

## Matthew 15

Read Matthew 15:1-9: This chapter contrasts the way that Jesus carries out scripture; compared to the way that the Pharisees carry out scripture. We need to memorize scripture for the purpose of knowing God's intentions; and to see the big picture. Stalin was a great Bible-verse memory student; and so is the Devil.

"Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see as man sees*;<sup>[a]</sup> for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

For the LORD is the God of knowledge; And by Him actions are weighed. (1 Samuel 2:3b)

The ancient rabbis added to the scripture; and created an oral tradition; which became more used than the scriptures. We are not to add or subtract from the Bible.

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19)

The rabbis taught beyond the Bible; providing details that they thought would prevent people from violating the laws. In effect, they built fences around the scriptures (precautions to observe) in order to not accidentally ~~break~~ <sup>BREAK</sup> a law.

God is more interested in our intentions than our outward appearances, and perfect performances. The Jews thought that they could be righteous through being experts at not making mistakes.

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:2-3)

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.

God wants us to humbly submit to him; and be vessels of grace and mercy; like he is. We are not supposed to receive grace and then intimidate others with strict enforcement. <sup>→ THAT WOULD BE HYPOCRACY</sup> Without the right heart; it is a worthless quest.

though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ (Philippians 3:4-8)

Love is more important than being flawless. Love is the goal.



And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; (1 Corinthians 13:2-6)

Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-39)

Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established. (proverbs 16:2-3)

The purpose of the Law is to show man that he is condemned to hell without a savior. The Law is not to reward *perfect people*.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20)

During the Captivity or Exile, detailed commentaries on the law appeared in the form of innumerable and highly specific restrictions that were designed to "build a hedge" around the written Torah and thus guard against any possible violation of the Torah by ignorance or accident. In other words; the rabbis thought that the scriptures alone did not provide enough detail. That kind of thinking comes from a mindset of finding loopholes. In 200 AD the Mishnah was written describing how to specifically live out the commandments. This encyclopedia of Pharisaic legalism instructs the reader with incredible detail concerning every conceivable area of conduct. To be honest it would be an injustice for me to try to describe it and it would probably take someone three lifetimes just to begin to understand it. the oral law of the Pharisees and its "microscopic precepts" was condemned by Jesus as a "burden" that is impossible for men to carry. Jesus has no interest in barely keeping the law. He wants us to share liberally and help others.

The rabbinic tradition of hand washing was way over the top. We should wash our hands before we eat; but we do not need a 5 minute procedure to pour water from clean cups every time we are ready to eat. The level of detail in the Mishna really worked against God's word. You would have to become a full<sup>time</sup> priest to observe every little requirement. There would be no time to work; and address the daily issues in life. The intent of God's word is to prevent abuses. Instead the impossible web of additional rules strangled the people.



You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. (John 5:39-40)

God cares about being clean from sin; not so much from dirt. The Mishna really makes people robots who stop evaluating options as they are reduced to merely maneuvering through how they can keep the rules.

for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

Read Matthew 15:10-20: Now Jesus explains what God wants from those trying to keep the Law. God is not concerned with what we eat (what goes into a man). He cares about what comes out of a man (thoughts and words and actions).

The clean and unclean animals and foods were really to teach us to be holy; and set apart from the crowds. Pigs love mud; and sheep love to remain clean. There were specific concerns such as trichinosis to stay away from pork in those days as well. Eating turkey verses vultures makes sense for obvious health reasons; but also teaches us about being about life not death opportunists. The Pharisees were focused on what was going into men: (food, hand washing, kosher laws, etc..). They were not as concerned about being nice to each other and having mercy on their fellow man. God is all about sharing love; not food preparation. Food really symbolizes how man really affects each other. Consider a beautiful apple that is eaten. What does it become after a man has digested its goodness; and it is eliminated? This is symbolic of our effect on the world around us if we function without God. What God has made is good. We taint all that we touch. Moreover, our thoughts and intentions and actions and sins are symbolically the way God sees a

digested apple. We are leaving our crud everywhere we go like a monkey cage in a zoo. All of the other monkeys have to live in a stinking mess unless someone cleans their cage.

Jesus adds that the Pharisees were unaware of what God wants. They are also directing others to follow them. The entire group of people observing the oral traditions would end up getting lost in a rut. The whole exercise becomes an endless labyrinth with no value. Note that Jesus includes the comment: "Leave them alone". We are not called to spend our time arguing with people pridefully—*whom ARE* committed to go their own way.

**Read Matthew 15:21-28:** Now Jesus takes it a step further to show that people living completely outside of the influence of Israel are more intellectually honest and humble than those who are connected to established religious practices. Here we have a Gentile woman living completely away from the teachings of God. She recognizes what is real without any sophisticated religious training. God sees more value in honesty and sincerity than to know a bunch of rules as a hypocrite.

When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" (Luke 7:9)

Jesus is trying to cultivate a little desperation, if that is what is required for us to engage our faith and take steps.

**Read Matthew 15:29-31:** These verses truly fulfill scripture. They are exactly what the messiah was prophesied to do.

Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *With* the recompense of God; He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. (Isaiah 35:4-5)

Read Matthew 15:32-39: Now God shows us an example of how to minister the Law of God correctly. It begins with an attitude of compassion and mercy. It seeks solutions to human predicaments. It is not all about enforcement and accusation. The Pharisees could care less about how to resolve personal dilemmas. Jesus is also about empowerment. Jesus told the disciples to feed the people; and don't send them down the line. Additionally the power and miracles come to meet the need. A lot of people want to talk in tongues and heal and perform miracles. It is <sup>A lot</sup> more likely that you will see a miracle if you are in the business of helping people.