



Chapter 15: Clean and Unclean

Traditions of Men or Laws of God? (15:1-9)

The Pharisees added their own traditions to God's laws. They insisted that hand washing had to be done according to a ritual tradition. *"For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, holding to the tradition of the elders"* (Mark 7:3).

However the Pharisees were hypocrites and constantly looked for ways to escape personally from laws they did not like, even though they told other people to keep them.

One example of this is found in the law that God gave to Moses about honouring our father and mother (read Exodus 20:12). The Pharisees' tradition allowed them to escape looking after their parents by pretending to dedicate their wealth and money to God and so escaping their duty to them. However, the priests in the Temple then allowed them to have the use of the money they had offered to God so their lives were just the same. This was called 'Corban'. This practice, and others like it, were completely against the spirit of God's teaching.

Jesus (verses 8-9) again quotes the prophet Isaiah. The Scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites. *"And the Lord said: 'Because this people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,'"* (Isaiah 29:13).

Jesus showed the scribes and Pharisees that this behaviour came from minds that God considered unclean and this was much worse than the dirty hands of the disciples.

Evil Thoughts (15:10-20)

Words which express the godless thoughts that are inside a person's mind defile a person (show he is evil). Some people wrongly believe that such thinking comes from a devil or satan, but the Lord Jesus made it clear that we are responsible for our own wicked thoughts.

"But what comes out of the mouth proceeds **from the heart**, and this defiles a person. For **out of the heart come evil thoughts**, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander." (Matt. 15:18-19)

This is what we are told in James 1:13-15:

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. **But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.** Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

The Bible consistently teaches us that we cannot blame anyone or anything else for our own evil thoughts! We need to be aware that our own wrong thinking is not pleasing to God, and we should try to improve.

The Canaanite Woman's Daughter (15:21-28)

Jesus and his disciples went to Tyre and Sidon. Jews in the time of Jesus would not normally visit these places as they are not in the land of Israel and belonged to Gentiles (non-Jews) called Canaanites. In Old Testament times Canaanite wicked influence spread into Israel when King Ahab married Jezebel from Sidon who was a worshipper of the Canaanite God, Baal. (1 Kings 16:30, 31).

Mark 7:24 suggests that Jesus went to this area to escape the crowds:

"And from there he (*Jesus*) arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden."

Perhaps he wanted time to teach quietly the twelve disciples.

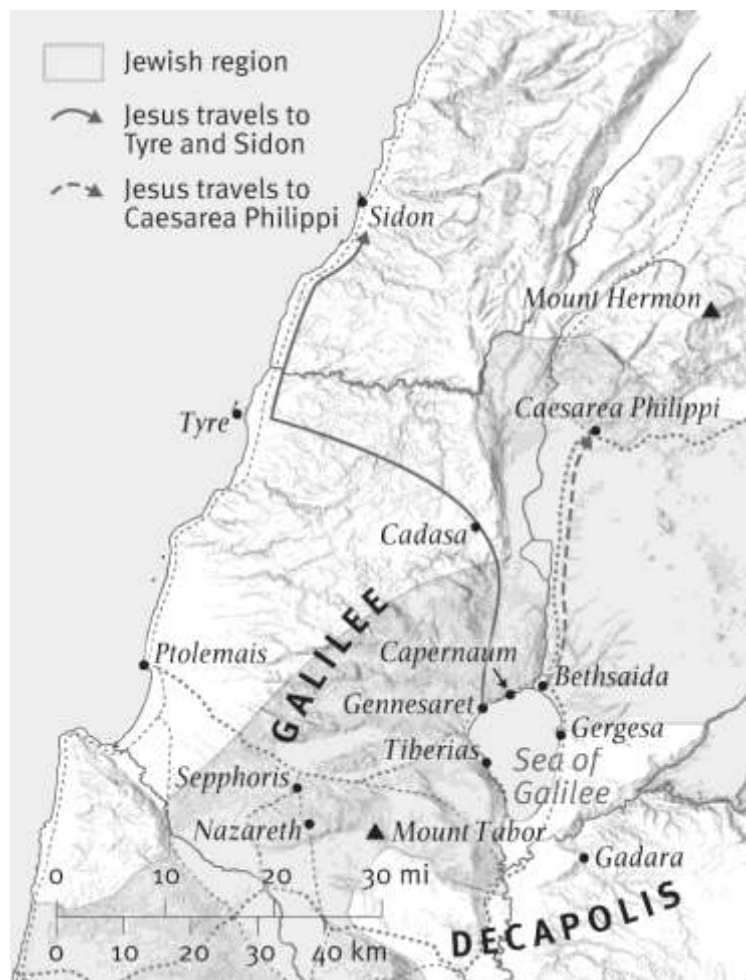
But Jesus did not help the woman at first; he waited so that she could show her faith. She knew that she was a Gentile and that Jesus had come to preach to the 'lost sheep of Israel'. Jesus tested her faith when he told her of his mission, *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* (verse 24). Jesus tested her faith further, when he said, *"It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."*





There was a time when a defeated Canaanite king ate discarded scraps of food under the table of the victorious leaders of the tribes of Judah and Simeon (read Judges 1:3-7). The Canaanitish women knew of this incident and replied *"Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."* (verse 27). She believed that Jesus was the "Son of David" spoken of by the prophets. She threw herself on the mercy of the Lord. 'Do you have any scraps left for me, a Gentile' is what she meant. Jesus recognised her great faith and her sick daughter was healed immediately.

Once again Jesus teaches us that it is faith that really matters and that he came to save faithful people from every nation.



The Feeding of the Four Thousand (15:29-39)

Jesus moved south to the Sea of Galilee, probably to the Gentile side. The people who saw the miraculous healing of the dumb, the crippled, the lame and the blind were in no doubt that it was the work of the God of Israel. Notice that Jesus did not take the glory for himself.

Jesus had compassion on this Gentile crowd of people that he had probably never met before. He was concerned that they had not eaten for three days, yet he himself had fasted for forty days in preparation for his great work. This shows that Jesus really cared about people. He cared so much that throughout his whole life he resisted the temptation to sin in order to be the perfect sacrifice to save us.

The miracle of the feeding of the four thousand is like the feeding of the five thousand in chapter 14. On both occasions the number given just refers to the number of men – there were also women and children that were fed.

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand had taken place near Bethsaida (read

Luke 9:10-17.). The multitudes of people fed there were mainly Jews.

However, when this multitude witnessed the healing powers of Jesus they *"glorified the God of Israel"*. This suggests that they were probably Gentiles. We are not told the location where Jesus fed the four thousand, simply that Jesus showed great compassion on the people and fed them.

So we have seen how Jesus fed both Jew and Gentile, caring for all those who came to him.

"Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

Name	
Address	
Reference Number	
Tutor	

Answers to most questions can be found in the lessons or Bible passages given. Please write your answers on this question paper and return them in the envelope provided:

Questions on Chapter 13

1a Fill in the gaps in the table below about the Parable of the Sower				
	Place 1	Place 2	Place 3	Place 4
Describe each place where the seed fell	Path (the wayside)			
What happened to the seed in each place?		Seed was choked by thorns		
What is the meaning of each part of the parable?			The stony places represent people who start to believe God's truth, but reject it as soon as they are persecuted or in trouble because of it.	

1b What does the seed represent?

In the parable of the wheat and the tares (weeds) in verses 24-30 and 36-43:

- 2a What does the harvest represent?
- 2b What does the burning of the tares mean?
- 3 Which other parable shows that the good and the wicked will be judged at the end of the age?
- 4 What is the main lesson of verses 44-46?

Questions on Chapter 14

- 1 What did Jesus do just before he gave the food to the disciples for the crowd to eat?
- 2 Why do you think we are told that there was a large amount of bread collected up after every one had been fed?
- 3 What lessons for our life can we learn from Jesus walking on the water and calming the storm?
- 4 What did the Twelve say when Jesus calmed the storm?

Questions on Chapter 15

- 1 What command were the Pharisees breaking by their traditions?
- 2 Why did Jesus call the Pharisees hypocrites?
- 2 What practical lessons can we learn from verses 8-9, for our lives?