

Bible Study: Matthew 15 Overview

Date: September 30, 2025 - October 1, 2025

Days: Tuesday and Wednesday

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Matthew 15:1-39 (KJV) – Overview

- Verses 1-20: Jesus teaches about inner purity.
- Verses 21-28: Jesus sends a demon out of a girl.
- Verses 29-31: The crowd marvels at Jesus healings
- Verses 32-39: Jesus feeds four thousand.

Discussion on Tradition and Purity (Matthew 15:1-2)

Mathew 15:1-2 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, ²Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

Matthew 15:1-2 introduces a confrontation between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. They questioned Jesus, asking why His disciples were violating the traditions of the elders by not washing their hands before eating bread. In the Bible, the term "bread" is often used to refer to food in general.

The concept of "transgress" or "transgression" is defined as a violation of God's law. It may also encompass the breaking of personal traditions, as noted in the Layman Bible Dictionary. For example, 1 Timothy 2:14 refers to Adam not being deceived, whereas the woman was involved in the transgression. This highlights the importance of recognizing the distinction between God's commands and human traditions.

It is important to be cautious and not assume that longstanding traditions are necessarily correct or pleasing to God. The passage encourages careful reflection on the difference between tradition and divine instruction.

Jesus Confronts Tradition (Matthew 15:3-7)

Matthew 15:3-7 ³But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

⁴For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

⁵But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

⁶And 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.

⁷Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

In Matthew 15:3-7, Jesus responds directly to the scribes and Pharisees. He asks why they themselves violate the commandment of God by upholding their traditions. Jesus refers to God's command to honor one's father and mother, even stating that anyone who curses their parents should face severe consequences.

However, Jesus points out that some people claim that any assistance given to their parents is a "gift," and by doing so, they neglect the true honor due to their parents. This practice, according to Jesus, renders God's commandment ineffective because of their tradition.

He calls them hypocrites and cites the prophecy of Esaias (Isaiah), which speaks of such behavior. Jesus teaches that Christians should be elevated to a sacred standing, emphasizing the importance of following God's commandments rather than merely upholding human traditions.

- Verse 3: Jesus challenges them, asking why they transgress God's commandment through their tradition.
- Verse 4: God commands to honor one's father and mother, and those who curse their parents are subject to judgment.
- Verse 5: Some claim that any benefit given to their parents is a gift, implying that this excuses them from honoring their parents as commanded.
- Verse 6: By not honoring their parents, they make God's commandment null and void through their tradition.

The Corban Law: Tradition and Responsibility

Understanding the Corban Law (Mark 7:11-13)

¹¹ But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

¹² And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

¹³ Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

- Mark 7:11-13 describes a practice known as the Corban Law, which allowed individuals to dedicate their possessions as a gift to God.

The Pharisees' Misuse of Tradition (Leviticus 25:35-43)

Leviticus 25:35-43 ³⁵ And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.

³⁶ Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

³⁷ Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.

³⁸ I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.

³⁹ And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant:

⁴⁰ But as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubile.

⁴¹ And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return.

⁴² For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen.

⁴³ Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but shalt fear thy God.

In these verses, the Pharisees are shown using religious tradition as an excuse to avoid supporting their families. By declaring their resources as Corban, they prioritized giving to the temple treasury over helping their own parents in need. This practice contradicted God's explicit command to honor father and mother, as stated in **Exodus 20:12: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."**

The Old Testament also teaches the importance of caring for those who are struggling. Leviticus 25:35-43 instructs that if a brother becomes poor or is in need, help must be provided. Specific verses emphasize:

- No interest or increase should be charged to a brother in need.
- Do not lend money or food for profit.
- If a brother must serve due to poverty, he should be treated as a hired servant, not as a bondservant, and released in the year of jubilee.
- The Israelites are to avoid ruling harshly over one another, remembering that all are God's servants.

Balancing Devotion and Responsibility

While it is important to dedicate money and time to God, scripture makes clear that these offerings should never be used as an excuse to neglect personal responsibilities, especially toward family and those in need. Helping others is one of the most meaningful ways to honor God, and tradition should never override this fundamental principle.

Don't Be a Hypocrite (Matthew 23:13-29)

Understanding Hypocrisy

A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be something they are not. In the Bible, Jesus strongly criticized the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. Though they performed good deeds to gain the praise of others and appeared outwardly righteous, they were insensitive to God's truth and failed to live according to it. Jesus called out their actions in Matthew 23:13-29, warning them and those like them about the dangers of pretending to be godly while neglecting true righteousness.

Matthew 23:13-29:

¹³ But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

¹⁴ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

¹⁵ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

¹⁶ Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

Jesus' Condemnation of the Pharisees

In Matthew 23:13-29, Jesus pronounced a series of woes against the scribes and Pharisees. He accused them of shutting the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, refusing to enter themselves and preventing others from entering. Jesus exposed several of their hypocritical behaviors, including:

- Taking advantage of widows while making long prayers just for show
- Traveling far to make one convert, only to make that person even worse off spiritually
- Obsessing over oaths related to the temple and its gold, focusing on the less important details

- Neglecting the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith, while meticulously tithing minor herbs
- Cleaning the outside of cups and dishes while ignoring the corruption within
- Appearing beautiful and righteous on the outside, but being spiritually dead and unclean inside
- Building tombs for prophets and decorating the graves of the righteous, yet harboring hypocrisy and wrongdoing within

True Worship Versus Hypocrisy (Matthew 15:8-11)

Matthew 15:8-11 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

⁹ But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (vain having no real value, idle and worthless) webster dictionary

¹⁰ And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

¹¹ Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

- Matthew 15:8-11 further highlights the difference between outward actions and inner truth. Jesus said, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” Their worship was in vain because it was based on human commandments rather than genuine devotion. What truly defiles a person, Jesus taught, is not what enters from the outside, but what comes from within—what is spoken and done from the heart

Defilement Comes from Within

Mark 7:14-15 says, ¹⁴ And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Harken unto me every one of you, and understand:¹⁵ There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

- Mark 7:14-15 echoes this message. Jesus called the people to listen and understand that nothing external can defile a person; rather, it is what comes out from within that reveals true character and can corrupt. Hypocrisy, therefore, is a matter of the heart, not just external behaviors. Authentic righteousness and worship come from a sincere heart, not merely from outward appearances or empty rituals.

Jesus' Teachings and Encounters in (Matthew 15:12-24)

¹² Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?

¹³ But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

¹⁴ Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

¹⁵ Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

¹⁶ And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

¹⁷ Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

²⁰ These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

²¹ Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

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.

²³ But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

²⁴ But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Confrontation with the Pharisees

After Jesus spoke, his disciples approached him and asked if he knew that the Pharisees were offended by his words. Jesus replied, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." He explained that the Pharisees were "blind leaders of the blind," and warned that if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch. Jesus emphasized leaving them alone because of their lack of true understanding.

Explaining the Parable

Peter asked Jesus to clarify his teachings. Jesus responded by expressing surprise at their lack of understanding. He explained that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is expelled, but what comes out of the mouth originates from the heart and defiles a person. Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies all come from the heart and are what truly defile a person. In contrast, eating with unwashed hands does not make someone unclean.

Jesus Departs to Tyre and Sidon

Jesus left and traveled to the regions of Tyre and Sidon. There, a woman from Canaan approached him, pleading for mercy for her daughter who was tormented by a demon. Jesus did not reply to her immediately. His disciples urged him to send her away because she was persistent in her cries for help. Jesus told them, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” indicating his mission was first to the people of Israel.

Background on Canaanites and Jewish Sects

Canaanites were members of a Jewish sect during New Testament times, known for their strong opposition to Roman rule. Jesus’ apostle Simon the Canaanite may have been associated with or sympathetic toward this group, as mentioned in Matthew 10:4. Within Judaism, there were other religious movements, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. When the woman from Canaan pleaded for help, the disciples showed no compassion, instead asking Jesus to send her away.

Jesus’ Ministry Beyond Israel: Faith, Mercy, and Healing (Matthew 15:25-28)

Matthew 15:25-28 ²⁵ Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

²⁶ But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

²⁷ And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

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.

The Faith of the Canaanite Woman

A woman approached Jesus, earnestly worshipping Him and pleading, “Lord, help me.” However, Jesus replied, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” The woman humbly acknowledged the truth of His words and responded, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Moved by her persistence and faith, Jesus declared, “O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” As a result, her daughter was healed immediately.

The Irony of Faith and Salvation

Ironically, while many Jews would lose God’s blessing and salvation because they rejected Jesus, many Gentiles would gain salvation by recognizing and accepting Him.

Jesus Heals the Multitudes (Matthew 15:29-30)

Matthew 15:29-30 ²⁹ And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

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:

After this encounter, Jesus left that place, went near the Sea of Galilee, climbed a mountain, and sat down. Large crowds came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others. They laid the sick at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them all.

The Heart of Compassion

Compassion is shown here as an attitude of mercy and forgiveness, demonstrated in Jesus’ interactions and healing ministry.

The Compassion of Jesus and the Feeding of Four Thousand (Matthew 15:31-32)

Miracles of Healing

Matthew 15:31-32 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.

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.

Matthew 15:31-32 describes the awe of the multitude as they witnessed remarkable miracles performed by Jesus. People who were unable to speak began to talk, those who were maimed became whole, the lame walked, and the blind regained their sight. The crowd was amazed at these wonders and responded by glorifying the God of Israel. Jesus healed every person who came to him, demonstrating his compassion for all.

Jesus' Compassion for the Multitude

After three days of teaching and healing, Jesus recognized the needs of the multitude. He called his disciples and expressed his concern, saying, "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." Here, fasting refers to the practice of abstaining from food and drink for a specific period.

Jesus Feeds Four Thousand

Matthew 15:33-37 ³³ **And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?**

³⁴ **And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.**

³⁵ **And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.**

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.**

³⁷ **And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.**

Matthew 15:33-37 recounts the miracle of feeding a large crowd in the wilderness. When the disciples questioned how they could possibly obtain enough bread to feed so many people, Jesus asked them how many loaves they had. They replied that they had seven loaves and a few small fish.

Jesus instructed the crowd to sit on the ground. He then took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke them, and distributed them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the multitude. Everyone ate and was satisfied. Afterward, the disciples collected seven baskets full of leftover pieces. Through faith, Jesus was able to feed the entire multitude, demonstrating both his compassion and divine provision.

References:

- Life Application Study Bible: King James Version
- The Layman's Bible Dictionary
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary