

## **GOD'S WORD NOT MAN'S**

– *OCTOBER 13.* – MARK 7:1-13. –

**"For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." – Rom. 14:17.**

THE STUDY TODAY shows that the Pharisees of eighteen centuries ago, while professing to keep carefully the Divine Law, and while even boasting of faithfulness in this respect, had gradually gotten away from God's Word and become followers of human tradition. It is so with the Jews today. Although they read the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament it is regarded as a sealed Book which they cannot understand; instead of endeavoring to comprehend it they study and shape the course of their lives by the Talmud. The latter admittedly contains both wise and unwise statements, sound and foolish advice; but according to it the orthodox Jews shape all their religious sentiments.

And surely the same is true of Christians today. The Bible is the recognized Authority and Standard, but each denomination of Christians has its own theory, its own proof-texts, its own catechism. When the Bible is read the gloss or interpretation of the accepted creed is before the mind and veils it. Thus it is that with Bibles in our hands and with reverence in our hearts Christians are divided into six hundred different sects, with very little prospect of coming together, because each one insists upon using his own creedal spectacles in the study of the Bible.

If truly wise would not all Christians cast aside and destroy these creed spectacles which have so long separated us, given false coloring to various passages of God's Word and confused our minds in general? Would it not be following Heavenly counsel and Heavenly wisdom to take a different course and to begin a study of the Word of God afresh in the light which shines from one page upon another? We surely will

all agree to this theoretically; shall we not put our agreement and resolution into practice?

## **EATING WITH UNWASHED HANDS**

The Pharisees would have liked nothing better than to have had so very able a person as Jesus to be one of their number – to conform to their usages and thus to mark them with His approval. They could not fail to note the lofty character of His teachings along the lines of Justice, Mercy and Love. They could have forgiven Him for some of the truths which He uttered and made them wince, if only He had enforced their formalism. As it was, He really suited nobody. To the impure He was too pure; to those of loud, hypocritical profession He was too sincere; to the worldly-wise He was too frank, too truthful.

In this lesson the Pharisees inquired why the followers of Jesus were not instructed along the lines of the Talmud – to be very careful to always wash their hands before eating, as a religious duty. We may be sure that Jesus set His followers no example of filthiness or impurity. Indeed, we know that in proportion as truth enters the heart it has a cleansing and purifying effect upon the entire life, upon the whole person – mental, moral and physical. What the Pharisees meant was a ceremonial washing, whether the hands were clean or unclean – to make a formal washing a part of their religion. This was what Jesus objected to. He could not so teach because it would have been ceremonial hypocrisy. As He said on another occasion, These customs of the Pharisees, of wonderful washings of their persons and of the vessels in a perfunctory and ceremonial way, consumed much of their time and were burdensome upon the poor, who had no servants to do these things for them, and not doing them were considered unclean, unholy, out of accord with the Divine arrangements, not true Jews.

Answering the Pharisees on these points, Jesus said to them, You are the holy people mentioned by Isaiah the Prophet saying, "This people seeketh Me with their **[R5096 : page 283]** lips, but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do ye worship Me, teaching for doctrines

the commandments of men," for ye leave the commandments of God and hold fast the traditions of men.

Jesus gave them an example of how they neglected the Divine commandments while giving so much attention to ceremonial washings, which were commanded, not of God, but of the Talmud. The illustration was that the Mosaic Law commanded that father and mother should be honored and that he that spoke evil of either of them should be put to death. But this command had been changed by the Talmud and any man might be free from his parents by consecrating himself and substance to God and religious uses. Having done so, according to the Talmud, he was freed from all obligations to his parents. Thus they had made God's direct commandment on this subject null and void, which they had no right to do.

This was the conflict between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of the Pharisees. Both claimed holiness and strict observance of the Divine Law, but Jesus held to the Word of God and rejected the Talmud, the traditions of the Elders, and the Pharisees neglected the **[R5097 : page 283]** Word of God and held to the traditions. What are we as Christians doing today? "Let us hold fast the faithful Word," "The Word of God, which is able to make us wise." Let us search the Scriptures daily and critically, and let us abandon everything which conflicts therewith.

## **WHAT IS GOD'S KINGDOM?**

Our text is frequently misunderstood to mean that God's Kingdom consists in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The context shows that this is entirely a wrong thought. Let us follow the context and see.

Let us bear in mind what we have already seen respecting the Kingdom mentioned in the Bible – that it is the glorious reign of Messiah for a thousand years, for the uplift of the human family, and that during that reign the Church will be associated with Jesus in His

Kingdom glory, power and honor. The call of this Gospel Age is to select this Bride class and to develop them and make them "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

We have seen that in the present time these called out ones – called to be the "Bride, the Lamb's Wife" – are the Kingdom in embryo or in an undeveloped state. These probationary members of the Kingdom, the Scriptures tell us, are not under the Law of Moses, expressed in the Ten Commandments; they are not hoping for eternal life through them, but they are under Grace – under a gracious arrangement which God has made for them through the merit of Christ's death. St. Paul points out that while these are free from the various commands of the Jewish Law they are not without Law, but under the great Divine Law, as members of the Body of Christ. He says that thus we, as New Creatures, do fulfil the real meaning of the Divine Law when we "walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit," even though we be not able to walk fully up to the spirit of the Law because of weaknesses of our flesh. It is the New Creature, the desire, that is being judged and not the flesh.

Accordingly the Gentiles who came into membership in the Body of Christ were not required to conform themselves to the demands of the Jewish Law. For instance, a Jew, according to the Law, might not eat fish that had no scales, mackerel, etc., neither might he eat rabbit meat, nor pork, etc., and in a variety of other ways he was restrained and limited in his eating and drinking. But none of these restraints apply to Christians who had come from amongst the Gentiles and who never had been under the Law Covenant.

In our text St. Paul urges that these liberties respecting what they might eat and drink were not to be esteemed as the real blessings of this embryo Kingdom class in the present life. Far from it; the real blessings of this class consisted in their enjoyment of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Transformed by the renewing of their minds, they had come to appreciate and love righteousness and truth; good

things rather than evil things; pure things rather than impure things; spiritual things rather than earthly things; their citizenship now was in Heaven instead of being an earthly one. They had come to appreciate "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," and its rule in their hearts was one of the grand blessings which they enjoyed as members of the embryo Kingdom class.

"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." "The wicked are like a troubled sea which cannot rest." Our heavenly peace and confidence in God are the result of our union with Christ as members of His Kingdom class. This we prize and not specially the privilege of eating pork or some other thing forbidden to the Jews. Joy in the Holy Spirit – fellowship with the Father and with the Son and with all who possess the spirit of righteousness – is the blessed privilege of every member of the embryo Kingdom class, every member of "the Church which is the Body of Christ."

Thus the Apostle would have his hearers place a proper valuation upon the various favors which they had received, so that if the interests of the Lord's cause or the interests of the brethren in Christ should ever require them to forego their liberties in respect to food and drink, they would count such self-denials for Christ's sake and for the brethren's sake as nothing – as sacrifices they could make with joy, because they would not interfere with or disturb in the least the real value of the blessings and privileges which are ours in Christ.

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### **"A CUP OF COLD WATER"**

"The Lord of the Harvest walked forth one day,  
Where the fields were white with the ripening wheat,  
Where those He had sent in the early morn  
Were reaping the grain in the noonday heat.  
He had chosen a place for every one,

And bidden them work till the day was done.

"Apart from the others, with troubled voice,  
Spake one who had gathered no golden grain:  
'The Master hath given no work to me,  
And my coming hither hath been in vain;  
The reapers with gladness and song will come,  
But no sheaves will be mine in the harvest home.'

"He heard the complaint, and He called her name:  
'Dear child, why standest thou idle here?  
Go fill the cup from the hillside stream,  
And bring it to those who are toiling near;  
I will bless thy labor, and it shall be  
Kept in remembrance as done for Me.'

"'Twas a little service, but grateful hearts  
Thanked God for the water so cold and clear;  
And some who were fainting with thirst and heat,  
Went forth with new strength to the work so dear;  
And many a weary soul looked up,  
Revived and cheered by the little cup."

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