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; 9 in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.””

- Isaiah 29:13.
- Hypocrites - creating an appearance that hides the fact that I have no intention of obeying.
- Is Christianity is just about trying harder to obey rules? No.

John 14:15-17 15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father,

and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

- We aren't saved because we obey Jesus.
- We obey Jesus because He has saved us, and He gives us His Spirit to transform us from the inside out.