

**MATTHEW 15:1-20**

**MESSIAH ON A MISSION (PART 29)**

**“THE PARADOX OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS”**

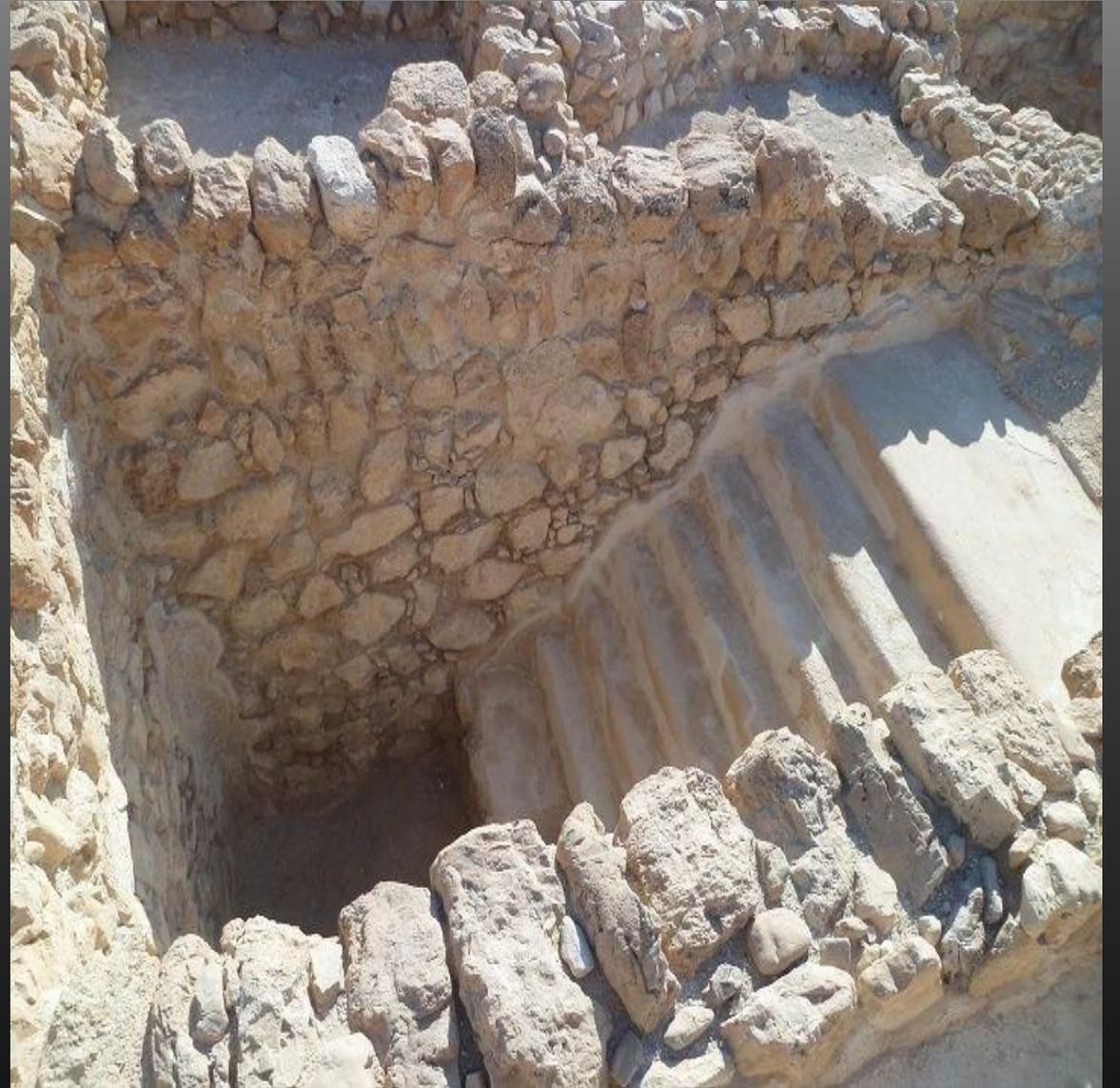
**The Jewish leaders are shown to be in opposition to the law of God by obeying their oral traditions. Matthew presents Jesus as the authority who correctly interprets the law.**

- Jesus is the true teacher of the Law
- The Jewish leaders are hypocrites in following their traditions rather than the Torah
- Evil thoughts and actions have a defiling nature

## The Questions Hypocrites Ask, Is Indicative Of Their Inward Corruption

Jesus had just fed the five thousand in the wilderness. Thousands of people had eaten bread with unwashed hands. The small-minded Pharisees did not care about the miracle. All they cared about was that the Lord had broken one of their religious taboos.

After the Babylonian exile, the Jewish rabbis began to make meticulous rules and regulations governing the daily life of the people. These were interpretations and applications of the Law of Moses, handed down from generation to generation. In Jesus' day this "tradition of the elders" was in oral form. It was not until about A.D. 200 that it was put into writing in the Mishnah.



**Jesus Answers Their Question With A Question:  
"Why Do Ye Also Transgress The  
Commandment Of God By Your Tradition?"**

The Lord did not deny that the disciples had transgressed the Pharisees' tradition; He simply swept it aside and vindicated the disciples for ignoring it. Not only was the tradition worthless; it violated the law of God.

The Lord referred the Pharisees to the fifth commandment "Honour thy father and mother" (15:4).

"By simply saying '[Corban], that by which I might be profited by thee '[the rabbinic formula for such a vow], a person bound himself never to touch, taste, or have anything that belonged to the person so addressed. Similarly, by saying '[Corban], that by which thou mightest be profited by me '[a corresponding rabbinic formula], he would prevent the person so addressed from ever deriving any benefit from that which belonged to him." (Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 489).

## A Quotation From Scripture Defines The Argument (15:7-11)

The quotation from Isaiah (29:13) was a direct hit at their hypocrisy, as were all the Lord's references to Scripture, for it ruled out tradition. Isaiah, of course, prophesied long before the Babylonian captivity, long before the days of Ezra and the scribes, and long before the beginning of the system of traditional teaching that, in the end, produced the Talmud.



# Jesus Prophesied Of Two Judgements Against Hypocrites

1. Every plant that God has not planted shall be uprooted. Jesus uses the Biblical image of building up or tearing down God's people (Psalms 28:5; Jeremiah 1:10; 11:17; 18:7-8; 24:6; 31:4,28; 42:10; 45:4; compare Jeremiah 12:2 with Isaiah 29:13).
2. These hypocritical leaders are blind leaders, and their followers are also blind, and both will fall. Those who were literally blind often had someone sighted who could guide them. When Jesus speaks of falling into a pit as a metaphor of judgment, study and compare Psalms 7:15; Proverbs 26:27; Isaiah 24:18; Jeremiah 48:43-44; Ezekiel 19:4.

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“The paradox of self-righteousness is the more one cleans oneself in their own righteousness, the dirtier one becomes.”

# The Main Point Of Jesus' Argument

Jesus teaches how evil thoughts and actions defile a person.

Jesus points to the source of evil thoughts and actions, the human heart – to illustrate the nature of defilement.

Through Jesus' teaching, Matthew cautions his reader to look inward to address where actions and thoughts come from (cf., Matthew 12:33).

By addressing the inward life, a person's actions and words will come into alignment with God's will.

