

Are Ye Also Yet Without Understanding?

Matthew 15:1 – 39

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~ In our last report from our Spiritual Safari, we saw the shortest prayer in the Bible as Peter cried out to Jesus, “...Lord, save me!” Three words and one second of prayer was what Peter had to offer as he was sinking beneath the waves. With most of our modern prayer techniques Peter would have been twenty thousand leagues under the sea by the time he got to, “...Lord, save me!” Let’s try to boil our prayers down a little bit today to what’s important - and leave out what’s not, shall we?

Looking back briefly, we witnessed the break between Jesus and the religious rulers in chapter thirteen; here the relationship becomes strained beyond any repair, if it wasn’t already. The altercation here will end with Jesus denouncing the scribes and Pharisees. This chapter will have Jesus rebuking His disciples and healing the daughter of a Phoenician woman and, also, another feeding of many thousands of people. This is an action-packed chapter....

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

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

~ The Pharisee’s don’t really want to question Jesus anymore; their only motivation was to discredit and criticize Him; and they would have simply killed Him if there hadn’t been so many people around. Interestingly, they aren’t accusing Him of contradicting Scripture. What they are saying is that Jesus has broken with their traditions, which, to them, was the same thing. The Pharisees want to know why these men didn’t clean up a little before eating. Most of the church today believes if they go through some ritual whereby they get cleaned up on the outside then they have done all that is necessary. This is ritualistic cleansing the Pharisees are asking about – not a physical cleaning for sanitary reasons. This “tradition” that the Pharisees

are asking about also permitted them to break the law! Their cleverness is absolutely amazing....

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

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

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;

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.

~ In that day, you honored your father and mother by supporting them in their old age. The Pharisees got around that law by dedicating it all to the temple. They had a tradition that contributing to the temple relieved them of their responsibility of supporting their parents. It was a very pious thing they did to justify breaking the Mosaic Law. Frankly, the best test of any Christian is their bank account. Money is the barometer of a genuine Christian. You can always tell who's who by their desire to get the Word of God to the world in sound doctrine. Getting the Word of God out is NEVER cheap – it costs a person everything. If it hasn't cost you everything then you are not following Christ. You may be following your own hypocritical religion that does nothing in the world except falsely make you feel good about yourself; that happens all the time – but if you're not supporting a systematic, sincere, Scripturally literate, Spirit-filled and Spirit-led Bible study – then, frankly, you're just wasting your time with religion. It's God's money anyways. What values do you put first when distributing His money? Mostly self? We should seek His guidance on how He wants us to give to further the cause of Christ. I seriously doubt that many people honestly do that. Candidly, most people handle their money in an uber-ultra-super-duper-pious way! That's when Jesus speaks what should be the most frightful words in Scripture. The word "hypocrite" was the word for an actor in a play in Jesus day. It implied that one person received a queue and

then answered back. The Lord Jesus is accusing them of playing with religion....

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

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

~ The Pharisees were obsessed with going through this ceremony of hand washing. That's all they were concerned with at the moment. They were incensed that Jesus wouldn't do as their tradition commanded. Well, Jesus is only concerned with the condition of your heart, friends; and nothing else, really. Here, they are breaking the Mosaic Law while back-talking God Himself. It's easy to rationalize away our disobedience to Christ. Most people do. Parents insist that children wash their hands before eating but they sit and watch absolute garbage on TV and talk filthy while they're eating. Their heart is damaged and religion, to them, is nothing in the world but hypocrisy, my friends. It would be better for them to simply renounce their religion and embrace the atheism they have no earthly idea exists within them. Jesus said so, my beloved....

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

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.

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?

~ The word "plant" in verse thirteen speaks of a "religious system" – and also of every system in the world. All of our man-made religions, constitutions, politics, institutions, legislation, mandates and declarations are planted by God – and they are all going to be pulled out of the ground some day. The Pharisees had wanted to question Jesus up until the Sabbath incident in chapter thirteen but now the entire situation has reached an irreconcilable crisis. Jesus has also been speaking to His disciples in parables but, unfortunately, they weren't catching on too well, either, apparently. This is a great principle I think they should have gotten without explanation. It doesn't matter what goes in the mouth; what matters is what comes out! The bucket of the mouth brings up what's in the well of the heart - sooner or later....

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 and blasphemies:

~ We can see this all over our contemporary culture today. We live in an age of what is known as the "new morality." Isaiah said there was a day coming when we would call good evil and evil good and that day has arrived, friends. The liberal will tell you that you are entirely wrong if you believe the Bible properly, completely and correctly. Now that we live in an age of free speech and man is free to express what is in his heart, what has come out? – The evil thoughts Jesus listed. Evil thoughts are all that man has – nothing else; and he perpetually expresses evil thoughts all day long

in this world. These things Jesus mentions are still as accurate today as it was back then!

We have really opened a Pandora's Box that will never be closed by mankind now. This world is in deep, deep trouble; and mankind must be controlled. Humanity is literally accelerating out of control. Mankind is the most vicious animal roaming the earth and, yet, we say man must be free to "do his thing!" Well, that "thing" man will do is right here in the list Jesus gave! Jesus calls this all SIN! We have a great emphasis on sex in our schools and in society, in general. It's on TV and radio and in the movies, billboards, newspapers, cartoons, magazines and it's in the church, too! These things defile us! Don't tell me you are immune from the effects of sin – because you are NOT immune. Tragically, all of this garbage takes place under the high and lofty guise of "Freedom of Speech!" Man wants to express himself and, when he is allowed to, this list is what he will express! Freedom of speech is nothing in the world today but a mis-interpreted self-given right to be hateful, obscene and antagonistic....

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.

~ Here, Jesus leaves the land for the first time. Remember, He told His apostles not to leave the boundary of Israel. Well, Jesus is out of Israel now and is going to show that He will accept Gentiles! His invitation of "everyone that thirsteth may drink freely" is now open to all. Also remember, Jesus has already said, "come unto me ALL who are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest." ~

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.

~ This woman had no claim on Jesus as the Son of David. That's why Jesus didn't answer her one word. Here, she is causing a disturbance in the city. This is, obviously, very embarrassing to the disciples. Let's make another note about "the lost house of Israel." It's a very important term to understand. The house of Israel is the primary issue Jesus has come to address at this time we are studying in Matthew. Jesus died with this inscription above His head, "King of the Jews!" Here is this woman coming to worship Him and she is calling Him Lord. She's asking for help – so – she's going to get help. Interestingly, the rebuffing she received about the dogs by the Lord Jesus would have sent MANY of us away saying, "...you can't talk to me like that!"....

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.

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:

31 Inasmuch 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.

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

~ Again, I must belabor the point that this is not a few isolated cases of healing that cannot be substantiated. No one denied the miracles in that day because there were too many of them happening. To deny them would have meant you were not credible. For a long time, I thought this was just a repeat of the feeding of the five thousand in chapter fourteen. It seems to be nothing but a repetition; and it's easy to wonder why it's even included. It doesn't seem to further advance the Messianic claims of the Lord Jesus; but I suspect it happened MANY times that are not recorded. We must remain aware that we are not in a section of Scripture where Jesus is verifying His claims as the Messiah. We are in a section of the Bible where the rejection of those claims is being presented to us. This miracle indicates exactly how slowly the disciples were learning. They had already witnessed the feeding of the five thousand. I think that probably took place just a few days before, actually.

Here, the disciples raise the same objectionable question of unbelief. His disciples hadn't really learned anything from the first feeding. Their reluctance to believe here is actually a form of rejection! See, unbelief is sin; although I will agree it is more accurately defined as a state of being. Anything that is not of faith is sin. When Paul says, "...lay aside every weight" – what is the "weight?" The only weight we have is unbelief! The sin of unbelief. Our problem today is that we just don't believe Him! I confess, willingly, I wish I trusted and believed in Him more than I have or do! Jesus is believable – I ought to believe Him - but the problem is not in

the Bible – the problem is with me! I’m sure this is not true for you – but it is for me....

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.

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

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

~ So, we end this leg of our Spiritual Safari in Magdala, which is on the coast of the Sea of Galilee - in ruins today. If we put just one man and one woman with each man we have twelve thousand. This reveals the disciples were not too good at keeping up with Jesus. They were slow to believe and even slower to follow Him. This is all hindering the Lord Jesus work on earth, too. It would seem that at this most difficult breaking point with the Pharisees He is also having some real problems with the apostles. Jesus is dragging His feet so they can catch up to Him. Jesus is very patient today with you and me, friends. We truly do not understand the depth of that statement. He’s waiting for us; so that we might catch up. There are too many people today that really need to catch up with Christ. We really need to trust and believe Him today ~

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