

OUR LORD REBUKED THE PHARISEES

TEXT: MARK 7:1-23

Introduction:

1. We see an interesting contrast at the end of Mark 6, and the beginning of Mark 7. People were coming to Jesus to be “made whole” (6:53-56).
2. But the “the Pharisees and certain of the scribes” came over from Jerusalem to find fault and give our Lord a hard time (7:1, 2).
3. Perhaps they had heard about the feeding of the five thousand. Instead of praising God for this great miracle, they looked for an opportunity to accuse our Lord.
4. John the Baptist also had conflicts with the Pharisees and Sadducees (cf. Matthew 3:7, 8).
5. And all throughout the Gospels we see our Lord hounded by these same religious hypocrites – the scribes and Pharisees and Sadducees. Their satanic hatred of Jesus eventually led to His crucifixion (cf. Mark 2:16, 24; 3:1-6, 22).
6. I saw in the newspaper the other day a headline that said, “Kosher Nostra.” Forty-four people, including three mayors and five Jewish rabbis, were arrested in NY and NJ for international money laundering.
7. A shady character named Solomon Dwek ran a yeshiva (Jewish school) in Deal, NJ. He was arrested in May of 2006 for trying to rip off \$50 million from PNC Bank through a check-kiting scheme.
8. After his arrest, Mr. Dwek agreed to cooperate with the FBI to bring down some of these crooked politicians and rabbis. He wore a hidden wire, which led to the arrest of these reprehensible rabbis, who are accused of moving “at least tens of millions of dollars through charitable, nonprofit entities” that they controlled.
9. Luke 16:14 says, “And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him” (Cf. Mk. 7:22 – thefts, covetousness).
10. The rabbis and other Jews captured in the FBI sting operation referred to money laundering as “Talmudic study sessions.” Evidence collected against the rabbis show they allegedly used the code word “gemora,” the Hebrew word for the Jewish Talmud, when referring to cash.
11. “I’m bringing, uh, 55 gemoras, and then I’ll see you,” undercover FBI operative Solomon Dwek told Brooklyn Rabbi Mordchai Fish when he wanted to launder a \$55,000 check.
12. Fish, who teaches Torah classes at a synagogue in Borough Park and runs several Jewish nonprofits, replied, “When do you want to learn?” This was the code for what time should the transaction go down.

13. What a mess! Things have not changed very much. The Pharisees were typical of all worldly, proud, unregenerate religious hypocrites, and here in our text, our Lord gives several marks of the religion of the scribes and Pharisees. And these are the marks of all false teachers today.

I. THEY PLACE TRADITION ABOVE THE BIBLE (MARK 7:1-13).

1. We find the word “tradition” five times in Mark 7 (7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13).
2. One of the major differences between Baptist doctrine and Roman Catholic doctrine is in the area of tradition. Baptists maintain that the Bible is our only authority.
3. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16).
4. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church says, “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God . . .” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*).
5. “Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*).
6. The RCC has elevated tradition to the same level as the Word of God. Roman Catholics need to make a choice: it is either the traditions of Romanism or the authority of God’s Word (Bible).
7. The traditions of Rome include the following:
 - They call their priests “father.” But Jesus said in Matthew 23:9, “And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”
 - Forbidding their priests and nuns and other workers to marry. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (I Tim. 4:1-3). Peter was married (the RCC claims Peter was their first pope). Matthew 8:14 says, “And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever” (cf. Mark 1:30; Luke 4:38). Paul, apparently single (perhaps a widower), however he made it very clear that he could marry if he wanted to. The apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:5, “Have

we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"

- Mary is referred to as a "perpetual virgin." The Bible teaches that after the birth of Christ, Mary and Joseph had children. Matthew 13:55, 56 says, "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?
And his sisters, are they not all with us?" (Cf. Mark 6:3).
- Mary is called "the queen of heaven." The only queen of heaven found in the Bible is a heathen goddess. Worshipping the queen of heaven (which is not the Mary of the Bible) is idolatry and provokes the Lord to anger. Jeremiah 7:17-19 says, "Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?"
- RC's refer to Mary as "the mother of God." This is unscriptural. Mary is the mother of the earthly Jesus, not "the mother of God." Eternal God has no mother. God the Father is eternal. God the Son is eternal. God the Holy Spirit is eternal. In fact, the Holy Spirit is called "the eternal Spirit" in Hebrews 9:14. Micah 5:2 says, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."
- By worshipping Mary, and praying to Mary, and giving her unscriptural titles, the RCC has exalted Mary above the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:18 says, "That in all things He might have the preeminence."
- Roman Catholics call the pope "Holy Father." The term "Holy Father" is only found one time in the Bible, and it is used in reference to God the Father. Jesus prayed, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom

thou hast given me” (John 17:11). It is nothing but blasphemy to call a man “Holy Father.”

- Roman Catholics are taught to worship and venerate statues and idols and images. The second commandment (deceitfully removed from the RC list of the “Ten Commandments”) says, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God” (Exodus 20:4, 5).
- Roman Catholics do not have preaching services or Gospel meetings. They have what they call “the mass.” Through what they call “transubstantiation” (“Holy Communion”) the wafer/host (bread) and the wine supposedly are transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ when their priest prays over them.
- But the Bible teaches that Jesus died once for sins, never to be repeated. The Lord Jesus sits on the right hand of God the Father and He does not come down from heaven at the command of a RC priest. Hebrews 10:12 says, “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”
- “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished” (John 19:30).
- RC’s genuflect and bow down before the bread and wine. This is idolatry.
- The Roman Catholic Church teaches that one can only be saved by faith plus good works. Ephesians 2:8, 9 says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”
- The RCC says the Christian church is founded on Peter. First Corinthians 3:11 says, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
- The RCC says sinners must confess their sins to a priest. But the Bible says we are to confess our sins to God alone (cf. Mark 2:1-7). “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).

- First Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”
 - Other RC traditions include purgatory, nuns, popes, penance, extreme unction, and the other sacraments, the rosary, etc. But there is no Biblical basis for any of these heathenistic traditions. There is no purgatory in the Bible, and there are no popes or nuns (or NT priests) or sacraments. It is a terrible sin to add to the Bible (cf. Rev. 22:18. 19).
8. Placing tradition above the Word of God is a mark of all false religion. I heard a Jewish man give his testimony over the radio. He said that his rabbi told him all Jews go to heaven, and this was taught in their *Talmud*. This Jewish man had to make a choice. It was either stay in the false religion of his parents and go to hell, or leave this false religion and receive Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Thank God he made the right choice; he put his trust in Jesus the Jewish Messiah.
 9. Before he was converted to Christ, the apostle Paul zealously followed the traditions of Judaism. He wrote in Galatians 1:14, “And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.”
 10. There are many similarities between Judaism and Romanism. Like Roman Catholics, Jews believe in both a written law and an oral law, and they place the oral law above the written law (the OT).
 11. Here is a quote from a rabbi, quoted by A.C. Gaebelien, “The words of the scribes are lovely and above the words of the law; for the words of the law are light and weighty, but the words of the scribes are all weighty.”
 12. Eventually all these Pharisaical oral traditions were compiled in a huge set of books called the “*Talmud*,” which Jews consider more authoritative than the Old Testament.
 13. According to the *Talmud*, “to be against the words of the Scribes is more punishable than to be against the word of the Bible” (quoted by William Hendriksen, cited by Arthur Robertson).
 14. All false religions place their traditions above the Bible. Our Lord rebuked the Pharisees for doing this. By placing their traditions above the Bible, they made “the Word of God of none effect” (Mark 7:13; cf. 7:9).

II. THEY ARE RITUALISTIC (MARK 7:1-9).

1. Ritualism refers to religious ceremonies and rites. There certainly was ritualism in the OT. For example, a good part of the book of Leviticus deals with ritual.
2. But there is no ritualism in the NT church (cf. Hebrews 7:22-28).
3. God has always hated hypocritical ritualism. Amos 5:21-23 says, "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."
4. Isaiah 1:13, 14 says, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them."
5. Spurgeon wrote an article against ritualism in his periodical, the *Sword and Trowel* in June, 1869: "It is no doubt true that the gaudy performances of the cathedrals have kept alive the Popish spirit in the church, and there will be no end to Ritualism while cathedral services are kept up in their present semi-popish fashion."
6. Study your Bible and you will see how God hates religious hypocrisy, formalism, ritualism, and all forms of popery. I receive many religious catalogues and advertisements in the mail, with robes and scarves and sashes and funny collars and weird outfits. Can you imagine me wearing these popish costumes?
7. When I see those colorful religious robes, this is what comes to mind: Phariseeism, popery, religious apostasy, hypocrisy, and dead formalism.
8. The Pharisees accused our Lord of transgressing "the tradition of the elders" by not washing His hands before He ate bread (7:5).
9. Nothing whatsoever is said about such washing of hands in the Old Testament Scriptures, but the oral traditions have much to say about it.
10. They even taught that evil spirits could get on their hands and needed to be washed off lest they find their way into the mouth and stomach.
11. This adding rules to the Word of God is a mark of Pharisaical religion. The imposition of anything as a religious duty, which God has not commanded in His Word, nullifies the Word of God.
12. Our Lord gave an example of this here in Mark 7. The Scriptures clearly teach that children should honor their parents. This is the fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12). But under a man-made tradition, a man could

- by a vow dedicate his property to God by saying to his father or his mother, "It is a gift" (Mark 7:11-13).
13. By doing this they were actually neglecting their responsibility to their parents and disobeying the fifth commandment. This shows how they made void the Word of God by their traditions.
 14. Today's Orthodox Jews are the descendants of the Pharisees. They are notorious for imposing unscriptural traditions on their people, thereby nullifying the Word of God.
 15. RC's nullify the Word of God by their many vain and unscriptural traditions: salvation through the sacraments, rosary beads, purgatory, praying for the dead, praying to Mary, etc.
 16. Let us keep our distance from popery, ritualism, so-called "holy days," funny robes and costumes, unscriptural titles, candles, formalism, and so on. All of these traditions come from either heathen Babylon or Pharisaical Judaism, and God is not in it.
 17. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).
 18. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers" (I Peter 1:18).

III. THEY ARE HYPOCRITES (7:6, 7).

1. Our Lord denounced woe upon the Pharisees in Matthew 23, and over and over He upbraided them for their hypocrisy (23:1-4, 13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29).
2. This is one of the marks of false religion – hypocrisy. Like the RCC, which says it is opposed to divorce but grants over 60,000 "annulments" a year (in America alone).
3. In roughly 90% of all cases that come before the RCC annulment councils (or tribunals), officials rule that "in the eyes of God the marriage never truly existed." What a farce!
4. A so-called expert in RC canon law boasted, "There isn't a marriage in America that we can't annul" (Sheila Rauch Kennedy, *Shattered Faith*, p. 12).
5. Annulment is nothing but a form of divorce in every way but name, but the hypocritical RCC refuses to admit it.
6. One RC writer said, "Moreover, the Catholic annulment procedures hurt children, are cruel to former spouses, force applicants to misrepresent the

- past, mock well-meaning priests, and drive many thousands out of the church. It is a disaster” (James Carroll, *Boston Globe*, May 13, 1997).
7. A few years ago, the RCC was crying “bigotry” because the US Congress would not hire a RC for the chaplaincy. Meanwhile they persecute fundamental and evangelical Christians in countries that are predominantly RC. This is hypocrisy. (By the way, their strategy worked and Congress was pressured into hiring its first RC chaplain.)
 8. I remember years ago working with a dirty-mouthed fellow whose mind was always in the gutter. One day he came back from lunch break with ashes on his forehead. When I told him ashes on his head would not clean up his filthy heart he got mad at me.

CONCLUSION:

1. In an effort to defend their traditions, some RC’s like to quote II Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:6.
2. “Traditions” in II Thessalonians refer to Biblical doctrines handed down from Christ and the apostles. This is clear from II Thess. 2:15 – “whether by word, or our epistle.” Second Thessalonians was written around AD 54. The Thessalonian epistles were the first that Paul wrote, way before NT doctrine was systematized. Therefore, “tradition” here means Bible doctrine, not extra-Biblical tradition.