

Mark 7:1-23

1. 7:1-23 – Jesus’ apparent ongoing confrontation with the Pharisees from Jerusalem while he is in Galilee has no connection with what occurred in chapter 6. But, Jesus’ next ministry location among the Gentiles may be a result of this constant rejection.
 - a. Jesus again enters Galilee in Mark 8:10-13 -
“And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha. The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation.” And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.”
 - b. Jesus returns to Capernaum after Caesarea Philippi in Mark 9:33-34 –
“And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you discussing on the way?” But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.
2. The idea that Mark is writing in Rome to Gentiles (Roman Christians) is supported by the constant editorial notes (in parenthesis in chapter 7) since a Jewish audience would not need the necessary explanations.
 - a. 7:2 – Need to define “unclean hands”
 - b. 7:3-4 – Jewish custom of washing hands is explained
 - c. 7:19 – doctrinal clarification that “**Jesus declared all foods clean**” should end all debate concerning ceremonial cleansings and kosher foods for followers of Jesus.
3. The purpose of this section is:
 - a. ONE – clarify that Jesus and the Pharisees have no common ground concerning the oral traditions of the Jews and rabbinic Judaism. Mark nullifies the need for the oral traditions of rabbinic Judaism with this encounter.
 - b. TWO – clarify for the readers the difference between Christian and Jewish understanding of:
 - i. Clean and unclean
 - ii. Ceremonial and Reality
 - iii. Morality
 - iv. Foods
 - v. Living a life that is pleasing to God
4. Two supporting portions of Scripture:
 - a. Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10
 - b. Romans 14:14 – The words of Paul, a former Pharisee! -
“I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.” – READ Romans 14:1-23
5. The conflict with the Pharisees is two-leveled:
 - a. **One**, the symptom – “uncleanness” – rituals and washing rooted in the teaching of the Pharisees.
 - i. Exodus 30:19; 40:13; Lev. 22:1-6 – the priests were required to wash before entering the tabernacle
 - ii. Lev. 15 – bodily discharge

- iii. Pharisees had a large list of things that required cleansing or washing (sometimes hands, but often full immersion) based not on the Torah (Scripture), but on the oral traditions (eventually written in the Mishnah). Contact with any of these:
human excretion, women after childbirth, corpses creeping things, idols, lepers, Samaritans, Gentiles and more
 - 1. Jesus or the disciples had needed cleansing after these events, but seemed to ignore the standard:
 - a. 1:40 – lepers
 - b. 2:13 – tax collectors
 - c. 5:1 – Gentiles
 - d. 5:25 – menstruating women
 - e. 5:35 – corpses
- iv. The Qumran community became extreme in their washings and full body immersions.
- v. Homes of wealthy Jews had mikvahs or ritual baths to use
- vi. This cleansing was not a matter of hygiene. It was a ritual or cultic practice
- vii. The Mishnah (first written document with the oral traditions of the elders) even declared the Aramaic sections of Daniel and Ezra left the hands of anyone who touched them unclean
- b. **Two**, the source – “traditions of the elders” mentioned in 7:3,5,8,9,13
 - i. This was only a Pharisee problem, not a Sadducees issue since the Sadducees only accepted the first five books as authoritative.
 - ii. The “oral traditions” developed after the close of the Old Testament
 - iii. The “oral traditions” were developed to serve as a fence around the actual Torah, or Word of God, to protect it.
 - iv. Following the “traditions of the elders” or the “oral traditions” (which would eventually be written down as the Mishnah after the 70 AD fall of Jerusalem) became as important as the Scripture itself
 - v. Often, the Mishnah was in conflict with the Scripture, as here in Mark 7
 - vi. The Mishnah intended to express the intent of the Law and help find application in everyday life.

Mark 7:1 – “Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem,

- 1. Pharisees had come from Jerusalem to engage Jesus.
 - a. 90 miles from Jerusalem to Capernaum
 - b. Scribes have been heard from before
 - c. This is most likely an ongoing conversation/debate/attack while in Galilee
 - d. Jesus departure to Gentile lands after this episode may be because of this constant conflict

7:2 – “they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed.

7:3 – “(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders,

3588 [e]	1063 [e]	5330 [e]	2532 [e]	3956 [e]	3588 [e]	2453 [e]	1437 [e]	3361 [e]	4435 [e]	3538 [e]
Hoi	gar	Pharisaioi	kai	pantes	hoi	loudaioi	ean	mē	pygmē	nipsōntai
3 Οἱ	γὰρ	Φαρισαῖοι	καὶ	πάντες	οἱ	Ἰουδαῖοι	, ἐὰν	μὴ	πυγμαῖ	νίψωνται
-	For	the Pharisees	and	all	the	Jews	if	not	carefully	they wash
Art-NMP	Conj	N-NMP	Conj	Adj-NMP	Art-NMP	Adj-NMP	Conj	Adv	N-DFS "the fist"	V-ASM-3P
3588 [e]	5495 [e]	3756 [e]	2068 [e]	2902 [e]	3588 [e]	3862 [e]	3588 [e]	4245 [e]		
tas	cheiras	ouk	esthiousin	kratountes	tēn	paradosin	tōn	presbyterōn		
τὰς	χεῖρας	, οὐκ	ἐσθίουσιν	, κρατοῦντες	τὴν	παράδοσιν	τῶν	πρεσβυτέρων	;	
the	hands	not	eat	holding	the	tradition	of the	elders		
Art-AFP	N-AFP	Adv	V-PIA-3P	V-PPA-NMP	Art-AFS	N-AFS	Art-GMP	Adj-GMP		

7:4 – “and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.)

1. Eating with unclean hands was just an example of the “many other traditions that they observe”. Others were:
 - a. Washing cups, pots and copper vessels
 - b. Washing dining couches

7:5 – “And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?”

1. Jesus had not instructed his disciples to follow the “tradition of the elders”, but he did instruct his disciples to follow the teaching of the Word of God.

7:6-7 – “And he 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;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”*

1. Sarcasm by Jesus
2. Isaiah 29:13 – read Isaiah 29:9-21
3. “Hypocrite” is a reference to an actor on Greek stage that wore a mask.
 - a. First, meaning it was not the true face. Here Jesus indicates they are not the true face of the Word of God
 - b. Eventually meaning a false cover or pretender

7:8 – “You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

863 [e]	3588 [e]	1785 [e]	3588 [e]	2316 [e]	2902 [e]	3588 [e]	3862 [e]	3588 [e]	444 [e]	909 [e]
Aphentes	tēn	entolēn	tou	Theou	krateite	tēn	paradosin	tōn	anthrōpōn	baptismous
8 Ἀφέντες	τὴν	ἐντολὴν	τοῦ	Θεοῦ	, κρατεῖτε	τὴν	παράδοσιν	τῶν	ἀνθρώπων	. ἡ βαπτισμοῦς
Having neglected	the	commandment	-	of God	you hold	to the	tradition	-	of men	the washings
V-APA-NMP "send away" "leave alone"	Art-AFS	N-AFS	Art-GMS	N-GMS	V-PIA-2P	Art-AFS	N-AFS	Art-GMP	N-GMP	N-AMP
3582 [e]	2532 [e]	4221 [e]	2532 [e]	243 [e]	3946 [e]	5108 [e]	4183 [e]	4160 [e]		
xestōn	kai	potērion	kai	alla	paromoia	toiauta	polla	poieite		
ἔστω	καὶ	ποτηρίων	καὶ	ἄλλα	παρόμοια	τοιαῦτα	πολλὰ	ποιεῖτε		
of vessels	and	cups	and	other	like [things]	such	much	you do		
N-GMP	Conj	N-GNP	Conj	Adj-ANP	Adj-ANP	DPro-ANP	Adj-NNP	V-PIA-2P		

7:9 – “And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!”

1. In order to fulfill their traditions or “the teaching of the elders” the Jews would have to reject the clear teaching of the Word of God
2. “Teaching of the elders” or “traditions of the elders” is mentioned in:
 - a. 7:3
 - b. 7:5
 - c. 7:8
 - d. 7:9
 - e. 7:13
3. Here Jesus refers to the “traditions of the elders” in an accusing tone as “your traditions” and places them in contrast with “the commandment of God”.
4. Jesus makes this issue “your traditions” vs “the Word of God”
5. The conflict between the Pharisees vs Jesus was actually the battle of Man vs. God.

7:10 – “For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’

7:11 – “But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God) —

7:12 – “then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother,

7:13 – “thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

7:14 – “And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand:

1. “Hear me” or “listen” (proskaleomai) is used 9x in Mark to begin a solemn pronouncement.



7:15 – **“There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.”**

1. Jesus does two things here:

a. One, he reverses the order of defilement from coming from the outside to the inside as the Pharisees were doing with unclean hands and food. Defilement comes from inside the man and is manifest on the outside.

b. Two, Jesus also assumes and applies the Rabbinic concept that in is the interior places of a vessel that were the most easily defiled and in the most need of being cleansed. Jesus takes this principle the rabbis applied to vessels and applies it to the man after having reversed directions of the defilement process.



Mikvah, or ritual bath, in Jerusalem along the south wall

(7:16 – *Some manuscripts add verse* – “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”)

7:17 – **“And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable.**

7:18 – **“And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him,**

7:19 – **“since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)**

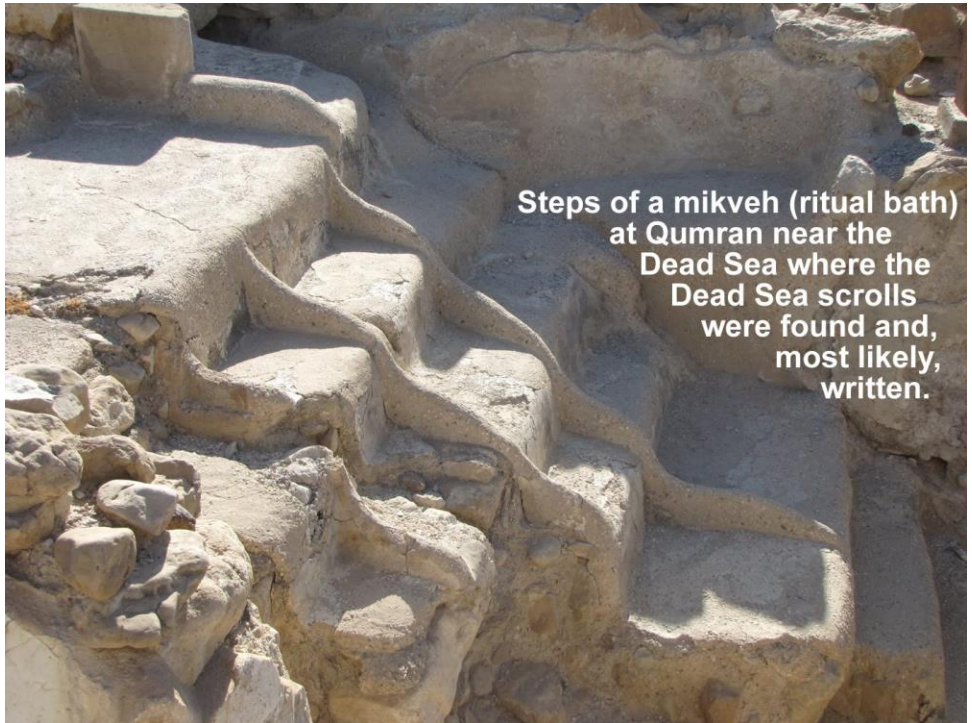
7:20 – **“And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him.**

7:21 – “For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,

7:22 – “coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

7:23 – “All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

1. 7:1-23 is the longest recorded conflict in Mark. The main points are:
 - a. Uncleanness is within people.
They do not need unclean hands, vessels and food to make them unclean.
 - b. The Word of God teaches God’s ways, God’s salvation and God’s morality, but the teaching of the elders distracts from and even prevents the presentation of God’s ways, salvation and morality.
2. If Mark was written to Roman believers in 64 or 65 AD then it was written a mere 7-8 years after Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in 57 AD which included Romans 14-15



Steps of a mikveh (ritual bath) at Qumran near the Dead Sea where the Dead Sea scrolls were found and, most likely, written.

Mark 7:24-8:13 – Jesus leaves Galilee and goes to:

1. Tyre and Sidon region
2. Went through Sidon
3. To region of Decapolis

It appears Jesus was seeking privacy among the Gentiles for some of these reasons:

1. Avoid the ongoing conflict with the Pharisees who constantly wanted to debate and argue
2. Herod Antipas was aware and concerned with Jesus even thinking Jesus was now John the Baptist haunting him.
3. The Jews had rejected Jesus as the bread of life, so Jesus goes to the Gentiles with a similar presentation minus the teaching. (15 x Mark refers to Jesus teaching in Galilee; zero times teaching the Gentiles although Jesus cast out demons, healed and multiplied bread for Gentiles.)

Reason for the Gentile ministry:

1. Since there is no unclean food, there is no unclean people.
2. The message of the Gospel was for all mankind. The disciples would eventually have to go to the Gentile nations with the message of salvation.

When Jesus returns to Galilee in 8:11 the Pharisees came and began to argue with him.