TRADITION AND THE HEART

I. Introduction-Traditions. Good or Bad?

A. Tradition in church history—a good thing

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you”. (I Corinthians 11:1,2)

“So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter”. (II Thessalonians 2:5)

“Tradition is also a helpful way of passing on the teaching of earlier generations so that each new generation is not required to reinvent the proverbial wheel of doctrinal truth”. (Michael Wilkins)

B. When traditions become a problem: when they take preference, or even equally share the spotlight with what God has said to us directly.

1. The Pharisees.

2. “tradition of the elders”. (paradosis) Attempts of the religious scholars and leaders over the past decades and centuries to explain exactly what was meant by the Torah laws.

3. Hand washing and the law.

4. Jesus’ response: doesn’t deny the charge

   a. “Corban”. (Korban, Qorban). “Dedicated to God”

   b. But what does Scripture say?

   c. Jesus quotes from Isaiah.

5. Teaching the crowd: the main point.
6. The Pharisees “offended”- skandalizo

7. Explaining the parable-heart issue!
   a. Pharisees are like the weeds
   b. Pharisees are like blind guides-not only do they not get it themselves, they are leading others into sin.

8. Peter: so what does it mean? Again, it’s a heart issue!

   The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

C. So how do we avoid these sins? Questions to ask ourselves.

1. Is the tradition I am following in conflict with any aspect of Scripture?

2. Is the tradition harmful to the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

3. What is going on inside my heart? (Brutal self-examination)

II. Vv. 21-28 Encounter with The Canaanite woman.

A. “Canaanite woman”
   1. Mark calls her “Syro-Phoenician”
   2. “Lord, Son of David”.
   3. Jesus’ response
      a. Silence. Why?
      b. “Lost sheep of Israel.”
      c. Children, dogs.
      d. “You have great faith”.


III. Vv 29-35: Feeding the 4000

A. Probably different from the feeding of 5000 in chapter 14.
   1. Mark tells us that he went to the region of the Decapolis—may still be in a Gentile region.
   2. Jesus’ concern still seems to be for the welfare of the people—is he here healing mostly Gentiles?
   3. They praised “the God of Israel”—Gentiles?
   4. The word for the “basketfuls” picked up after the feeding miracle used here is different from the previously one and is a Greek rather than Jewish term.

B. So do we have here a repeat of the feeding of the 5000 but done specifically for a largely Gentile audience?

IV. Conclusions

A. As the Messiah, Jesus didn’t denigrate tradition. He follows what seems to be God’s traditional plan of salvation to first bring the Gospel to Israel. But He is more concerned in the long run with the whole of the plan of salvation. He has compassion on Gentiles which we see running throughout the Gospel.

B. While Jesus didn’t denigrate tradition, he understands following God’s commands as a matter of the heart. He sees people from the inside out and wants us to examine ourselves from the inside out.

“Pharisees frequently determined morality by extrapolating from tradition. By demanding that we extrapolate morality instead from biblical principles, Jesus takes ethics out of the domain of the academy and courtroom and places it in the daily lives of his followers.” (Craig Keener)

C. If we elevate tradition, ritual and rules above the witness of God in the words of Scripture we run the risk of hypocrisy.

“How much church attendance and Christian activity preoccupy believers today with things they assume please God yet without ever really ministering materially or spiritually to the desperately needy people of our world?...Christians today ought to ponder on the implications of [verses] 17-20. Many churchgoers continue to attend services and faithful, even while indulging, without repentance, in sexual sin on the side or even while mistreating fellow Christians with unkind or abusive speech. Such people remain defiled in God’s eyes rather than those who violate rules of human origin about how Christians should act. Sadly, the latter are often precisely those who are condemned by their more legalistic brother and sisters in Christ.” (Craig Blomberg)
Application questions

1. What traditions do you and your family hold dear? Do they build and strengthen your faith? Or do they ever become more important than what God wants from you?

2. Do you elevate traditions and rules above what God says in His Word? How would you know if you did?

Bibliography


