



Chapter 15

Traditions of Judaism vs. Commandments of God

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This chapter continues the movement of the King, and He is beginning now to move toward the cross. We have already seen His rejection and conflict with the religious rulers. This chapter advances the ministry of Jesus to the very breaking point with the scribes and Pharisees. There is a lot of action here.

Matthew 15:1

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

[from Jerusalem] The highest-ranking **Pharisees and scribes** arrive to confront Jesus.

[scribes] Referred to 120 times in the Bible. Formerly secretaries to kings (2 Samuel 8:17; 2 Samuel 20:25; 2 Kings 12:10; 2 Kings 22:3-12). Later, they were copyists and interpreters of the Scriptures and laws of Israel, keepers of all records, and were the lawyers and schoolmasters in Israel (Ezra 7:6-21; Neh. 8:1-13; Matthew 23:2-34; Mark 9:11; Mark 14:43; Mark 15:1; Luke 5:17; Luke 22:66; Luke 23:10; Acts 4:5; Acts 5:34; 1 Tim. 1:7).

[Pharisees] A sect of self-righteous and zealous Jews who held to the letter of their interpretations of the law and to their own traditions, regardless of whether they nullified the Word of God or not. They were Christ's bitterest enemies (Matthew 15:2; Matthew 23:1-33; Mark 7:8-13; Luke 11:42; Galatians 1:14; Phil. 3:4-6).

The Pharisee headquarters was in Jerusalem, so why mention that these were from Jerusalem? We will be seeing a confrontation between the traditions of Judaism and the commandments of God. Pharisaical Judaism had become ensnared with traditions of men.

Jerusalem was a Jebusite city before David conquered it and made it the capital of the united kingdom of Israel (2 Samuel 5:6-12). Here the most extraordinary events of human history have taken place—events in which God, angels, and men have played a part. Here is where the temples of Israel have been and will again be located. Here is where Christ was consecrated to God, where He was crucified and buried, where He arose from the dead, and the place He will come to at the second advent (Zech. 14:1-5). At Jerusalem is where Christ will reign forever when He comes (Isaiah 2:1-4; Ezekiel 43:7; Ezekiel 48:35; Joel 4:20; Zech. 14). The city has undergone no less than twenty-eight sieges and two more are yet to come (Zech. 14; Rev. 20:7-10). It was the center of Jewish life—political, social, business, and religious. The gospel was first preached here by the early church (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:4-8; Acts 2:14). Here the first congregation of Christians was formed, the church saw its greatest victories and had its greatest struggles to survive; here

is where the first Christian martyr laid down his life (Acts 2-12). Many prophecies are yet to be fulfilled concerning Jerusalem as we shall see in the various books of the prophets.¹

Eighteen Names for Jerusalem (Dake)

1. Jerusalem (814 times, Joshua 10:1,3)
2. Jebusi (Joshua 18:16,28)
3. Jebus (Judges 10:10-11; 1 Chron. 11:4-5)
4. Zion (152 times, 1 Kings 8:1; Zech. 9:13)
5. The City of David (2 Samuel 5:7)
6. Salem (Genesis 14:18; Psalm 76:2; Hebrews 7)
7. Ariel (Isaiah 29:1)
8. The city of God (Psalm 46:4)
9. The city of the Great King (Psalm 48:2)
10. The city of Judah (2 Chron. 25:28)
11. The throne of the Lord (Jeremiah 3:17)
12. The holy mountain (Daniel 9:16,20)
13. The holy city (Neh. 11:1,18)
14. The city of solemnities (Isaiah 33:20)
15. The city of truth (Zech. 8:3)
16. The Lord is there (Ezekiel 48:35)
17. The Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 33:16)
18. Aholibah (Ezekiel 23:4)

Origen; “The Scribes Came from Jerusalem”

Pharisees and scribes came to him from Jerusalem. They did not come because they were amazed at the power in Jesus that healed people even if they “only touched the edge of his cloak.” Instead, they came with a faultfinding attitude and brought an accusation before the teacher. The accusation did not concern the transgression of a commandment of God but rather the transgression of one tradition of the Jewish elders. Probably the charge of the faultfinders itself displays the piety of the disciples of Jesus, because they offered no grounds at all for criticism by the Pharisees and scribes in regard to transgressing the commandments of God. The Pharisees and scribes would not have brought the charge of transgressing the commandment of the elders against the disciples of Jesus if, indeed, they were able to get a firm hold on the ones who were being accused and were able to show that they were transgressing a commandment of God.²

(Commentary on Matthew 11:8)

Chrysostom; “When and Where”

It says that the Pharisees and scribes came to him “then.” When? When he had worked thousands of signs, when he had healed the sick with the touch of his tassel. It is for this reason that the Evangelist indicates the time, so that he might show that their unspeakable wickedness is second to none. But what is intended by the phrase “the scribes and

¹ Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

² Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Varsity Press, Thomas Oden, Editor

Pharisees from Jerusalem”? They were scattered everywhere throughout the tribes and were divided into twelve parts. But the ones who were in charge of the mother city were more wicked than the others, because they enjoyed more honor and had become extremely arrogant.³

(The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 51.1)

Matthew 15:2

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

[tradition of the elders] Jews held that the writings of the scribes were more important than those of the law and the prophets: "the words of the elders are weightier than the words of the prophets." Many similar statements are found in the Talmuds. Traditions were held to be the finishing touch to the Divine revelation.

[wash not their hands when they eat bread] This was considered no small crime among religionists (Matthew 15:1-9).

Elders—Rulers and magistrates among the Jews. For they wash not their hands— What frivolous nonsense! These Pharisees had nothing which their malice could fasten on in the conduct or doctrine of our blessed Lord and his disciples, and therefore they must dispute about washing of hands! All sorts of Pharisees are troublesome people in religious society; and the reason is, they take more pleasure in blaming others than in amending themselves.⁴

The Pharisees and teachers of the law came from Jerusalem, the center of Jewish authority, to scrutinize Jesus’ activities. Over the centuries since the Jews’ return from Babylonian captivity, hundreds of religious traditions had been added to God’s laws. The Pharisees and teachers of the law considered them all equally important. Many traditions are not bad in themselves. Certain religious traditions can add richness and meaning to life. But we must not assume that because our traditions have been practiced for years they should be elevated to a sacred standing. God’s principles never change, and his law doesn’t need additions. Traditions should help us understand God’s laws better, not become laws themselves.⁵

McGee: The scribes and the Pharisees had come all the way from Jerusalem. In the previous chapter we saw that Jesus and His disciples were way out in a desert place where the crowds couldn’t even get to a hamburger stand; so He had fed them. On the surface it may seem like a wonderful thing that the religious rulers had come all the way out to listen to Him. Well, frankly, they hadn’t come all the way out to applaud Him or to accept His teaching; they had come to criticize Him. Immediately we recognize that this was not a friendly visit. They did not accuse Him of breaking the Scriptures but of

³ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Varsity Press, Thomas Oden, Editor

⁴ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

⁵ Life Application Bible

violating the traditions which they considered to be on a par with the Scriptures. They wanted to know why His disciples did not wash their hands. They were referring to a ceremonial cleansing rather than to what we would consider a physical or sanitary washing. There are a great many people who feel that if you go through some sort of an outward ceremony and clean up on the outside, this is all that is necessary.⁶

Yashanet: The story in this chapter one that has consistently been misused to teach that the Messiah did away with the Levitical food commandments (kosher laws). The text plainly shows that this is not the subject at hand, yet many ignore this in order to teach against Torah. (See comments on verse 14 below).

The context of the discussion, is stated clearly in this verse (and at the end of the topic, in verse 20). The subject is not the kosher laws, but that of "washing of hands." There is more to this tradition than what the scripture tells however. (Hence the advantage of knowing the Hebrew background to the discussion.)

There were varying mystical beliefs among some Jews of Yeshua's day, not all firmly grounded in Torah. Some of these ideas had to do with how a person could become spiritually "clean" or "unclean." (A concept, that is of course, quite biblical.) One such teaching was that during the night, evil spirits could come into a man's body. These spirits would exit the body through the hands (more precisely, the fingertips). The body would become spiritually "clean" again, in the morning, with the exception of the fingertips/hands. It was taught that the hands had to be washed in order to remove any defilement that would cause anything touched (i.e., food) to become unclean.

Yeshua is showing that this hand-washing tradition that was not based in Torah, was in fact nullifying Torah, as they were calling unclean, foods that God Himself had declared clean, simply by eating with unwashed hands. He also chastises the teachers for breaking true Torah commandments (while laying these unnecessary burdens on the people) by citing their own lack of properly following the commandment of honoring father and mother. This is the lesson of verses 2-20.

Another scripture cited in the same incorrect fashion is Peter's vision of the unclean animals in Acts chapter 10. Here too, the context and explanation are ignored in order to support false doctrine. Dreams in scripture commonly use specific items and themes to represent certain people, places, things and teachings. In the case of Peter's dream in Acts 10, he clearly explains this vision several times throughout the book of Acts. Not once does Peter say that God showed him that the laws of kashrut are done away with. Rather, in every case, he explains the meaning of the dream as being that gentiles were not to be considered as "unclean," and could directly come to faith through Yeshua -- something that God had not provided for before Yeshua's death. (See comments to verse 24 below.)⁷

[tradition of the elders] Interpretations of Scripture handed down from esteemed rabbis. **they do not wash their hands.** Priests were required to wash their hands and feet prior to performing their duties. The Pharisees made this a matter of ceremonial purity and, in

⁶McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:86). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷Yashanet.com, Commentary on Matthew

their desire to meticulously avoid any possibility of becoming unclean, applied it to all Israelites.⁸

Spurgeon: When our Lord was busiest his enemies assailed him. These ecclesiastics "of Jerusalem" were probably the cream of the set, and from their great reputation they reckoned upon an easy victory over the rustic preacher. Perhaps they were a deputation from headquarters, sent to confound the new Teacher. They had a question to raise, which to them may have seemed important; or possibly they pretended to think it so to answer their own purposes. Traditions of the elders were great things with them: to transgress these must be a crime indeed. Washing of the hands is a thing proper enough; one could wish it were oftener practiced; but to exalt it into a religious rite is a folly and a sin. These "scribes and Pharisee" washed their hands, whether they needed washing or not, out of a supposed zeal to be rid of any particle that might render them ceremonially unclean. Our Lord's disciples had so far entered into Christian liberty that they did not observe the rabbinical tradition: "they wash not their hands when they eat bread." Why should they wash if their hands were clean? Tradition had no power over their consciences. No man has any more right to institute a new duty than to neglect an old one. The issuing of commands is for the King alone. Yet these religionists inquire why the Lord's disciples break a law which was no law. It will be well if our opponents are unable to bring against us any worse charge than this.⁹

Matthew 15:3

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

“Wash Not Their Hands”

The Bible does have laws for the priests, yet here we are dealing with the everyday orthodox Jew, of which there is nothing about washing your hands in this sense in the Old Testament. In Pharisaical Judaism, they added oral traditions, which were put above the written statutes of the Torah. They held the Torah highly, but would only look at it through the interpretation of the Talmud or the Mishna. For example: Ex 34:26 led to some of the kosher laws.¹⁰

[Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?] You accuse My disciples of breaking the traditions of the elders—I accuse you of breaking the commandments of God. You prefer human inventions in religion more than God's Word (Matthew 16:6-12; Matthew 23:1-36; Mark 3:1-6; Mark 7:1-13; John 5:10-16). Paul also rebuked Jews for the same sin (Galatians 1:13-14; Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 1:4; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:14-16; Titus 1:14; Titus 3:9).

⁸ ESV Study Bible

⁹ Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

¹⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

Yashanet: Here is a second statement about the problem at hand -- Yeshua is not telling them the kosher laws (given by God) are suspended (in violation of His own words in Matthew 5:17-18), but clearly says they are breaking God's Torah by this particular man-made (not God-given) tradition.

It should be noted that Yeshua is not against tradition, including many of the traditions of the Pharisaic Judaism, (which He himself followed, i.e., celebration of Chanukkah, called the "Festival of Dedication" in the gospel of John). Such tradition is the way in which we "walk out" our faith (called *halakha*). As we will see in the next chapter, Yeshua even gave the power to set such "tradition" to His disciples.

What Yeshua is opposed to is any tradition not founded in Torah that places itself above Torah.¹¹

Matthew 15:4

For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

[Honour thy father and mother] This meant not only respect and submission, but also support of parents (Exodus 20:12; Exodus 21:17; Deut. 5:16; Deut. 27:16; Proverbs 23:22; 1 Tim. 5:17).

[He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death] Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9; Deut. 27:16).

[Let him die the death] This is a Hebrew phrase, the same as saying, *let him surely die*. The Jewish law punishes this crime with death. This duty of honouring and obeying a parent was what Christ said they had violated by their traditions. He proceeds to state the way in which it was done.

Spurgeon: Our Lord explains his question, and lays home his accusation. God had bound the son and daughter to honor the parent; and this unquestionably included rendering to father and mother such help as they might need. From this duty there could be no escape without breaking the plain command of God. It was always right, by the law of nature, to be grateful to parents; and by the law of Moses it was always a deadly sin to revile them. In we read: "He that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death." Father and mother are to be had in reverence, and cherished with love; and the precept which ordains this, is called "the first commandment with promise." There could be no mistake as to the meaning of the divine law, yet the base teachers of the period had invented a method of excusing men from the performance of so obvious a duty.

These wretched tradition - lovers taught that if a man cried, "Corban! A gift"; and thus nominally set apart for God what his parents sought of him, he must not afterwards give it to them. If in anger, or even in pretense, he placed what was requested by father or mother under a ban he became free from the obligation to aid his parents. It is true he was not required by the Rabbis to carry out his vow, and actually give the money or the goods

¹¹ Yashanet.com, Commentary on Matthew

to God; but as he had compromised the sacred name, he must on no account hand over the gift to his parents. So that a hasty word would loose any child from his duty to aid his father or his mother; and then he might pretend that he I was very sorry for having said it, but that his conscience would not permit him to break the ban. Vile hypocrites! Advocates of the devil! Was ever device more shallow? Yet thus they "made the commandment of God of one effort."¹²

Matthew 15:5

But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

[**gift**] Greek: *doron* (GSN-1435), anything that is dedicated (Matthew 5:23-24; Matthew 8:4; Matthew 23:18-19; Mark 7:11; Hebrews 5:1; Hebrews 8:3-4; Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 11:4). It is translated offering (Luke 21:4). Children who did not want to support parents used this tradition as an excuse to evade the law. They would enter into a deal with a corrupt priest for a small percent to dedicate things to God which should go to parents. They then could claim them to be God's and not their own. Thus they would be free from any obligation to parents.¹³

[**It is a gift**] In Mark it is *corban*. The word *corban* is a Hebrew word, denoting a gift. It here means a thing *dedicated to the service of God; and, therefore, not to be appropriated to any other use*. The Jews were in the habit of making such dedications. They devoted their property to him, for sacred uses, as they pleased. In doing this they used the word *corban*, or some similar word; saying this thing is *corban*, i.e., is a gift to God, or is sacred to him. The law required that when a dedication of this kind was made, it should be fulfilled. "Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God," Psalms 76:11. See Deuteronomy 23:21. The law of God required that a son should *honour* his parent; i.e., among other things, provide for his wants when he was old, and in distress. Yet the Jewish teachers said that it was more important for a man to *dedicate his property to God* than to *provide for the wants of his parent*. If he had once devoted his property-once said it was *corban*, or a gift to God -it could not be appropriated even to the support of a parent. If a parent was needy and poor, and if he should apply to a son for assistance, and the son should reply, though in anger, "It is devoted to God-- this property which you need, *and by which you might be profited by me, is corban*, I give to God,"-the Jews said the property could not be recalled, and the son was not under obligation to aid a parent with it. He had done a more important thing, in giving it to God. The son was free. They would not suffer him to do anything for his father after that. Thus he might *in a moment* free himself from the obligation to obey his father or mother. In a sense somewhat similar to this the chiefs and priests of the Sandwich Islands had the power of devoting anything to the service of the gods, by saying that it was *tabu*, or *tabued*. That is, that it became consecrated to the service of religion; and no matter who had been the owner, it could then be appropriated to no other use. In this way they had complete power over all the possessions of the people, and could appropriate them to their own use under the pretence

¹² Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

¹³ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

of devoting them to religion. They thus deprived the *people* of their property under the plea that it was consecrated to the gods; the Jewish son deprived his *parents* of a support under the plea that the property was devoted to the service of religion. The principle was the same and both systems were equally a violation of the rights of others.

Besides, the law said that a man should die that *cursed* his father; i.e., that refused to obey him, or to provide for him, or spoke in anger to him. Yet the *Jews* said, that though in anger, and in real *spite* and *hatred*, a son said to his father, "All that I have which could profit you, I have given to God," he should be free from blame. Thus the whole law was made void, or of no use, by what *appeared* to have the appearance of piety. *No man, according to their views, was bound to obey the fifth commandment, and support an aged and needy parent, if either from superstition or spite he chose to give his property to God, that is, to some religious use.*

Our Saviour did not mean to condemn the practice of giving to God, or to religious and charitable duties. This the law and the gospel equally required. He commended even a poor widow that gave all her living, Mark 12:44. But he meant to condemn the practice of giving to God, where it interfered with our duty to parents and relations: where it was done to get rid of the duty of aiding them; and where it was done out of a malignant and rebellious spirit, with the *semblance* of piety, to get clear of doing to them what God required.¹⁴

Matthew 15:6

And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Corban:

There was a tradition that goods could be set aside for either of two purposes: as a dedication to the Temple, or in reserve for the performance of a vow. These "set aside" funds were designated *korban*, a gift offered (or to be offered) to God; a sacred treasury (Mk 7:11).

"Corban" was excluded from any other requirements. But they used this tradition as a ruse to evade the commandment to care for their father and their mother. From this came a practice, say grandpa and grandma were hungry; you were to provide for them. But if you had a big steak you could declare it "corban" as being exempt from having to take care of your grandparents with it. So Jesus is saying that these traditions are not only wrong, but they have been contrived as to make the commandment of God of no effect!

This was the practice of *Corban* (literally, "offering"; see Mark 7:11). Anyone who made a Corban vow was required to dedicate money to God's temple that otherwise would have gone to support his parents. Corban had become a religiously acceptable way to neglect parents, circumventing the child's responsibility to them. Although the action—giving money to God—seemed worthy and no doubt conferred prestige on the giver, many people who took the Corban vow were disregarding God's command to care for

¹⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary

needy parents. These religious leaders were ignoring God's clear command to honor their parents.¹⁵

McGee: Our Lord is saying that honoring father and mother includes supporting them. The way they got around that responsibility was to dedicate their money as a gift to God, and that would relieve them of supporting their parents. This gave a pious way out for a man to break the Mosaic Law.

I still believe the best way to test a Christian is by his pocketbook. The barometer of the Christian today is how he handles his own money and how he handles God's money. The religious rulers of Jesus' day were helping men escape their responsibility.

I am of the opinion that God wants you to pay your honest debts before you give to Him. God wants you to take care of your personal responsibilities. He wants you to support your family before you give to Him. I once knew a man with a wild idea. This man came to me on payday and wanted to give me half his income while his family went hungry. When I found out, we had quite a little talk, and at first he was offended. Finally, he saw that he was neglecting his own family, which is a tragic thing to do. It is amazing how people try to escape a responsibility in a pious way.¹⁶

Matthew 15:7

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

[hypocrites] Actors—acting under a mask; feigning principles not adopted and passions not felt (Matthew 22:18; Matthew 23:28; Matthew 24:51; Mark 12:15). They literally sounded trumpets under the pretext of calling the poor, though with no other design than to gratify self by giving alms in public.

The hypocrite has no hope when God takes away the soul (Job 27:7-12). All his life is miserable—professing to love what he doesn't love, trying to enjoy what his heart hates, mingling with people with whom he has no sympathy, and joining in worship when his heart isn't in it.

Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you—In every place where the proper names of the Old Testament occur, in the New, the same mode of orthography should be followed: I therefore write Isaiah with the Hebrew, not Esaias, with the Greek. This prophecy is found Isaiah 29:13. Our blessed Lord unmasks these hypocrites; and we may observe that, when a hypocrite is found out, he should be exposed to all; this may lead to his salvation: if he be permitted to retain his falsely acquired character, how can he escape perdition!¹⁷

¹⁵ Life Application Bible

¹⁶ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:86). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary

Hypocrisy is the concealment of some base principle under the pretence of religion. Never was there a clearer instance of it than this—*an attempt to get rid of the duty of providing for needy parents under an appearance of piety towards God.*

Spurgeon: Right well did they deserve the name which the indignant Savior fixed upon them: "Ye hypocrites." They were agitated about hands unwashed, and yet laid their foul hands upon God's most holy law. The prophetic words of Isaiah were indeed descriptive of them: he had pictured them to the life. Theirs was mouth-religion, lip-homage, and that only. Their heart never approached the Lord at all.

Thus, our Lord gave his opponents Scripture instead of tradition: he broke their wooden weapons with the sword of the Spirit. Holy Scripture must be our weapon against the Church of traditions: nothing will overthrow Rome but the Word of the Lord.

When quoting from the prophecy of Isaiah, our blessed Lord not only used a translation, but he gave the sense freely; thus rebuking the mere word-chopping of the Rabbis. They could count the letters of a sacred book, and yet utterly miss its meaning: he gave the soul and spirit of the inspired utterance. Jesus insisted upon heart-worship, and said nothing as to the matter of washing or not washing the hands before eating bread. That was too paltry a point for him to dwell upon.¹⁸

Matthew 15:8

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

(Isaiah 29:13) Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Their heart is far from me—The true worship of God consists in the union of the heart to him—where this exists not, a particle of the spirit of devotion cannot be found.

[Draweth nigh unto me with their mouth] That is, they are regular in the forms of worship. They are strict in ceremonial observances, and keep the law outwardly; but God requires the heart, and that they have not rendered.

McGee: The Lord called the scribes and Pharisees *hypocrites*. This is the most frightful word in Scripture. Nothing quite corresponds to it, but it did not have quite the meaning in that day that it does today. To us it is a scorching word, but in Jesus' day it simply meant to answer back and was used of an actor in a play. It means that an actor would receive a cue and then answer back. Jesus accused the scribes and Pharisees of playing at religion.

¹⁸ Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

The religious leaders were eager to have people go through the ceremony of washing their hands, but they ignored the condition of the heart, which was the important thing to God. In a very pious way they were breaking the Mosaic Law.

My friend, we also are pretty good at rationalizing. Parents say to their children, “You wash your hands before you come to the table,” but they pay no attention to what their children see on television, which is the thing that is damaging the heart. Oh, of course, children should wash their hands, but what is on the inside is far more important.¹⁹

Matthew 15:9

But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

Resemblance to Church of Sardis, Rev 3: denominationalism. Everyone of the major heresies started with a germ of truth that got exaggerated, overemphasized, over embellished and eventually became a heresy. Scriptural protection from this sort of trap is to absorb the whole counsel of God.

The Lengthening Tethers

- Mosaic Judaism *Torah*
- Pharisaical Judaism 400 B.C. ...
- Talmudic Judaism 300 - 600 A.D.
- Kaballah 12th century
- Hasidic Judaism 18th century

[But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men]

Much religion today is vain for this very reason.

By the traditions of the elders, not only the word of God was perverted, but his worship also was greatly corrupted. But the Jews were not the only people who have acted thus: whole Christian Churches, as well as sects and parties, have acted in the same way. Men must not mould the worship of God according to their fancy—it is not what they think will do—is proper, innocent, etc., but what God himself has prescribed, that he will acknowledge as his worship. However sincere a man may be in a worship of his own invention, or of man’s commandment, yet it profits him nothing. Christ himself says it is in vain. To condemn such, may appear to some illiberal; but whatever may be said in behalf of sincere heathens, and others who have not had the advantages of Divine Revelation, there is no excuse for the man who has the BIBLE before him.²⁰

The prophet Isaiah also criticized hypocrites (Isaiah 29:13), and Jesus applied Isaiah’s words to these religious leaders. When we claim to honor God while our hearts are far from him, our worship means nothing. It is not enough to act religious. Our actions and our attitudes must be sincere. If they are not, Isaiah’s words also describe us.

¹⁹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:87). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁰ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

The Pharisees knew a lot about God, but they didn't know God. It is not enough to study about religion or even to study the Bible. We must respond to God himself.

Yashanet: He repeats His criticism. They are elevating the doctrines of men over the commandments of the Torah. The kosher laws are from God, they are not traditions of men. In fact, teaching that the kosher laws (or any part of Torah) is done away with, would be what God would consider "commandments of men" and goes against His Word (Matthew 5:17-18).

Matthew 15:10

And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

[Hear, and understand] This is all God ever required. Scriptures are so clear that if one will only hear he will understand.

Hear and understand—A most important command. Hear—make it a point of conscience to attend to the ministry of the word. Understand—be not satisfied with attending places of public worship merely; see that the teaching be of God, and that you lay it to heart.²¹

Matthew 15:11

Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth—This is an answer to the carping question of the Pharisees, mentioned Matthew 15:2, Why do thy disciples eat with unwashed hands? To which our Lord here replies, That what goes into the mouth defiles not the man; i.e. that if, in eating with unwashed hands, any particles of dust, etc., cleaving to the hands, might happen to be taken into the mouth with the food, this did not defile, did not constitute a man a sinner; for it is on this alone the question hinges: thy disciples eat with unwashed hands; therefore they are sinners; for they transgress the tradition of the elders, i.e. the oral law, which they considered equal in authority to the written law; and, indeed, often preferred the former to the latter, so as to make it of none effect, totally to destroy its nature and design, as we have often seen in the preceding notes.²²

That which cometh out of the mouth—That is, what springs from a corrupt unregenerate heart—a perverse will and impure passions—these defile, i.e. make him a sinner.

²¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

²² Adam Clarke's Commentary

Yashanet: This is the verse that is commonly pulled out of its context to support the idea that the kosher laws have been done away with. Yeshua is teaching that we don't make clean foods unclean by failing to ceremonially wash our hands before we eat. Non-kosher food is not part of this discussion as the surrounding verses show.

Matthew 15:12

Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?

McGee: The disciples are amazed that the Lord would offend the Pharisees. Up to this point there has been conflict between the religious leaders and Jesus, but this is the breaking point. The Lord continues to instruct His disciples.²³

Spurgeon: The disciples evidently thought more of offending the Pharisees than their Master did. He knew that they would be offended, and thought it no calamity that they should be. He placed his remarkable aphorism in their way, that they might find themselves balked and grveled by it. They had come to him in a fawning manner, desiring to catch him in his speech: he was disgusted with their hypocrisy, and by this staggering statement he unmasked them, and they came out in their true colors. They could not further conceal their hate: henceforth they could not entrap the disciples by their professions of friendliness.²⁴

Matthew 15:13

But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

[rooted up] Every religious leader and his false doctrines shall be destroyed (Matthew 7:21).

For a plant to be bad, all it has to be is a plant that God did not plant! Meaning things in your life: Anything that is in your life that God didn't plant is temporal and will be rooted out.

McGee: The word *plant* here means "system". It is not too broad to interpret Jesus as saying, "Every religious system which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."²⁵

²³ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:87). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁴ Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

²⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:87). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Spurgeon: If men are themselves an offense, they deserve to be offended. If these professed teachers of God's mind cavil at God's Son, they deserve no quarter; but it is right and wise to treat them to truth which shall annoy them. A good gardener is careful to uproot weeds as well as to water plants. Our Lord's sententious utterance operated like a hoe to uproot these men from their religious profession; and he meant that it should do so. But what a solemn word is this! If our religion is not wholly of God it will come to an end, and that end will be destruction. No matter how fair the flower, if the Father hath not planted it, its doom is sealed: it shall not be pruned, but "rooted up." Those whom the truth uproots are uprooted indeed.

Matthew 15:14

Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

[Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch] This refers in particular to the willfully spiritually blinded Pharisees and their disciples who were the popular religionists of that day (Matthew 15:12-14; Matthew 23:16-26; Luke 6:39; John 12:40; Romans 2:19; Romans 11:7,25; 2 Cor. 3:14; 2 Cor. 4:4; Isaiah 56:10).

And if the blind lead the blind—This was so self-evident a case that an apter parallel could not be found—if the blind lead the blind, both must fall into the ditch. Alas, for the blind teachers, who not only destroy their own souls, but those also of their flocks! Like priest, like people. If the minister be ignorant, he cannot teach what he does not know; and the people cannot become wise unto salvation under such a ministry—he is ignorant and wicked, and they are profligate. They who even wish such God speed; are partakers of their evil deeds. But shall not the poor deceived people escape? No: both shall fall into the pit of perdition together; for they should have searched the Scriptures, and not trusted to the ignorant sayings of corrupt men, no matter of what sect or party. He who has the Bible in his hand, or within his reach, and can read it, has no excuse.²⁶

Jesus told his disciples to leave the Pharisees alone because the Pharisees were blind to God's truth. Anyone who listened to their teaching would risk spiritual blindness as well. Not all religious leaders clearly see God's truth. Make sure that those you listen to and learn from are those with good spiritual eyesight—they teach and follow the principles of Scripture.

Yashanet: Despite "popular opinion," the situation is the same today. The vast majority of people who say they believe in the God of the Bible, follow teachers who tell them that they are "free" from what they call "the Law," (an inaccurate translation of "Torah," which is God's revelation/instruction on how to live, for all who claim to be His people.) The examples given above (Matthew 5:17-21; 15:2-20, Acts 10, etc.), show how people ignore what is explained in the text of the Bible, in favor of following man's anti-Torah

²⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary

doctrines. This is not dissimilar to what many of the religious leaders of Yeshua's day did. Then, as now, men reject the truth of God's Torah.

This is NOT to say that we must first learn and follow the Torah to be saved. That has never been the case, as men and women have always been saved by trusting God (faith) which is a free gift from Him. No one can merit entry into heaven based on works. What is being said (throughout all the studies on the YashaNet web site), is that once anyone "comes to know of God," and His salvation in Yeshua, His Son, there is a path for them to "walk," and this is to learn of, and begin doing God's Torah (Romans 2:13; James 1:22-25).

The only other path is the "false torah" of the flesh and of the world (i.e., Romans 7:23). Picking and choosing commandment from the Torah is not an acceptable position with God (James 2:10), nor is "straddling the fence," (i.e., Revelation 3:15-16). Those commandments that we are able to keep are the ones we should strive to learn of and follow, in order to be conformed to the image of God -- which is a main purpose of the Torah. We cannot keep all of God's commandments perfectly, because there is no Temple or priesthood (and also because most of us are living outside the land of Israel). Because the Torah has been rejected by followers of the Messiah for such a long time, we need to diligently re-learn the Torah precept by precept. The Holy Spirit is our guide, but this does not alleviate us of our responsibility of diligently studying God's word:

2 Timothy 2:15 - *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Acts 17:11 - *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

The Holy Spirit will never contradict Torah, as it is God's word. If someone believes the "spirit" is telling them that it is permissible to go against any Torah command (correctly understood in context), then that person is being led by some other spirit. One question to ask is, "If someone tells a person they are a sinner and need to repent (i.e., as in most "salvation messages" given today), how does that person know what 'sin' is?" Scripture tells us that sin is violation of God's Torah (including all the teachings of the Tenakh/"Old Testament").

Torah was the ONLY standard used by Yeshua and his disciples. Paul and the others only taught Yeshua and salvation out of the Tenakh as there was no "New Testament" around at the time. Neither Yeshua (Matthew 5:17-21), or Paul (Romans 3:31), or any of the other disciples, did away with any part of the faith of Israel. The original believers continued in this faith, only now with knowledge of the promised Messiah.

The "New Testament" is of course, inspired of God, but it was never meant to be read outside of the context of the Torah. Unfortunately, this is exactly what is done today, with churches giving their own meaning to the teachings of the "New Testament." They then use this to explain the "Old Testament." This is "putting the cart in front of the horse." (i.e., the common practice of handing out "New Testaments" to people, rather than complete Bibles.)

Gentiles who came to faith in Yeshua, did not become "Christians," as there was no such separation from Judaism ("the faith of Israel") until much later. Gentiles who came

to faith, came into the faith of Israel with its Torah (Ephesians 2:10-13) and began to learn more of the Torah as they were taught within the faith of Israel (Acts 15:21).²⁷

Spurgeon: He turned from them as unworthy of further notice, saying, "Let them alone." There was no need for the disciples to combat the Pharisees, they would be uprooted in the natural order of things by the inevitable consequences of their own course. Both themselves and their dupes would "fall into the ditch" of error and absurdity; and ultimately come to utter destruction. In every case it is so: when the bigoted teacher leads the ignorant disciple, they must both go wrong. The same is the case with every form of spiritual blindness in those who lead the thought of a period, and in those who follow their erroneous guidance. The philosophic unbelief of this age is blind with self-conceit, and fearful is the ditch towards which it is hastening. Alas! its teachers are carrying precious souls with them into the ditch of Atheism and anarchy.

O Lord, suffer us not to be despairing as to the present ascendancy of false doctrine. In patience may we possess our souls! We cannot make either the blind leaders or their blind followers see the ditch before them; but it is there all the same, and their fall is certain. Thou alone canst open the eyes of the blind, and we trust that this miracle of grace will be wrought by thee.²⁸

Matthew 15:15

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

Parables are often riddles. This is not a parable, this is a straightforward instruction. None of us can lay claim to not having any one of these occur in our heart. The Law of Moses dealt with the overt act, which was enforceable by the society. Jesus Christ in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 (the Sermon of the Mount), translates those intents to the heart. If you even think these things...

Heart: Jer 17:9-10. Nothing is more deceitful than the heart. Incurably wicked. God never cures an old heart, He gives us a new one.

Matthew 15:16

And Jesus said, *Are ye also yet without understanding?*

Are ye also yet without understanding?—The word *αἴτιον*, which we translate yet, should be here rendered still: Are ye still void of understanding? and the word is used in this sense by several Greek writers. The authorities which have induced me to prefer this translation may be seen in Kypke.²⁹

²⁷ Yashanet.com, Commentary on Matthew

²⁸ Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

²⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

Spurgeon: Of course the Pharisees would hate the light, and so refuse to see the spiritual truth which our Lord had set before them in so forcible a fashion. Nor was it wonderful that the crowd should be too ignorant to see the divine meaning of the compact sentence. But should not the chosen twelve have had clearer insight? After all their Lord's teaching, were they "yet without understanding" Should they not have reached the inner sense of their Lord's utterance? Alas, how often have we been in a like state! How pertinently might the question be put to us, "Are ye also yet without understanding?"

Matthew 15:17

Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

[**draught**] Greek: *aphedron* (GSN-856), place for physical waste, sewer (Matthew 15:17; Mark 7:19).

Matthew 15:18

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

This is a great principle. A person is not defiled by what goes into his mouth but by what comes out of his mouth. As someone has well said, what is in the well of the heart will come up in the bucket of the mouth sooner or later.³⁰

Matthew 15:19

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

Theft is also denying someone else the rightful use of his or her own property. None of us can lay claim to not having any one of these occur in our heart.

[**defile the man**] Things that defile men:

1. Evil thoughts. Thoughts is Greek: *dialogismos* (GSN-1261), translated reasoning (Luke 9:46); imagination (Romans 1:21); doubtful (Romans 14:1); doubting (1 Tim. 2:8); disputing (Phil. 2:14); and thoughts (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21; Luke 2:35; Luke 5:22; Luke 6:8; Luke 9:47; Luke 24:38; 2 Cor. 3:20; James 2:4). Here it means evil thoughts, reasonings, debates, and other intellectual rebellions against God.
2. Murders or slaughters (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21; Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19-25; Romans 1:29; Acts 9:1; Galatians 5:21; Rev. 9:21)
3. Adulteries—fornications (Matthew 5:32)

³⁰McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:87). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

4. Thefts (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21)
5. False witnessings, untrue testimonies, lying (Matthew 15:19; Matthew 26:59; Mark 10:19; Romans 13:9; Acts 6:13; 1 Cor. 15:15)
6. Blasphemies (note, [□] Matthew 12:31). For other lists of sins that will damn the soul, see Mark 7:19-21; Romans 1:29-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephes. 4-5; Col. 3:5-10)³¹

Clarke: Christ proceeds to state what *does* defile the man, or render him a sinner:

(1.) *Evil thoughts*. These are the first things. These are the fountains of all others. Thought precedes action. Thought, or purpose, or motive, gives its *character* to conduct. All evil thoughts are here intended. Though we labour to suppress them, yet they defile us. They leave pollution behind them.

(2.) *Murders*. Taking the life of others *with malice*. The malice has its seat in the *heart*, and the murder therefore proceeds from the heart, 1 John 3:15.

(3.) *Adulteries, fornications*. See Matthew 5:28.

(4.) *Thefts*. Theft is the taking and carrying away the goods of others without their knowledge or consent. They are produced by *coveting* the property of others. They proceed, therefore, from the heart, and violate at the same time two commandments—the *tenth* in thought, and the *eighth* in act.

(5.) *False witness*. Giving wrong testimony. *Concealing* the truth, or stating what we know to be false, contrary to the ninth commandment. It proceeds from a desire to injure others, to take away their character or property, or to do them injustice. It proceeds thus from the heart.

(6.) *Blasphemies*. Matthew 9:3. Blasphemy proceeds from opposition to God, hatred of his character, Romans 8:7 and from a desire that there should be no God. It proceeds from the heart. See Psalms 14:1. Mark adds,

(7.) *Covetousness*, always proceeding from the heart—the unlawful desire of what others possess.

(8.) *Wickedness*. The original here means *malice*, or a *desire of injuring others*, Romans 1:29.

(9.) *Deceit*; i.e. fraud, concealment, cheating, in trade. This proceeds from a desire to benefit ourselves by doing injustice to others, and thus proceeds from the heart.

(10.) *Lasciviousness*. Lust, obscenity, unbridled passion—a strong, evil desire of the heart.

(11.) *An evil eye*. That is, an eye sour, malignant, proud, devising or purposing evil. See Matthew 5:28, 20:15, 2 Peter 2:14, "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin."

(12.) *Pride*. An improper estimate of our own importance—thinking that we are of much more consequence than we really are—always the work of an evil heart.

(13.) *Foolishness*. Not want of intellect. Man is not to blame for that. But *moral folly*, consisting in choosing bad ends, and bad means of gaining them; or, in other words, sin and wickedness. All sin is folly. It is foolish for a man to disobey God; and foolish for any one to go to hell.

³¹ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

*These are the things which defile a man. What an array of crimes to proceed from the heart of man! What a proof of guilt! What strictness is there in the law of God! How universal is depravity!*³²

Matthew 15:20

These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

These—defile a man—Our Lord’s argument is very plain. What goes into the mouth descends into the stomach and other intestines;—part is retained for the nourishment of the body, and part is ejected, as being improper to afford nourishment. Nothing of this kind defiles the soul, because it does not enter into it; but the evil principles that are in it, producing evil thoughts, murders, etc., these defile the soul, because they have their seat and operation in it.³³

We work hard to keep our outward appearance attractive, but what is in our hearts is even more important. The way we are deep down (where others can’t see) matters much to God. What are you like inside? When people become Christians, God makes them different on the inside. He will continue the process of change inside them if they only ask. God wants us to seek healthy thoughts and motives, not just healthy food and exercise.

McGee: We are certainly seeing this working out in our contemporary culture. We are in the period of the “new morality” and have reached the day that Isaiah talked about when he said that they would “... call evil good, and good evil ...” (Isa. 5:20). Those of us who believe the Bible are considered squares and entirely wrong. What do we have in this day of freedom, now that the lid has been taken off and man expresses what is in his heart? Do we have a new *morality*? No, we have the same old things—evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, false witness, blasphemy, and thefts. We have really opened a Pandora’s box, and we are in trouble.

Man has to be *controlled*. He is the most vicious animal on earth. We put other animals in cages, but man must be free to do his thing, and our Lord has told us what mankind will do, and He says that these things *defile*. All about us today is an emphasis on sex—in our schools, even in our churches, on television, on radio; it stares at you from billboards, from the covers of magazines, from newspaper headlines. My friend, these things *defile*. Don’t tell me that you are immune to it; no one is immune to this type of thing. Our children and young people are being *defiled*—all in the lofty-sounding terminology of freedom of speech! The things that are in the heart are now coming out. Our Lord has made a tremendous statement here.³⁴

³² Adam Clarke’s Commentary

³³ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

³⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:88). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yeshua wraps up the discussion by making it clear what the subject has been since verse 2 -- eating with unwashed hands -- not doing away with the Torah commandment of eating only clean foods.

Matthew 15:21

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

[coasts] Greek: *meros* (GSN-3313), parts, borders. The Jewish parts, not the sea coasts.

McGee: Now our Lord leaves the land of Israel for the first time during His public ministry. This is interesting because He came to Israel as her King. When He sent His disciples out, He instructed them to go into the cities of Israel but not beyond her boundaries. Then the Lord was rejected by Israel, and there arose conflict. The breaking point between Jesus and the religious rulers came only a few verses ago. What happens? Jesus Himself steps over the boundaries of Israel and lays down another great principle. He will now receive the Gentiles. His invitation is, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (lit., "rest you")" (Matt. 11:28).³⁵

Matthew 15:22

And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

This is the area of Lebanon. She is not Jewish, she is a Gentile, and she is of a specifically cursed group, the Canaanites (Joel 3:17; Zech 14:21: two prophecies that point to the fact that the Canaanite will be driven out of the land. The Canaanites were not supposed to be spared by Joshua.)

[**Son of David**] is a title of the Messiah. He does not respond because she has no basis (being Canaanite).

Son of Abraham and David by direct descent (Matthew 1:2-16; Romans 9:5), and by promise (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:6-22; Isaiah 11:1; Matthew 22:41-46; 2 Tim. 2:8). "Son of David" is used nine times of Christ in Matthew (Matthew 1:1; Matthew 9:27; Matthew 12:23; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 20:30-31; Matthew 21:9,15; Matthew 22:42). David is mentioned first because he was the most illustrious of His ancestors (as king and prophet) and because his line is singled out by later prophets as the one of Abraham's seed through whom the Messiah was to come.

[**a woman of Canaan**] The 7th of over 24 unnamed women in Mt. (Matthew 8:14; Matthew 9:18,20; Matthew 12:42; Matthew 13:33; Matthew 14:6; Matthew 15:22;

³⁵McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:88). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 18:25; Matthew 20:20; Matthew 25:1-13; Matthew 26:7,69,71; Matthew 27:55). Eight women are named (Matthew 1:3,5-6,18; Matthew 14:6; Matthew 27:56; Matthew 28:1).

A woman of Canaan—Matthew gives her this name because of the people from whom she sprung—the descendants of Canaan, Judges 1:31, 32; but Mark calls her a Syrophenician, because of the country where she dwelt. The Canaanites and Phoenicians have been often confounded. This is frequently the case in the Septuagint. Compare Genesis 46:10, with Exodus 6:15, where the same person is called a Phoenician in the one place, and a Canaanite in the other. See also the same version in Exodus 16:35; Joshua 5:12.

The state of this woman is a proper emblem of the state of a sinner, deeply conscious of the misery of his soul.³⁶

[grievously vexed] Miserably possessed (Matthew 15:22; Matthew 17:15; Matthew 21:41). Not the same as in Matthew 8:6.

[vexed] Greek: *daimonizomai* (GSN-1139), to be controlled by a demon, demonized (Matthew 4:24; Matthew 8:16,28,33; Matthew 9:32; Matthew 12:22; Mark 1:32; Mark 5:15-18; Luke 8:36; John 10:21).

Have mercy on me, etc.—How proper is this prayer for a penitent! There are many excellencies contained in it;

1. It is short;
2. humble;
3. full of faith;
4. fervent;
5. modest;
6. respectful;
7. rational;
8. relying only on the mercy of God;
9. persevering.

Can one who sees himself a slave of the devil, beg with too much earnestness to be delivered from his thralldom?

This woman is called a “Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia” in Mark’s Gospel (Matthew 7:26), indicating that she was from the territory northwest of Galilee where the cities of Tyre and Sidon were located. Matthew calls her a Canaanite, naming her ancient ancestors who were enemies of Israel. Matthew’s Jewish audience would have immediately understood the significance of Jesus helping this woman.³⁷

For this **Canaanite woman**, the title **Lord** is probably just an expression of great respect; she does not fully realize what she is saying, though her use of **Son of David** shows some

³⁶ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

³⁷ Life Application Bible

knowledge of Jewish thoughts about him (but see note on [v. 27](#)). She probably knows about Eshmun, a pagan god of healing, whose temple was just 3 miles (4.8 km) northwest of Sidon, but she has heard of Jesus and goes to him instead. "Canaanite" here means a non-Jewish pagan person living in that region (the term occurs only here in the NT).³⁸

Spurgeon: "Behold": here is something worth beholding; good for eyes and hearts. Just as Jesus went to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, a woman came out of the same coasts to meet him. Sooner or later, a meeting will come about between Christ and seeking souls. This "woman of Canaan" had no claim on account of her nationality: she was a Gentile of the worst sort, of a race long before condemned to die. She came from the narrow strip of land whereon the Tyrians dwelt; and like Hiram, of Tyre, she knew the name of David; but she went further, for she had faith in David's Son. Love to her daughter led her to travel, to cry, to beseech, to implore mercy. What will not a mother's love achieve? Her need had abolished the barrier between Gentile and Jew; she appealed to Jesus as though she were of the same country as his disciples. She asked the healing of her child as a mercy to herself: "Have mercy on me." She asked it of Jesus as Lord. She asked it of One greater than Solomon, the son of David, the wisest and most potent of wonder workers. She put the case briefly and pathetically, and pleaded for her daughter with all a mother's loving anxiety. Her need taught her how to pray. Until we, also, know what we require, and are full of hopeful longings, we shall never plead prevailingly. Do we pray for our children as this woman pleaded for her daughter? Have we not good reason to take her for our example?

Matthew 15:23

But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

[not a word] Perhaps to give her time to manifest faith and earnestness, and complete her request.

[disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us]

This is still the attitude of some disciples who have no mercy and compassion of God and who are still ignorant of the true purpose and will of God in the atonement (Matthew 8:17; John 10:10; 1 John 3:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

The disciples asked Jesus to get rid of the woman because she was bothering them with her nagging persistence. They showed no compassion for her or sensitivity to her needs. It is possible to become so occupied with spiritual matters that we miss real needs right around us. This is especially likely if we are prejudiced against needy people or if they cause us inconvenience. Instead of being bothered, be aware of the opportunities that surround you. Be open to the beauty of God's message for *all* people, and make an effort not to shut out those who are different from you.

³⁸ ESV Study Bible

Spurgeon: Silence was a hard answer; for it is translatable by fear into something worse than the harshest speech. "Not a word", not a word from him whose every word is power! This was a heavy discouragement. Yet she was not silenced by the Lord's silence. She increased her entreaties. The disciples were mistaken when they said, "She crieth after us." No, no, she cried after him. Should this have afflicted them? Oh, that all men would cry after him! Such a blessed annoyance should be longed after by compassionate hearts among the Lord's servants. The disciples were, however, drive to appeal to their Master, and though that was something, it was not much. Possibly they meant their complaint to help the women by obtaining an answer for her one way or another; but their words have a cold look — "Send her away." May we never be so selfish as to feel troubled by inquirers! May we never send them away ourselves by cold looks and harsh words!

Still the disciples were not able to neglect her; they were forced to plead with Jesus about her; they came and besought him. If Christian people are apparently unsympathetic let us warm them into feeling by our persistent fervency.

Matthew 15:24

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

The Lord chose to ignore her! His primary mission was to Israel.

[I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel] God's plan was to offer salvation first (including healing) to the Jews before going to the Gentiles (John 1:11; Matthew 10:6; Romans 1:16). God then planned the same blessing for Gentiles (Matthew 21:43; John 10:16; Romans 1:16; Romans 9:24-33; Acts 15:13-18; Ephes. 3:1-11).

[lost sheep] Lost in sin because of going astray from God, not because their national identity was unknown.

[of Israel] These were Jews, not Anglo-Saxons (Luke 7:3; John 1:11,19; John 3:1; Acts 2:5; Acts 10:39; Acts 11:19; Romans 1:16). Jews are mentioned 200 times and the same people are called Israel 78 times in the New Testament (Romans 3:9,29; Romans 9:24; 1 Cor. 10:32; 1 Cor. 12:13). The Jews then and now make up all the tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Acts 26:7; James 1:1; Rev. 7:4; Rev. 21:12). There is not one reference to a distinction between Jews and Israelites, so the Anglo-Saxon theory is purely of human origin.

Jesus' words do not contradict the truth that God's message is for all people (Psalm 22:27; Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 28:19; Romans 15:9-12). After all, when Jesus said these words, he was in Gentile territory on a mission to Gentile people. He ministered to Gentiles on many other occasions also. Jesus was simply telling the woman that Jews were to have the first opportunity to accept him as the Messiah because God wanted them to present the message of salvation to the rest of the world (see Genesis 12:3). Jesus was not rejecting the Canaanite woman. He may have wanted to test her faith, or he may have

wanted to use the situation as another opportunity to teach that faith is available to all people.

McGee: The Syrophoenician woman was a mixture of several races and a true Gentile (see Mark 7:26 for her nationality). She had no claim on Jesus as the Son of David, and when she addressed Him as such, He answered her not a word.

The disciples said, “Send her away, for she crieth after us.” She was causing a disturbance and probably a little embarrassment.

This seems to be a harsh statement, but it was a statement of fact. Jesus was offering Himself first as the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the coming of the King in David’s line. He was forcing this gentile woman to recognize that fact.

Jesus came as King of the Jews. You mark that down—it was the primary issue that had to be settled. He died with this superscription written over Him on the cross: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.³⁹

21–28 This passage raises the question: does Yeshua treat Gentiles in a demeaning way? Is he a Jewish chauvinist? The notes to the following verses address this issue.

Here is a teaching on this passage by Joseph Shulam: The Syrophoenician woman knew that Yeshua was the Son of David (v. 22), i.e., the Messiah. Yeshua puts this piece of information in the context of Ezekiel 34; see Ezekiel 34:24. Thus his answer about coming only to the lost sheep of Israel (v. 24) reflects Ezekiel 34:12, 16; in effect he says, “If, as you say, I am the Son of David, the shepherd who was King of Israel, I was sent to find my lost sheep and am not sent to you. So I’m surprised that you recognize me.” It’s a straightforward Middle-Eastern style friendly joke, not an insult. But his remark also reflects the biblical truth that God cares for his own people first—as Sha’ul put it, “Let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Ga 6:10). However, God does not neglect the others, as we learn from 1 Kings 7:7ff., where the prophet Elijah asks to be fed first, yet the widow of Tzarfat, coming second, gains a miraculous lasting food supply.⁴⁰

Yashanet: As Paul also stated the following:

Romans 1:16 - *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

It should be noted that the Gospel was not sent out to the gentiles until after Yeshua's death and resurrection. Up to that time, both Yeshua and His disciples went only to the Jews. Something very mysterious happenend with His death -- gentiles could now come to the God of Israel in a more direct fashion -- by placing their faith in the Messiah of Israel.

Why is this? The basic explanation is that Yeshua was/is the Torah ("Word") in the flesh (i.e., John chapter 1). Just as the Torah is the revelation of the invisible God -

³⁹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:88). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴⁰Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 15:21). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Yeshua is also the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Coming to trust in Yeshua, is coming to trust in God (as much as we mere mortals can know Him, which is revealed in His Torah). Yeshua is the door to this relationship. Torah is the path beyond this door - for all who wish to put their trust in Him. Sadly, most will not end up on the right path, even after learning of Him (Matthew 7:12-21).

Most people who come to know of the God of the Bible are soon taught that He changed His mind about His Torah two thousand years ago, that it was somehow done away with by Yeshua. This is taught despite the fact that Yeshua is the Torah in the flesh, (the "goal" of the Torah - Romans 10:4), who said Himself in no uncertain terms that none of the Torah was done away with by His arrival (Matthew 5:17-21).

After Yeshua's death, the practice (evangelistic method) of the disciples was to go to the Jew first. For instance, in every town Paul went to, he first visited the local synagogue. (Paul skipped over some very large cities in his travels that lacked a significant Jewish presence.) In each case, the Gospel was preached to the Jews first. In every location, there would be some Jews that accepted his message and others that rejected it. Once "Israel" had made its "decision" (in each town), then, and only then, would the message be given to the local gentile population.⁴¹

Spurgeon: When Jesus did speak, it was not to her, but to his disciples. She heard the word, and felt it to be a side blow which struck heavily at her hopes. She was not of "the house of Israel"; she owned that she could not number herself among the sheep; he was not sent to her; how could he go beyond his mission? It would have been small wonder if she had retired in despair. On the contrary, she redoubled her pleading.⁴²

Matthew 15:25

Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

Lord, help me—Let me also share in the deliverance afforded to Israel.

When she addressed Him as the Son of David, He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." She as a Gentile had no claim upon Him as the Son of David. However, now she comes and worships Him, calling Him "Lord," and asks for help. Now she will get help, as we shall see.

Spurgeon: Instead of retiring she came nearer, and she "worshipped him." It was well done. She could not solve the problems of the destiny of her race, and of the Lord's commission; but she could pray. She knew little about the limitations of Messiahship, but she knew that the Lord had boundless power. If, as a shepherd, he may not gather her, yet, as Lord, he may help her. The divine nature of Christ is a well-spring of comfort to troubled hearts.

⁴¹ Yashanet.com, Commentary on Matthew

⁴² Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

Her petition was brief, yet comprehensive; it came hot from her heart, and went straight to the point. Her daughter's case was her own, and so she cried, "Lord, help me." Lord, help us to pray as she did.⁴³

[worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me] Threw herself at His feet, making her last effort to get mercy. Her prayer was 10-fold:

1. Short
2. Humble
3. Fervent
4. Desperate
5. Rational
6. Respectful
7. Worshipful
8. Persevering
9. Determined
10. Full of faith in Christ⁴⁴

Matthew 15:26

But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

[meet] Greek: *kalos* (GSN-2570), right, good, proper (Mark 7:27; Galatians 4:18; Romans 14:21).

[children's bread] Jews were the first children of the kingdom (Matthew 8:12). Their bread here refers to the benefits that the Messiah was to bring to them, which included salvation for the body, soul, and spirit—salvation from sin, sickness, demons, and satanic powers. These are family rights, legal rights, promised rights, human rights, Divine rights, and redemptive rights of all children of God. Children can have whole loaves if dogs can have crumbs (Matthew 7:7-11; Matthew 17:20; Matthew 21:22; Mark 9:23; Mark 11:22-24; Luke 11:1-13; Luke 18:1-14; John 14:12-15; John 15:7,16; 1 John 3:21-22; 1 John 5:14-15).

[dogs] Greek: *kunarium* (GSN-2952), little dog, puppy, a pet. Only used four times (Matthew 15:26,27; Mark 7:27,28). Gentiles were called dogs by the Jews. Christ merely used the common speech of His people (1 Samuel 17:43; 2 Samuel 3:8; 2 Samuel 9:8; 1 Kings 8:13; Matthew 7:6). Dogs were not cared for in the East when grown. The term was not offensive. It merely expressed the fact that Gentiles were outside the covenant rights of Israel.

⁴³ Spurgeon's Commentary on Mathew

⁴⁴ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

[dogs] Used figuratively of nine classes:

1. Homosexuals (Deut. 23:18)
2. Anyone despised (1 Samuel 17:43; 1 Samuel 24:14; 2 Samuel 9:8; 2 Samuel 16:9; 2 Kings 8:13)
3. Satanic powers (Psalm 22:20)
4. Wicked men (Psalm 22:16; Psalm 59:6,14)
5. False prophets (Isaiah 56:10; Phil. 3:2)
6. Deceived people (Matthew 7:6; Rev. 22:15)
7. Fools (Proverbs 26:11)
8. Gentiles (Matthew 15:26-27; Mark 7:27-28)
9. Backsliders (2 Peter 2:20-23)⁴⁵

The children's bread—The salvation provided for the Jews, who were termed the children of the kingdom. And cast it to the κυνάρτιος, little dogs—to the curs; such the Gentiles were reputed by the Jewish people, and our Lord uses that form of speech which was common among his countrymen. What terrible repulses! and yet she still perseveres!

Dog was a term the Jews commonly applied to Gentiles because the Jews considered these pagan people no more likely than dogs to receive God's blessing. Jesus was not degrading the woman by using this term, he was reflecting the Jews' attitude so as to contrast it with his own. The woman did not argue. Instead, using Jesus' choice of words, she agreed to be considered a dog as long as she could receive God's blessing for her daughter. Ironically, many Jews would lose God's blessing and salvation because they rejected Jesus, and many Gentiles would find salvation because they recognized and accepted him.

Matthew 15:27

And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

[Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table]

The woman acknowledged her position as undeserving and without legal covenant rights to the children's bread, yet she used the Lord's own words concerning dogs as grounds for further claim for healing. Even dogs have some rights—rights to the crumbs that the master throws away and would give to them. Children have enough bread to spare, so she claimed the scraps for her daughter and won her case.

You remember that our Lord told of a poor man who ate of the crumbs that fell from a rich man's table, and the dogs came and licked his sores. The Israelites used the word *dog* in reference to the Gentiles. This woman was willing to bear that reproach because she believed in the Lord Jesus.

⁴⁵ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Jews frequently insulted Gentiles by calling them **dogs**, which in ancient Palestine were wild, homeless scavengers. But the form Jesus uses here (Gk. *kynarion*, "little dog") suggests a more affectionate term for domestic pets. Jesus is not insulting the woman but testing her faith.

Spurgeon: It was humbly spoken: "Truth, Lord." It was bravely spoken; for she found food for faith in the hard crusts of our Lord's language. Our Lord had used a word which should be rendered "little dogs", and she caught at it. Little dogs become the playmates of the children; they lie under the table, and pick up the fragments which fall to the ground from the table of their little masters. The householder so far takes the little dog under his care as to allow him to be under the table. If, Gentile dog as she is, she may not be shepherded as one of the flock, she will be content to be tolerated as one of the household in the character of a little dog; for then she will be allowed the crumbs which fall from the children's bread, from the dog's little masters' table. Great as was the blessing which she sought, it was but a crumb to the Lord's bounty, and to Israel's portion, and therefore she begged to have it, dog as she owned herself to be.

Let us accept the worst character that the Scripture gives us, and still find in it an argument for hope.⁴⁶

Matthew 15:28

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

[great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt] Christ could not turn down such faith based upon such claims. If she got healing on these grounds, certainly the children can still get their part of the bread (Matthew 7:9-11). Compare her faith with that of the disciples (Matthew 6:30; Matthew 14:31; Matthew 16:8). Only two people are spoken of as having "great faith" (Matthew 8:10-13; Matthew 15:28).

[even as thou wilt] All believers are promised what they want and they govern their own supply by faith. See scriptures under the note on the children's bread, Matthew 15:26.

[whole] Greek: *diasozo* (GSN-1295), to be saved throughout or completely healed. It is used eight times and only of physical salvation (Matthew 14:36; Luke 7:3; Acts 23:24; Acts 27:43; Acts 28:1,4; 1 Peter 3:20). Not only whole, but "perfectly whole." This is the only way Jesus healed. Not one case is recorded of a partial healing. There may be such things, but this is because of partial faith, for the law of faith is: "According to your faith be it unto you"

O woman, great is thy faith—The hinderances thrown in this woman's way only tended to increase her faith. Her faith resembles a river, which becomes enlarged by the dykes opposed to it, till at last it sweeps them entirely away with it.

⁴⁶ Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

Her daughter was made whole—Persevering faith and prayer are next to omnipotent. No person can thus pray and believe, without receiving all his soul requires. This is one of the finest lessons in the book of God for a penitent, or for a discouraged believer. Look to Jesus! As sure as God is in heaven, so surely will he hear and answer thee to the eternal salvation of thy soul! Be not discouraged at a little delay: when thou art properly prepared to receive the blessing, then thou shalt have it. Look up; thy salvation is at hand. Jesus admires this faith, to the end that we may admire and imitate it, and may reap the same fruits and advantages from it.⁴⁷

On these terms Yeshua grants her request. Her case differs from that of the Roman army officer at 8:5–13, an isolated Gentile in a Jewish community. Had Yeshua healed the daughter immediately, this bold talkative woman would surely have spread the news, unleashing an onslaught of Gentiles with needs; and this might well have tempted him to neglect his commission to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”⁴⁸

Spurgeon: Our Savior loves great faith, and grants to it whatever it desires. Her faith was great comparatively: for a heathen woman, and for one who knew so little of the Savior, she was surpassingly strong in faith. But her faith was not only great comparatively it was great positively: to believe in a silent Christ, in one who treats her with a rebuff, in one who calls her a dog, is exceedingly great faith, measure it how you will. Few of us have a tithe as much faith in our Lord as this woman had. To believe that he can cure her daughter at once, and to cling to him for that boon, is faith which sets even the Lord a wondering, and he cries, "O woman, great is thy faith!" How splendid the reward: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt"! According to her will her daughter's cure was immediate, perfect, and enduring. Oh, for like precious faith, especially for such faith in reference to our sons and daughters! Why should we not have it? Jesus is the same, and we have even more reasons for trusting in him than the Canaanitess could have had. Lord we believe; help thou our unbelief, and make our children whole.⁴⁹

Matthew 15:29

And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

Matthew 15:30

And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:

[cast them down at Jesus's feet] The proper way to get healing or any other answer to prayer (1 Peter 5:7). Not one person ever went away from His feet without His blessing.

⁴⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary

⁴⁸ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 15:28). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁴⁹ Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

Matthew 15:31

Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

[glorified the God of Israel] The true way to glorify God. If some had remained sick God would not have received this glory. The devil's works would have continued to be manifest, not God's (Acts 10:38; John 10:10; Luke 13:16). God may get glory out of some lives in spite of sickness, but not because of it.

A great crowd was brought to Jesus to be healed, and he healed them all. Jesus is still able to heal broken lives, and we can be the ones who bring suffering people to him. Who do you know that needs Christ's healing touch? You can bring them to Jesus through prayer or through explaining to them the reason for the hope that you have (1 Peter 3:15). Then let Christ do the healing.

Matthew 15:32

Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said, **I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.**

This feeding of 4,000 is a separate event from the feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21), confirmed by Mark 8:19-20. This was the beginning of Jesus' expanded ministry to the Gentiles.

Matthew 15:33

And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

Jesus had already fed more than 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. Here, in a similar situation, the disciples were again perplexed. How easily we throw up our hands in despair when faced with difficult situations. Like the disciples, we often forget that if God has cared for us in the past, he will do the same now. When facing a difficult situation, remember how God cared for you and trust him to work faithfully again.

Let's not miss the message that is here. Frankly, it seems like just a rerun of the feeding of the five thousand. It appears to be a repetition, and we wonder why Matthew included it since it doesn't seem to add any further advancement of the messianic claims of the Lord Jesus. However, we are in the section in which the emphasis is no longer upon Jesus pressing His messianic claim but the emphasis is on the *rejection* of His claim. And this miracle shows how slowly the disciples were to learn. They had already witnessed the feeding of the five thousand, and I think it took place only a few days before this; yet here they raise the same old objections of unbelief. Again His disciples say to Him,

“Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?”⁵⁰

Matthew 15:34

And Jesus saith unto them, *How many loaves have ye?* And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

Matthew 15:35

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

Matthew 15:36

And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.

McGee: Again He fed the multitudes. This is a revelation that the disciples had not really learned the lesson. Their reluctance to believe actually constitutes a form of rejection. My friend, unbelief is *sin*. In Romans 14:23 it says that “... whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” In Hebrews 12:1 we are admonished to “... lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us...” What is that weight? I think it is unbelief. Unbelief is *sin*. I am willing to make this confession: I wish that I believed Him more. He is worthy to be believed; I ought to believe Him fully, but the problem is with me. And I suspect that the problem is with you, also.⁵¹

Spurgeon: He did as aforetime. His way is perfect, and so there was no need for altering it. "He took the seven loaves and the fishes." They only made one handful for him. This shows us that our slender abilities must be placed at his disposal, and in his wonder working hands. He does not disdain to carry the bread and the fish, though he bears up both heaven and earth. His giving thanks at an outdoor meal should teach us not to eat without thanksgiving. The breaking teaches that there must be expenditure of talent, and that there should be a crumbing down of truth to suit human mouths. His giving the provision into many hands shows that nothing is to be retained in store, but all must be distributed among the many. Our Lord Jesus again honored his disciples by making them the servitors by whom he reached the multitude. Lord, use us: for if we have neither loaf nor fish, we have grilling hands.

⁵⁰McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:89). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:89). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 15:37

And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left seven baskets full.

[baskets] Greek: *spuris* (GSN-4711), large baskets like our clothes baskets (Matthew 16:10; Mark 8:8,20; Acts 9:25). Not small ones as in note on Matthew 16:9.

[baskets] Greek: *kophinos* (GSN-2894), handbasket (Matthew 14:20; Matthew 16:9; Mark 6:43; Mark 8:19; Luke 9:17; John 6:13). Not the same basket as in note on Matthew 15:37.

Matthew 15:38

And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.

Feeding the Multitudes

The 5,000

Matthew. 14:15–21

- Predominantly Jews
- Took place in Galilee, Bethsaida
- 5 loaves, 2 fish
- 12 baskets left over
- In the spring of the year
- Crowd with Him one day

The 4,000

Matthew 15:32–39

- Predominantly Gentiles
- Took place at Decapolis *
- 7 loaves, “a few fish”
- 7 baskets left over
- In the summer
- Crowd with Him three days

* Mark 8:31ff

Note that this time there are seven loaves, and the fishes aren't numbered. The Holy Spirit is drawing our attention to the number seven. This time more loaves (7 vs. 5), less people (4000 vs. 5000 men+ women and children), and less left over (7 vs. 12 baskets). In the first case, it was a small boy that had the basket (the basket was actually a small hand pail). The word basket here in the Greek is a large hamper, at least twice and up to five times bigger. So the seven baskets here may have been a lot more than was left over last time.⁵²

Matthew 15:39

And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

[Magdala] A city on Galilee about 10 miles south of Capernaum.

Magadan was located on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee. Also known as Dalmanutha (Mark 8:10), this was Mary Magdalene's hometown.

⁵² Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

This was part of the Lord's Galilean ministry. Magdala is on the Sea of Galilee and today lies in ruins.

This chapter reveals that our Lord's disciples are not keeping up. They are slow to believe and slow to understand. This is actually hindering the Lord Jesus. It seems at this point that, since He has reached the breaking point with the religious rulers, He is having a real problem with His disciples. He appears to be just marking time until they catch up.

Frankly, He is very patient with you and me, also. Many of us need to catch up; we are far behind in our belief and understanding. Oh, that we might *believe* Him!⁵³



⁵³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:90). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

