

Jesus Confronts Legalism Pt 1

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[0 : 0 0] All right, we're in Mark chapter 7, and so if you've got a Bible, open up to Mark chapter 7. And we've just gone through in Mark chapter 6, Jesus walking on water, Him feeding the 5,000, healing more people. He's becoming quite popular, and as His popularity grows with the masses, there has been more attention to His ministry from the Jewish leaders.

And so what we're going to read about today is a little bit of a conflict or criticism that Jesus receives, Jesus and His disciples receive, from some of the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem.

This is the center of Christian life, or not Christian life, the center of Jewish life in Israel comes from Jerusalem. Some of the things that we're going to look at are traditions.

The traditions of the Jews. The topic of legalism. A little bit on the topic of water baptism, it just kind of comes in a little bit on the sly, actually. If you read through this, you'd think, well, how does water baptism fit into all this? And then, really, the last thing is the authority of Scripture. I think we're going to end up doing this in a couple of parts, so we'll do this, we'll talk through this section, both this week, this morning, and then next week as well.

But I'm going to go ahead and read, we're going to read, let's see, through verse 13. So, Mark chapter one, or excuse me, chapter seven, verse one through 13, we're going to read, and then just talk through it verse by verse here. Again, Mark chapter seven, verse one, then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to him, having come from Jerusalem. Now, when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.

[2 : 1 1] When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? He answered and said to them, well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites? As it is written, this people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do. He said to them, all too well you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, honor your father and your mother, and he who curses his father or mother, let him be put to death. But you say, if a man says to his father or mother, whatever profits you might have received from me is korban, that is a gift to God, then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition, which you have handed down. And many such things you do.

So we'll stop there. We won't necessarily get through all these passages today, as I mentioned. We'll have a part two next week. But starting back here in verse one, it says, then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to him, having come from Jerusalem. A lot of times you will see scribes and Pharisees mentioned together. These were leaders in Israel.

The Pharisees, a particular sect of leaders that were separate from a different group called the Sadducees. The Pharisees were what we would consider today the more conservative group. They took the Bible more literally than the Sadducees did in many ways. But these were the religious leaders.

Notice that these weren't just religious leaders from the surrounding area, which we found that Jesus, most of his ministry by this point had been in Galilee. But these are some folks that came from Jerusalem, from the big city, from really the center of Jewish religious life. This is actually the second time in the book of Mark, anyway, that we hear about a delegation of Pharisees coming from Jerusalem. Back in Mark chapter 3, we read this in Mark 3.22, and the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, he has Beelzebub. And by the ruler of demons, he casts out demons. They came to hear about this guy Jesus. And when they see him, they said, well, this guy, he's just a demoniac. He's just filled with devils. That's what's going on here. And so we find that both times, when they come to see what's going on with Jesus, they find fault. They find something wrong, something to accuse him of.

[5 : 32] And you know, as the leaders of Israel, the religious leaders, the Bible teachers, the ones who are supposed to make sure that the law is kept as it should, according to the law of Moses, they were responsible for making sure that there weren't false teachers coming in, right, and leading the people astray. And there were plenty of false teachers at that time and in previous times. And so really, that was their duty. That was their job to do that. This was an outsider. Jesus was an outsider.

He didn't come up from the ranks of the Pharisees or the religious leaders, right? So he was some unknown character who came from some small town in Nazareth. Who is this guy? You know, he's claiming to be somebody special. Even the Messiah, people are saying, let's go check him out. But notice their approach as we read this. Is there, are they coming with an open mind? Not at all. We don't see that at all. Their approach is not from the right heart. Yet they of all people, right, these are the teachers of the law. Those who study the Old Testament scriptures. Them of all people should know that they need to be keeping their eye out for the one that Moses spoke of. Moses, who said to all the people of Israel, he said, there's one coming after me. You have to listen to him. Don't miss him.

And of course, even beyond that, the prophets of the Old Testament had spoken for generations about the Messiah who would come, the deliverer who would come. And they were supposed to be looking for the Messiah. And ostensibly they were. But really with their eyes, instead of being wide open, with their eyes shut. Because all signs were pointing to Jesus as being who he said he was.

All the things that were happening were signs that he was the Messiah. Signs that he was even more than the Messiah that the scriptures spoke of. But they had made up their minds beforehand.

And they did everything that they could. We see this throughout the whole story in the Gospels. They do everything they can to undermine his ministry. To try to get the people to turn from Jesus and to destroy his ministry. In verse 2 it says, Now when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. So they noticed some of his disciples eating bread. Now, that doesn't mean necessarily eating bread. It just means they were eating some kind of food. That's just a common way in the scriptures where it talks about eating a meal. You eat bread. In fact, in some places, I actually lived in Asia for a few years. And in many places in Asia, many countries, you call a meal rice.

[8 : 54] Or you say it's time to eat. You say it's time to eat rice. It's rice time. And so we reference a staple food. Bread is a staple. Rice is a staple as for all food. And so they saw some of his disciples eating bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands. Now notice here he says with defiled hands, but then he explains himself. Well, what I mean is their hands were unwashed. And that gives us a little bit of a clue to the author and the audience that he's trying to reach. I think we talked about this when we did an overview of the Gospel of Mark. And that Mark, and most people believe that this is John Mark, who we read about later, especially in the book of Acts, who wrote this Gospel, really geared this Gospel toward Gentiles, not towards Jewish people. You read the Gospel of Matthew, and Matthew seems much more focused on a Jewish audience. Where Mark, many kind of believe or see from how he writes, that it seems to be geared more towards a Gentile audience, people who might be unfamiliar with Jewish customs or traditions. So he's explaining that these Pharisees and scribes saw that the disciples were eating with defiled hands. If you just said defiled, well, what in the world does that mean?

And so he explains it. Well, it means with unwashed hands. So they found fault. And so this reference to unwashed hands is not just talking about a health concern, right? Have you ever seen somebody and they're like doing something, you know, messing with something really gross. Their hands are in the dirt. And then they go and they grab a sandwich and just stick it in your mouth and just like, oh, that's, that wasn't the concern going on here, right? That, oh, your disciples are kind of being icky. This had to do with a concern about a ceremony that we'll actually read about here in the next few verses. So verse 3, for the Pharisees and all the Jews did not eat unless they washed their hands in a special way. Not just in any way, but in a special way. Holding the tradition of the elders.

When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.

So notice here, here's a full explanation of what the Jews do. And so you can see, this is, this is somebody who's writing to possibly a Jewish audience, but also a non-Jewish audience. He wants to make sure it's clear to those who, that they understand the context that they may not be aware of. So it speaks here of the tradition of the elders. And what does that mean? Elders in the nation of Israel were leaders. Those who were in charge in some, in some kind of way. We shouldn't think though that necessarily, in fact, I think from the way that this is described, especially in verse 4, that this isn't something that was just from the current day's leaders. Because he says, for the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat. So it's everybody, not just the leaders, but all the people. And it mentions in verse 4, and there are many things which they have received and hold.

They have received and hold. This is something that was received from past generations. And so the Pharisees, they received this tradition from elders from the past. And really what we see when you study the history of the Jews is, over time, lots of traditions were piled up. They were gathered over time. We have different writings, which we call today the, we have the written law of Moses, which was actually the scripture and recognized as scripture. But then you have what are called the oral traditions, which were eventually written down. But in the beginning were just passed along orally through word of mouth. So there's a book called the Talmud, which has a listing of oral traditions from rabbis from the past. And even to this day, Jews hold these as somewhat authoritative, not with the same authority as the scripture. At least it's not supposed to be. Many times we see it actually, many times reversed. And that's actually what Jesus is getting at here. And so there are, this specific ceremonial washing is actually something that you will see even to this day among the Jews. Those who practice or are serious about their faith, we would call them Orthodox Jews or sometimes ultra-Orthodox

[14 : 08] Jews. They will have a ceremonial washing of their hands before they eat, before every meal. Notice how it says, in a special way. This isn't just washing your hands, cleaning up like we would do.

But this is a special ritual, a special ceremony. It's done in a special way. And some people have tried to describe what it might have looked like. And I don't know that anybody knows for sure.

But I saw some people say, well, you would dip your hands in water and then you would kind of rubbed them in a certain way. So we're not, I don't think anyone knows for sure. But it was in a special way that this was done. He also mentions that there were other traditions, not just washing the hands, but ceremonial washings regarding other things. He mentions the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and even couches. So we'll talk about those here just briefly. So when that word for cups is actually a word that just means any kind of earthen vessel or clay vessel, anything made out of clay. It might be a cup or a pot or a jar of some kind. So they would, quote, wash those. A pitcher would be something that you use to actually measure things with. So that's, when we think about a pitcher, we think about, you know, pouring out water for a group of people or something like that. But in this case, the term is for something you would use for cooking or baking. And then copper vessels are something a little bit more permanent, but you might use them for all kinds of different things.

But it's made out of metal, out of copper instead of clay. One thing I'd like to point out here before we talk about couches is couches is the other thing. And I guess we'll talk about it here briefly.

But we think about a couch as a piece of wood furniture wrapped in, you know, some kind of fabric, right, that we sit on. And usually it's nice and soft. So they didn't have those back during this time. At least, you know, maybe very wealthy people had wooden furniture like that. But most people did not. And so couches is really more of like what we would think today is like a futon, a thick mat that you would lay on typically for meals. And so you'll notice that a lot of this has to do with food, right? And we'll find out as Jesus talks more about this that it does, has to do with food. And so when you're eating, they would actually lay food out on the floor, probably on some kind of mat. And then the people would sit around, not on chairs like we typically do today. In fact, this is more like you see in Asia, where people will sit on the floor. You might have a little bit of a raised table, but not, you know, not more than a few inches off the floor. And then people would lay down, they would recline on more like mats or futons. And so when it refers to couches here, that's what the scriptures are talking about. So one of the things I mentioned when we talked about what the content of this passage has in it is that there's a reference to baptism. And it's like, well, where's baptism come?

[17:30] I don't see any reference to baptism. Baptism is, water baptism is a controversial subject in Christianity. And there are about as many views on water baptism as there are denominations within Christianity. But the word baptism is so controversial that in the Bible, there's a word, a Greek word called, that you pronounce somewhat like baptizo, baptizo. Well, wow, that sounds exactly like baptism.

And it sounds almost exactly like the Greek because it's what we call a transliteration. When you're translating a text from one language to another, sometimes you'll find a word that just does not have a corresponding word in that language that you're translating to. So sometimes it's necessary to just create a new word in the language, like English, that's just based on the word that you're translating from. That's called a transliteration. Now with the word baptizo, there actually are lots of words that we can use that mean the same thing. One of the primary words that we use for baptizo is washing or wash. But because of all the controversy around this ceremony, this ritual of water baptism, translators have chosen in many, many cases to instead of translating baptizo as wash, they translate it baptism. We're going to avoid the controversy. And what is the controversy? The big controversy is, well, what is this ceremony, this rite, this ritual of baptism? Is it pouring water on something? Is it sprinkling water? Is it rubbing, you know, a washcloth on somebody washing like that? Or is it dipping, full submerging under the water? And so Christians argue about this to no end. And we'll have big fights and denominational splits, and some people will not allow you in their church if you have a difference in opinion on this subject matter. But here we find that this word, and you wouldn't know that it's the same word as baptism, would you? Unless you actually look at a commentary or maybe read the original Greek, which most of us don't do. I don't do. But it's the same word.

It's baptism. And so he's saying, hey, listen, there's this tradition where the Jews will baptize their hands, and they'll baptize their cups, and they'll baptize their pitchers, and they'll baptize their couches.

And so, well, what does this actually look like? And so many have debated about whether, well, they're taking all these things, and they're submerging them underwater. And we actually don't really know exactly what these ceremonies look like. Maybe they sprinkled them, maybe they did submerge them underwater. But one of the things I think we can be fairly certain of is that when it came to these big mats, these futons, they didn't dunk them under the water, right? And so this kind of puts a little bit of a hole in the argument that some have to say, the only way that you can actually do this ceremony of water baptism is by full submersion underwater. But I think these kind of arguments are a little bit silly, and especially in light of what Jesus is talking about here, because he's getting really upset about these Jewish people who are putting so much weight into ceremony and ritual and neglecting the more important things. So where did this tradition even come from? Because he's going to make the point, this didn't come from the Bible and even the Jews themselves, the Pharisees who were saying, hey, this is the tradition of the elders. They didn't say, well, hey, your disciples aren't washing their hands according to the law of Moses. They didn't say that because, well, Moses didn't say that this was a command from the Lord. So where did a tradition like this come from? Did people just make it up out of thin air? Well, I see this as one of these common tendencies among the Jews, and even though we're focusing on the Jews and some of the things that they do, we're going to be talking about Christians as well here in a few minutes, and things that we do in a similar manner.

But there's this concept of creating a law or a regulation around God's law, a way to protect people from breaking God's law by adding another rule, another regulation that will kind of encompass or surround that law from God. And so there were laws in the Old Testament, you'll find them in Leviticus chapters 11 through 15, laws about the clean and unclean, clean animals and unclean animals, what you're allowed to eat, touching of things like dead bodies or certain types of animals or other types of things. There's a whole laundry list of unclean and clean things, and especially regarding touching things that are clean or unclean. And for many of them, if you did this, if you touched an unclean thing, the law required that you would baptize, that you would wash, that you would go through a water purification ritual. It didn't have to be big, but you had to do this ritual washing.

[23 : 27] And then you remained unclean until the end of the day, until evening. And so there were things that you were not allowed to do because you were unclean, but you had to go through this water purification ritual, and then you would be unclean until evening. And so the way that I see it is that this water ritual that was created, not from the scriptures, but was a tradition of the elders, probably came down because the Jews were concerned, well, if we just do this water ritual before every meal, then we'll make sure that we're clean, we're not ritually defiled, no matter what happened. And you'll notice that he mentions that when people come from the marketplace, and remember the Jews are living at the time among Gentiles as well. And these Gentiles are offering things, a lot of times offered to idols, or, you know, maybe the Gentiles are not thinking about clean and unclean like the Jews are.

And so you can imagine the justification is, well, there's risks involved. There might be some unclean thing going on, and we're touching it, so let's just, we'll make it a rule, a regulation, that every time a Jew eats a meal, they have to go through this water purification ritual. And you can think, well, hey, that sounds like a pretty good idea, right? I mean, if we just do these extra things, we'll make sure that we never accidentally break God's law. We actually see this throughout a lot of the Jewish law, even today. There is a law in the law of Moses that gives a restriction for how you punish criminals. One of the ways that punish, criminals would be punished under the law of Moses is by lashing. We call that corporal punishment. You know, we have corporal punishment within families, right? Parents will spank their kids. Well, under the law of Moses, adults would receive spankings, or lashings, or the rod beatings.

Now, in America, we don't do anything as horrible as that. I mean, we would never punish a guilty criminal with something so severe. We just let criminals run wild and let them cause violence on everybody else, on the innocent, because we're so compassionate to the guilty. I think a lot of things would change if criminals who committed acts of violence had to suffer under 40 lashes from a whip or the beating of rods. But there was a law that said in the law of Moses that you don't give more than 40 lashes, and that was to protect people. You know, this is corporal punishment, not capital punishment, right? And so we're not putting somebody to death here, so there needs to be some kind of limit on how you punish someone. Well, in the Talmud, the Talmud says the limit is 39 lashes.

Well, why would that be? I mean, we already have the law of Moses. It says 40. Why would you have 39 in the Talmud? Well, here's the justification. What if you miscount, right? What if you don't get the count right? And so if you just do 39, then you'll be safe. Another one is all these kosher laws, and if you're familiar with Jewish law, if you go to Israel, it's really hard to find a cheeseburger, right? And why is that? Well, you're not allowed under kosher laws to have dairy and meat mixed together in any kind of way. And if you look throughout the scripture trying to find a law about mixing dairy and meat, you're going to have a hard time because it's just not really in there.

But there is one law, and that's the law where this whole thing stems from. There's a law, which seems bizarre to most of us, that says it's forbidden to boil a kid goat, a kid, a goat, in his mother's milk. It's like, well, what in the world is that all about? And we won't get into. There are some ideas on kind of why that is. And for many of these laws, they're ceremonial.

[27 : 55] They're not meant to be moral laws about right or wrong, but really ceremonies that point to something in the future, many times point to Christ. But because of that one law that says you don't boil a kid in his mother's milk, there are all kinds of vast rules about how you can eat food, and you can't have meat and dairy mixed together at all. You can't even have meat and dairy produced in the same facility. You have to, there are rules about when you're making meat, if you have a butcher shop, you got to keep dairy far, far away.

And what's the justification? Well, if we just never eat meat and dairy together, if we never have meat and dairy in the same cooking facility, well, you'll never boil a kid in his mother's milk, right? And so it's this concept of adding laws around laws. And some people might think, oh, that's a good thing. But Jesus certainly did not. We'll go on to verse 5 here.

Then the Pharisees and the scribes, they asked him, why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? Why, Jesus? Everybody else does?

How come you and your disciples don't follow these tradition of the elders? And you know, Jesus could have followed tradition. In fact, we see examples in the Bible where Jesus does follow other traditions.

Do you know that there is a reference, there's a holiday that's common in, among the Jews today. It's called Hanukkah. And Hanukkah, if you go back to your Old Testament and try to find the details of Hanukkah, you won't find anything. Hanukkah's not in the Old Testament. It's a tradition, it's a holiday that is outside of the scriptures. But did you know that there's a reference to Jesus going to celebrate Hanukkah? Even though it's not something that was commanded by Moses, not something in the Old Testament. So Jesus was not completely against traditions, but he was against this one, or these in particular.

[30 : 26] But he could have just gone along, right? I mean, it would have made his life a little bit easier. When you have religious leaders, people who are kind of in charge, and it's not like it's inherently immoral to just wash your hands or your cups or whatever it is, sprinkle your futon or your couch as part of a ritual every time you eat. It's not really that big of a deal.

But we find out that Jesus thought it was actually a really big deal. He could have reduced the tension and the conflict and the friction between him and the Jewish leaders just by going along.

But I think we see here an example of where righteous defiance to regulations that are not moral, that are not right, even if they're not inherently like evil in and of themselves, is appropriate at times.

And I think we can see the same thing. I'll just make one short application to the primary religion that we have in this country. We think, well, what's the primary religion we have here?

I think we have mostly Christians, right? I mean, there's more Christians than there are Jews or Muslims or Buddhists or anything else. But Christianity is not the primary religion we have here. Here in America, the primary religion we have is a religion where we worship the state, where we worship the state and whatever they say.

[31 : 58] We call it socialism, things like that. And so I think this became very clear during this whole pandemic thing that happened.

And well, if you want to be virtuous, if you want to be a virtuous person, a good citizen, then you're not going to go visit your family on Thanksgiving this year.

Because what good people do is they stay home. The same thing with the whole wearing of masks thing. And that became quite a controversy.

And, you know, it seemed, especially in the beginning, well, you know, people are looking out for our welfare. But as time went on, it became more clear that this was just a power grab.

And so there were people, and thank God for many people, who said, you know what? We're not going to do this. There was a guy, what's his name?

[33 : 00] Dreher, I think, Rod Dreher, who wrote a book called Live Not By Lies. He wrote this during the past few years. Anybody read that book, Live Not By Lies? And he gets the title from, I can't remember, somebody in Russia who was writing to Russians during the time of communism.

And all the Russians kept being given all these things that they were told they needed to give assent to, to believe. All these lies.

And, you know, in and of themselves, each one little lie didn't seem like that big of a deal. Okay, well, if I just go along with the lie, then it'll make my life a little bit easier.

Right? If I just go along with this one little lie, and then it's another little lie, and then the lies get bigger, and the next thing you know, your whole life is a lie.

And so, Jesus is showing us here that, and Jesus told his disciples and the people that you need to listen to the Pharisees.

[34 : 15] He told them that in another place. In fact, I think we might even have a reference to it later on. You need to listen to the Pharisees. But he said, do what they do when it comes, or do what they say when it comes to the law of Moses, but don't do what they do because they're hypocrites.

You know, when they tell you what's in the law of Moses, make sure you do it. It's important. But here we see an example. If they tell you to do something that's not in the Bible, hey, listen, you don't need to do that.

Jesus and his disciples were not doing it. Verse 6, he answered and said to them, well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites? As it is written, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

And in vain they worship me, teaching his doctrines the commandments of men. He says, Isaiah did prophesy. And so he's talking, there's actually a verse. Isaiah 29, verse 13 is what he's referencing.

Where Isaiah is speaking not to the Pharisees, not to a future generation. Isaiah is speaking to his generation, to the people at his time. And so why does Jesus say, well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites?

[35 : 28] Well, it's because when we read the Bible, even though it's written specifically to another person, can it apply to us? Certainly it can. As we say in our day, if the shoe fits, wear it, right?

If something applies to us, we need to take note. And so not in a direct way did he prophesy of you Pharisees in this generation, but he, Isaiah was speaking to anyone who would act hypocritically.

teaching as doctrines, teaching as doctrines. They're teaching, they're saying, there is authority in what we are telling you. And in doing so, they undermine the actual authority.

And so Jesus, over and over again, establishes that there is authority in the scriptures, in the word of God. There's not authority in traditions, whether it be elders, elders, or any other group.

And it's not like any of this was new. Like the Pharisees wouldn't have known about this kind of hypocrisy from ages past.

[36 : 43] In Isaiah chapter 1, the very first chapter of Isaiah, the prophet is criticizing the Jewish people for keeping the ceremonies but acting wickedly.

He says this, bring no more futile sacrifices, incense, it's an abomination to me. The new moons, the Sabbaths, he's talking about holy days, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.

You're just mixing your sin in with all these ceremonies. That's not, that's not anything I want. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates. I hate your ceremonies.

They are trouble to me. I am weary of bearing them. When you burn your incense to me, which I commanded you to do, I hate it. It makes me weary smelling that incense.

In other places, he talks of smelling the incense as a sweet aroma, but not when your hearts are full of sin. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you.

[37 : 47] Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Violence. Then he says this, wash yourselves, make yourselves clean.

Is he talking about a ceremony there? No. It's clear. There's no ceremony involved. Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good.

Seek justice. Rebuke the oppressor. Defend the fatherless. Plead for the widow. These are the things that God is looking for above anything else.

And not just in the New Testament. You know, we think of as New Testament Christians. Oh yeah, all those ceremonies are done away with. But even back during the time when it was important to God that they keep these ceremonies and these rituals, even then, he wanted them to know that justice and good, doing good, was of utmost importance, way beyond any of these ceremonies.

In verse 80, he says, for laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washing of pitchers and cups and many other such things you do.

[39 : 03] He's saying, you lay aside God's command and you add in all these extra rules, these extra rituals, these extra ceremonies.

It's not that these Pharisees had laid aside all of God's commands. In fact, they seemed to enjoy a lot of the ceremonies that were commanded in the book of Moses.

But they did lay aside the ones that were inconvenient. He talks later and we'll talk next week about this specific one regarding children obeying your parents or honoring your parents and what was going on there.

But the moral commands, God's commands to do good, to be just, to live uprightly, those are the more important commands.

But for those who are religious, ceremonies are so much easier to do. And plus, more people can see that you're doing them.

[40 : 09] In Matthew chapter 23, it's this big chapter where Jesus just goes after the religious Pharisees and scribes.

Some people call it the chapter of woes. Jesus says, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. But this is what he says in verse 4 of chapter 23. For they bind heavy burdens hard to bear and they lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

others. And so, they like to add, just add more rules, more regulations. Because for me, hey, I'm a full-time religious person.

It's easy for me to do those things. It's part of my job. And so, I can look more righteous than other people because I have the time to do all these religious rituals that others, it's more of a burden for them to do.

And so, is this something that just happens among the Jews? We have, obviously, over the last 2,000 years, multitudes of ceremonies and rituals that have been added to the Christian church that have caused nothing but harm.

[41 : 26] But what about for the evangelical church, right? Because we could, I could criticize the Catholic church all day long on things. But, I don't know how helpful that would be in this audience. So, the thing that I think of is the burdens that are put on in the evangelical world related to guilt trips.

Because we would never add all these extra ceremonies and things, right? I mean, we're above that. But how about when it comes to guilt trips around money?

And, well, are you given enough? Giving people guilt trips for enjoying the fruits of their labor? Maybe somebody went on a nice vacation and, well, would a good Christian do something like that?

Or maybe somebody bought a house for their family in the nicer part of town and, well, don't you know what else could have been done with that money?

When a family or a father maybe is just trying to provide a safe place in a dangerous world for their family. And, you know, some people, they choose to live in the inner city where there's more violence and crime and things like that.

[42 : 50] but they do it because they have a heart for the city. And, that's the ministry that they want. But, that's not everybody.

And, if, I've seen churches where they basically guilt trip the whole church into, you know, making their homes in a certain part of town, maybe in the inner city, because that's where God needs everybody.

And, you know what happens? People, they're guilted into it and they do it and they're just miserable their whole Christian life because that's not what God necessarily called them to. They end up just becoming miserable and then ineffective in their ministry anyway.

When it comes to spiritual disciplines, there's a book that I read years ago that messed up my whole Christian life, Why Revival Terries by Leonard Ravenhill. And, he talked about all, that Christians, he made it sound like Christians needed to pray at least two hours a day and you need to memorize all this scripture and you need to, I've heard from many churches, you need to be at church every Sunday.

And, not just Sunday morning, but you need to go to the evening service Sunday night, plus the prayer meeting on Tuesdays, and the midweek service on Wednesday nights and make sure you don't skip out on Sunday school, if you want to be a really good Christian.

[44 : 17] And, these are all good things, right? These aren't rituals, these aren't ceremonies, these are good things that are good to do. But, we find that these are things that are heavy burdens that are put on others that God does not put on everyone.

And so, even, I think, pastors do this out of maybe a good heart, but they should know better not to put burdens that are heavy to bear on others.

There is an allure of ceremony and ritual that we've seen over the last 2,000 years. It's a problem in the Christian church just like it was with Israel. And so, we need to be careful.

We need to be careful not to allow ceremony, rituals, to overtake our Christian life. I'll read one more scripture and then we're gonna, I'll go ahead and have the elders come up because we're gonna transition here into actually a ceremony that Jesus gave us to do.

There are many ceremonies in Christendom, but there is this one that Jesus called us to do and we'll talk about that in a second. And so, yeah, if the elders come up, while I finish this up, Matthew chapter 23, again, that same chapter, he says, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites, for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law.

[45 : 49] Doing right, doing righteousness is the weightier part of the law, not the ceremonies, but doing the matters of justice. And he calls them blind guides who strain out gnats and swallow camels.

Paul later speaks in Colossians 2 and he says, and he's talking about all these ceremonies that the Jews are trying to put on the Christians, do not touch, Colossians 2, 21, do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using according to the commandments and doctrines of men.

He says, these things indeed have an appearance of wisdom and self-imposed religion, false humility and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

these ceremonies don't really help you to live righteously. In fact, most of them are for just the Old Testament to point to Christ, the one who was to come.

So let's keep this message in mind as we transition here into taking the Lord's Supper together. So I'm going to have, we're going to pass these elements out. And so, as we pass this out, I'll give these to you guys.

[47 : 07] Just a little bit of instruction. Yeah, each of you take one, one of each. Yeah.

So, first, as we do this, if you've never been here before, just a little bit of instruction, we're passing out both the bread and the juice. That's juice, by the way, and not wine, if anybody's wondering.

We're going to all take it together. So as we pass this out, just hold on to it. We're going to read through the Scripture where Jesus tells us to remember him and what he did for us, but we'll all do that together.

So just hold on to it. Some people might have a question about your children. Really, we leave that up to you if you want your kids to take that. We have our kids take it with us.

And really, this is something for any believer in Christ. You don't have to be a member of our church to remember the Lord. You just have to be a member, you're supposed to be a member of the body of Christ, somebody who's trusting in Christ and his death, burial, and resurrection for you.

[48 : 14] And what is the purpose of this? Again, this is a ritual and a ceremony. And in the church for thousands of years, and it makes my blood boil, even just talking about it, that people have turned this, which is a time of remembrance, into a religious ritual that is supposed to add something to our Christian life.

Some people call it a sacrament. And they'll say, oh, well, you need to do this every week. It's a sacrament. It's a means of grace. It's a way in which we receive the grace of God.

And that's a lie from the pit of hell. It's not a means of grace. The only means of grace is Jesus' death for our sins and our trust in what he did.

That's how we receive the grace of God. This is just a time to remember what he did. And some people say, well, it's an ordinance. It's a law. It's a regulation.

Well, that's not true either. In fact, we'll read a verse here in a second about that. It's a reminder that we do together to remember the Lord and what he accomplished for us.

[49 : 32] And when we do this together, it reminds us to remember not just today, but tomorrow too. And the next day. And the day after that. To remember what he accomplished for us.

This is also not a time which I've seen over and over again to heap guilt on Christians to think about our sins.

That's not what Jesus wanted us to do with this remembrance. He didn't say, do this in remembrance of your sins. Though, that's easy to do, right? Some of us, we have sins that are all too memorable.

Whether it was something 30 years ago or something just last night. But that's not what this time is for. It's a time to celebrate that our guilt and our condemnation has been taken away.

That our guilt is no more because of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. And I know that there will be believers, people who are trusting in Christ, in this room that don't quite believe that all of your sins have been done away with.

[50 : 54] it's hard sometimes. I'm going to read this and then we'll take this together. I guess we'll read a couple more passages.

But in Colossians 2.8 it says this, Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ.

For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in him. complete. Who is the head of all principalities.

And I'm going to skip down. And you being dead in the trespasses and uncircumcision of your flesh, he is made alive together with him, having forgiven all trespasses. Not most.

Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. All that handwriting requirements, taken out of the way, nailed to the cross.

[51 : 57] It's gone. There's nothing that stands against us. What's this talk about? The handwriting requirements, the law that condemns us.

It's taken out of the way. And so we are complete in him. This time of remembrance does not complete us. There's nothing to complete. We're completely forgiven.

We're completely sanctified. We're completely adopted as his children. We're not partially adopted. We're completely adopted. We're made alive completely, not partially.

We're completely his. We belong to him. And there is nothing that can take us out of his hand. nothing. Because of what he accomplished for us on that cross.

And so, let's read the scripture. I'll grab some here. We'll take this together.

[53 : 02] I'm going to read from 1 Corinthians chapter 11. And Paul says this about the night in which Jesus gave up his life. For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread.

And when he had given thanks, he broke it and he said, take eat, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Let's do this together.

do this in the same manner.

He also took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes. Let's drink. Amen.

[54 : 12] Isn't he so good to us? Absolutely incredible. Well, to finish up, we do have that offering we want to take.

we're going to take this offering, but as we do that, I'd like us to sing.

What's that song that we sang at the beginning there? How he loves you and me. If you don't know the words, you can open up your hymnal, but I think most of us know.

I think I know it. If I don't, I'm going to be in trouble. Should we be in the paper clip? Okay. Yeah.

All right, let's finish out with this as we take up this offering. Here we go. Oh, how he loves you and me.

[55 : 17] Oh, how he loves you and me. He gave his life. What more could he give?

Oh, how he loves you. Oh, how he loves me. Oh, how he loves you and me.

Hey, man, let's do it one more time. I'm going to bring it down a notch. Oh, how he loves you and me. I don't think I did it, did I?

All right, somebody help me out. Oh, how he... I'm not very good at this, am I? Oh, how he loves you and me.

He gave his life. What more could he give? Oh, how he loves you.

[56 : 24] Oh, how he loves me. Oh, how he loves you and me. Amen.

Are you glad that he loves you? Amen. I am, too. All right. Thanks, everybody. Don't forget to remember him tomorrow as well and tell him how much you love him. Thank you.