

## THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #023

### A Chronological Study

### "The Heart of Man"

Mt 15:10-20; Mark 7:14-23



### "The Heart of the Sinner" [1](#)

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Before we get into the scriptures we need to take a look at the "The Heart of the Sinner" image above. (there is a brief history of this image, and several others, at the end).

The image shows a representation of who we are on the inside due to "The Fall." There is the man and a heart symbol that is filled with the elements that make us all up - that which we think and feel

about who we are. First, on the outside of the man is a dove and an angel. The angel has his hands out in offering instructions to this lost man. The Dove is there representing God's Holy Spirit, and He also is sending out His spiritual flames trying to get his attention (like the flames at Pentecost).

Inside the man's heart is a completely different set of symbols. In the center stands the almighty man warrior... holding the devil's fork and looking very much like him. Yes, without Christ in the heart - you belong to satan.

Top center is the Egyptian **all seeing eye**. Ask any young person anything... and they have all the answers. Age should change much of that, but often does not.

Next clockwise is **the Frog**. The story is told of the Congo frog who eats so many ants they burst and die - the epitome of greed.

Then there is **the Snake**. The image of the evil one who, in Eden, broke up the sweet fellowship and friendship with God and brought on the Fall of man & woman.

Next is **the Leopard**. A savage and cruel beast - symbolically full of hatred, anger and bad temper that often rules the heart of man - even to commit murder.

Then, **the Tortoise**. Laziness, sluggishness in obeying. Rebellious and disobedient to God and His will.

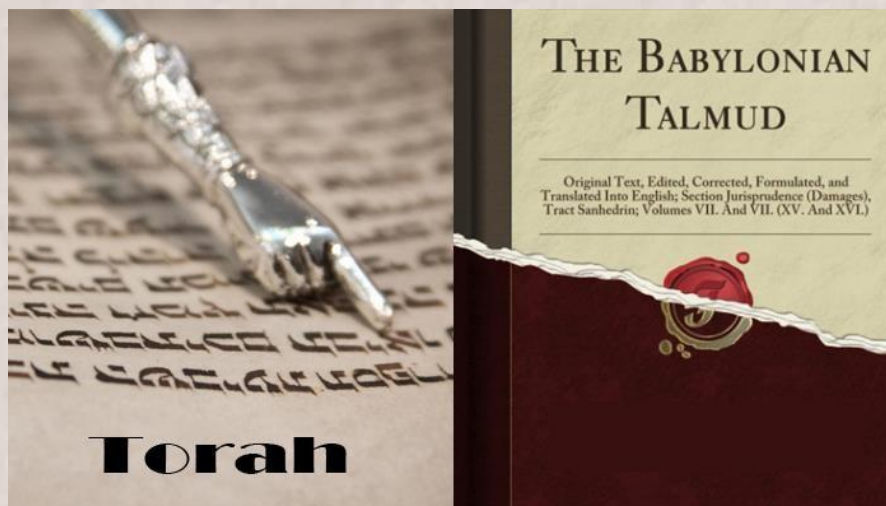
**The Pig** is next. Drunkenness and gluttony - a dirty animal eagerly swallowing up everything in its way.

**The Goat**. It is used here to represent bodily desires, immorality, and adultery.

**The Peacock** is last - the sin of pride - "You can't tell me what to do!" Oh, how we suffer so at the hand of pride.

As we travel along this path in this lesson about the "Heart of Man," may we recognize each of these symbolic animals within our very nature and yield to the Will of God in each of these areas. Clean-up your life and allow God's Holy Spirit to dwell in fullness in your every action and thought.

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### **The Word of God VS The Oral Traditions**

We'll be introducing this parable with much of the chapter that lies ahead of it. Jesus is still in the area of Capernaum, on the North West shore of the Sea of Galilee. Largely, I imagine, they are living in tents on the outskirts of the towns they visit, and sometimes they are invited into homes. Jesus has caught the eye of the Jewish religious leadership and they are now out in full force to spy upon Him in order to get evidence that will convict Him in their religious court. They wish to "Destroy Him," which -- in the end -- they will do at the Cross. What they do not know is that this is the Will of His Heavenly Father and Jesus is willing to make this journey on behalf of man.

John the Baptist had just been beheaded by Herod, the fivethousand have been fed, and Jesus had walked upon the water of the Sea of Galilee... just before this parable.

We'll, once again, we will be using my method of a "linear text," from the New American Standard bible, weaving lines of text from both Matthew Ch-15 and Mark Ch-7 in order to tell the full story. We'll comment between each section.

## **THE PHARISEE'S OBSERVATION**

### **[Mark 7:1-2]**

*1 The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, 2 and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed.*

Capernaum is approximately 79 miles from Jerusalem - on a modern highway. It currently takes about two and a half hours to travel between the two places. On a donkey and only a dirt or stone paved road... On a good day with cool weather a donkey can get up to 15 mph - for short bursts. At walking speed (approx. 7 mph) it would take about 12 hours. Like all travel, especially in the hot middle east sun, there would be lots of breaks for rest, water, and personal needs. I would guess a 2 day journey would normally do it. I bring this up because this team of Pharisees and scribes has just traveled from Jerusalem to where Jesus is as they were sent there to spy upon Jesus. So they would probably had a caravan of men and animals. Quite an undertaking - not just a simple "walk in the park!"

We don't want to miss Mark's comment that when they came to Jesus - they "gathered around Him." A group of hostile men excited to get evidence against Jesus to destroy Him, His ministry, and His Disciples. This confrontation comes about because in their spying, they saw Jesus' disciples eating bread - without washing their hands first.

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**THE TRADITION** (notice the parenthesis)  
**[Mk 7:3-4]**

*3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; 4 and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.)*

Mark gives us the insight to the problem. We must not miss the important information included in his report. Over time, the Jewish religious leaders began to replace God's written law with an "Oral Code" which required enormous amounts of legalistic dialog making the Jewish people deeply responsible to this new form of Law. The teaching of God's Word was neglected and teachers of the Oral Law, "Rabbis," became the form of preaching and teaching... and God's Word was largely abandoned - it is still true today. This is a lesson we all need to pay attention to, for in many "Christian" circles today the teaching of the authority of church tradition and religious leadership is placed in an authority relationship that replaces the authentic Word of God. Be On Your Guard of such teaching... and run from it!

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**THE PHARISAIC QUESTION**

**[Mk 7:5]**

*5 The Pharisees and the scribes \*asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?"*

They ask a pretty simple question. *"Why do YOUR disciples NOT walk ACCORDING TO THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS?"*

You will notice that they do not reference the Holy Scriptures handed down by God. They are accumulating evidence against the Son of God that has nothing to do with Jesus violating the Word of God -- but only the Traditions which are now held as the "supreme authority" for "the people of God." Jesus' disciples did not wash their hands before eating bread. "Oh my!"

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## **JESUS' RESPONSE TO THE PHARISEES AND TEACHERS**

### **[Mk 7:6-8]**

6 *And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:*

*'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.*

7 *'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'*

8 *Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."*

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### **[Mk 7:9-13]**

***Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."***

9 *He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death'; 11 but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),' 12 you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; 13 thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition*

*which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."*

There is some overlap I've included here so that we can get the full picture of what God is saying to these Pharisees and Scribes. Under the "Oral Law" a Jewish person was able to avoid providing for their elderly parents by going to the Synagogue and "dedicating" their finances to the work of the Synagogue. So they could make a small monthly payment - but declare the total as belonging to the Synagogue - so that they did not have to spend any of it on their elderly parents needs. The feeling when one reads about this is that this method of avoiding help to parents was something that the rich and the Jewish leadership worked on together to make "Law."

Jesus makes His answer to the Pharisees and Scribes very biblical and very clear, "You invalidate the Word of God by your tradition." Oh, how important this concept is! We need to be cognizant of this principle in all the things we do, especially as we sit in a congregational meeting of the church and develop rules for each other in the body. We need to be exceedingly careful that we do not put burdens upon the body of Christ that are not purely Biblical. No matter how strongly we feel personally about certain ethics, actions, traditions - many that come about from our collective pasts - that our system of self government does not violate the clear teaching of the Scriptures. So much harm is done when these Biblical parameters are not carefully followed. Much of the anger we see against Christ and Christianity in the world today comes from the miss appropriation of our authority in replacing God's authority in our thoughts and actions.

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## THE HEART OF MAN (some time has passed)

### [Mk 7:14-17]

*14 After He called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. 16 **[If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.]** 17 When he had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable.*

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## EXPLAIN THE PARABLE TO US

### [Mt 15:15-17]

*15 Peter said to Him, "Explain the parable to us." 16 Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also? 17 Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? **[Mk 7:19b]** (Thus He declared all foods clean.)*

This last statement would have been a revelation to His audience. Jewish food rules were intense. Layer upon layer of rules were added to God's Word in order to make God's people holier than He desired – again, a form of idolatry. God's original food rules were given to the Israelites for their wilderness wanderings – often the forbidden meats were those which would spoil in the wilderness heat and bring on unwanted sickness during their journey. Later, post resurrection, Peter would have a vision, a revelation, brought by God indicating that all of the old food laws were no longer applicable (Acts 10:9-16).

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**THE LIST**

**[Mt 18-20] 18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 For out of the heart come**

*evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.*

*20 These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."*

Jesus is very clear with His disciples. Simply put, evil, foulness, hate, discrimination (and all the things in Jesus' list) COME FROM INSIDE YOU! You are a fallen, broken, individual. Your every thought is based upon what you want, what you need, what satisfies you. The only cure comes first from repentance (a turning around), faith in Jesus Christ, the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and a close continuing relationship with our Holy God. We will still be broken people, but we are forgiven, but only because of what Jesus has done for us.

**[Mk 7:16] 16 [If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.]**

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**QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS**

- 1. Take a look at the opening graphic image - which creature do you most identify with - before Christ came into your life, and which creatures still linger in your life?**
  
  - 2. After getting to this lesson, #23 in the series, why do you think so much of Jesus' ministry took place in the North of Israel - the Galilee area?**
  
  - 3. What was the major point of the Pharisees and scribes that came to Jesus concerning His disciple's unwashed hands?**
  
  - 4. How did Jesus handle the Pharisees and Scribes accusations?**
  
  - 5. What is the point of Jesus telling His disciples that "everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?"**
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## QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

**1. Take a look at the opening graphic image - which creature do you most identify with - before Christ came into your life, and which creatures still linger in your life?** When I look into the image and consider my non-Christ past, I think I see myself in the "all seeing eye." I was born with intelligence and most of my friends loved sports. I was clumsy and found games dull and boring - therefore, I was not asked to play sports, or at least always chosen last - if at all. So I worked on manipulating others. After I was saved I began to see myself for who I really was. I try now to please others with skills I've learned, but most of all I try hard to use my gifts for studying and teaching the Word of God. So many changes!

**2. After getting to this lesson, #23 in the series, why do you think so much of Jesus' ministry took place in the North of Israel - the Galilee area?**

Jesus was on a planned mission. The Father had given Him three years as a fully grown adult to accomplish the full plan. Judah was full of Jews who closely followed the Oral Law traditions. It was also the home of the capital city, Jerusalem - where the religious leadership lived and worked. The Temple was the central point of contact for the Judean Jews. It would be there that the most confrontational leaders would be. So, Jesus spent most of His teaching time in the North where a more "Word of the Lord" atmosphere dwelled amidst the people. His methods there were to avoid major confrontations with the Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, and other Jewish leadership. He had those three years to acquire the needed following to establish His Church following His death and resurrection. You may remember Him telling His disciples in their ministries to go into a community, preach the Gospel of the grace of God - and if it was not received... shake the dust from off their feet and move on. His plan worked out perfectly!

### **3. What was the major point of the Pharisees and scribes that came to Jesus concerning His disciple's unwashed hands?**

Their point was that Jesus, and His disciples, did not conform to the "Oral Law" that had been developed by the Jewish leadership. A careful study of those "laws" leads to a conclusion that the leadership was very much concerned with "controlling" the public. Mostly for financial reasons. We find this kind of manipulation of God's word in many areas of "Christendom" religions. Make the people afraid of violating all the little laws and you have them under your control. Keep your eyes open for cults and others who manufacture rules in order to control their members - for their own purposes. (Jim Jones, etc.).

### **4. How did Jesus handle the Pharisees and Scribes accusations?**

Jesus uses the Word of the Lord to combat their errors. His choice of Isaiah 29:13 ff. We should remember that when Jesus quotes the Old Testament prophets, we should go back and see the context and the chapter around His quote. Quite often there's a message that is much larger than the moment in the quote. It's interesting to me that within the context of this chapter of Isaiah, much of the Lord's words concern asking a illiterate to read the words of a vision written in a book. The illiterate will just reply... "I cannot read."

*"This people honors Me with their lips,*

*But their heart is far away from Me.*

*But in vain do they worship Me,*

*Teaching as doctrines... the precepts of men.*

*Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."*

**5. What is the point of Jesus telling His disciples that "everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?"**

The very next sentence answers the question. "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man." Without the control of the heart by the Spirit of God - that which comes from within will always just be wicked, and will bring defilement without remedy.

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**A Note about the "Heart of The Sinner" images used in this lesson:**

This booklet originated in France in 1732, was revised and rewritten for the mission fields of Africa by Rev. J. R. Gschwend in 1929, and has subsequently been translated and printed under copyright in over 250 indigenous languages by All Nations Gospel Publishers who are distributing it today in 127 mission countries. People of all languages, classes and religions are being led by this booklet to experience the deep spiritual truth and significance of God's message to mankind as expressed by the prophet Ezekiel 586 years before Christ, "I will give you an new heart and a new mind ... then you will be my people, and I will be your God!" Ezekiel 36:2628.

The booklet, in English, is a free PDF and available at:

[http://www.angp.org/fileadmin/angp/sites/pdf/HB\\_english.pdf](http://www.angp.org/fileadmin/angp/sites/pdf/HB_english.pdf)

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Jeremiah 18:15

"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"

2023-09-27 updated

<sup>1</sup> ***"The Heart Of The Sinner,"*** Image #1

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<sup>1</sup> Boice, James Montgomery, ***"The Parables of Jesus,"*** Moody Publishers, Chicago, 1983

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