

## Lesson 16: The Question about Tradition

Objective: To know that it is the "dirty heart" (inside), not the "dirty hand" (outside), that makes us unclean before God.

Background: The opposition to Jesus intensified as He entered the last year of His ministry. The argument over the tradition of "hand washing" had convinced Jesus that He must leave Galilee if He were to teach the Twelve, for the hostile eyes of the Jewish religious leaders followed His movement everywhere. He and the Twelve then withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon (See map) for the first time He entered the Gentile territory, and the Galilean Ministry was now coming to an end.

Instruction: Read Matthew 15: 1-39 first before you study vs. 1-20.

Let's Think: Read Mt 15:1-20 over again as if you were there at the scene.

1. Please review Lesson 9 and explain why the religious leaders, Pharisees and Scribes, were hostile to Jesus and kept Him under surveillance (Mt 15:1).
2. a. What "tradition" were the disciples accused of breaking? (Read also Mk. 7:1-4) Were Jesus and His disciples "conformist"? Explain.  
b. What is "tradition"? Are there religious traditions (or practice) in our churches, which are not based on the Word of God? Explain.
3. a. In reply, what charge did Jesus level against the religious leaders? How did he substantiate His charge? Explain. (vs. 3-6).  
b. Could the same charge be leveled against the churches today? If so, substantiate your answer with examples.
4. a. How did Jesus unmask the hypocritical folly of the religious leaders? (Mt 15: 7-9).  
b. What's the difference among "ritual," "formality," and "true worship"? Discuss. (Read also Jn.4:16-24). How do you characterize your Christian life and worship?
5. a. After exposing the error of the religious leaders, what truth about defilement did Jesus teach the people? How would this knowledge set them free? (Mt 15: 10-14).  
b. Did Jesus consider it important to preserve the "status quo"? Explain. Which is easier, to go along with the crowd or to go against (withstand) it? Which did Jesus seem to choose?
6. a. In explaining the truth, where did Jesus assign the source of moral pollution? (Mt 15:15-20).  
b. Has history, in any way, validated Jesus' analysis? Substantiate your answer.
7. Use Mark 7:20-23 as a "mirror" to look into your heart. Do you like what you see? How about God?

Let's Remember: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9, Old Testament) "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." (Psalms 51 :10, Old Testament).