

**Sermon outline notes: Mark Chapter 7 vv 1-23;
The Alternative to Change**

Introduction

The Pharisees and some teachers of the law come to Jesus. They challenge Jesus as to why his disciples are not following the 'tradition of the elders'. This tradition of the elders was made up of the oral development and interpretation of the Old Testament law which had evolved and had been handed down over several centuries. It was called Halakah and was a mass of material. The implied charge to Jesus was either 'Was he ignorant of the tradition of the elders' or was there a more sinister heretical reason for the lack of obedience to the tradition of the elders.

In reply Jesus expresses and expands two enormously important general principles :-

1) 'Divine authority resides not in human tradition but in inspired scripture'.

- The Pharisees and teachers of the law held the traditions in too much reverence. In practice it was put on par with scripture.
- In some cases the traditions were being allowed to override scripture. Jesus quotes 'Corban' as an example of this.
- Corban—you could put your money in a specially designed account dedicated to God. That money could not be touched even if your parents needed financial help. In Jesus' view this was clearly against the fifth commandment.
- The tradition of the elders was man made and therefore by definition optional. This tradition cannot be made obligatory. Tradition and scripture are not to be placed in the same category.

2) 'Divine acceptance lies not in external rituals but in heart renewal'

- When man made traditions enter our thinking about relationship with a holy God, almost always the result is that the 'contamination', the dirtiness, the unworthiness we feel is externalised in some way.

- Jesus states that the root of evil in this world does not lie in external factors which enter us, but the root lies within individual human hearts. (v 2)
- Ritual cleansing can never be more than a symbolic picture of man's real need. What we need is a new heart. (see Psalm 51v 10; Ezekiel 36 v 26; John3 v 7).

Points To Ponder

- 1) Share first reactions to the sermon. Were there any points made which you disagreed. Why? Did any particular point speak powerfully to you. Why?
- 2) Is there anything in your 'religious life' comparable to the tradition of the elders (ie rules and regulations not from scripture but from your tradition and culture)
- 3) Chapter 7 Verses 20-23 represents an evil heart, whereas chapter 12 v 30-31 represents a pure whole heart. How can you strengthen this second kind of heart? What do you do when the evil heart wins out?
- 4) "Reformation is a never ceasing necessity within the church. The Church must always be ready to change, to examine her traditions in the light of scripture. The only alternative to change in the Church is tradition and tradition never saved anybody!"

How far would you agree with this statement?