

Amazing Rebuke

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- [0 : 0 0] He can't have fed 5,000. How would the disciples ask that question? But if they've just experienced a miracle of feeding 5,000 and they don't understand how Jesus did it, they're well able to ask that question again.
- How can you do this in the desert? But the how is not important. It's the why. Again, the emphasis in verse 8 is that they're filled. They've eaten their fill.
- It's not because they're not hungry that there's leftovers. There are 4,000 people, we're told, in verse 9. Less than the first miracle true, but more probably a mixed population.
- And here we see another foretaste of heaven, don't we? Here we see another glimpse of God's perfection. Not just the miraculous feeding, not just that God feeds us and spiritually and physically nourishes us, but that here we have all sorts of people, Jew and Gentile, being fed together by God, fed together by Jesus.
- It's a glimpse of that heavenly banquet that one day all of God's people will enjoy. People of every tribe and tongue and nation. And many, many more than 4,000, indeed a multitude that nobody could number, gathered around and cleaned by Jesus' blood.
- [1 : 3 3] Wearing white robes is how it's described at the end of the Bible. Here is a foretaste of that. People, in a sense, cleaned because they've come to Jesus, eating together with him, not being made unclean by what goes into them, but in a sense cleaned by Jesus, cleaning their hearts.
- Just a glimpse, in a sense, here. How he does that? His cross is how that happens later on. All of this directs us again to the praise of Jesus, that he is of universal significance, that there is no person on this universe in any age in this universe who cannot be a beneficiary of the cleansing power of God, who cannot enter the kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ.
- See, too often, I think, our praise of him is half-hearted. We almost take him for granted. We're so familiar with the stories, they just sort of run off us like water off a duck's back.
- At the end of chapter 7, those people declared with sincerity, he has done everything well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.
- To what extent in our lives on earth are we getting ready for the heavenly praise of Jesus? To what extent are our hearts filled with the good things that God has done?
- [3 : 0 6] Is it indeed only three people tonight who can say something that God has been doing and give thanks to him? I hope not. I hope it's our shyness or bashfulness that prevented us coming up to the front tonight to say with praise what God has done.
- Because heaven will be filled with our praise of God and Jesus for what they've done for us. And here on earth, we're to start preparing for that.
- After this I looked and there was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.
- And they cried out in a loud voice saying, salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb.

Praise him. But he'd be saying in effect, you're a pretender. You're putting on a show.

[4 : 15] That is, it's as though you're an actor in a stage play where what we see is just a veneer, a facade. That's really what he's accusing them of, from which we end up with hypocrites.

People who, in a sense, say one thing but actually do another. People who keep up the facade of appearances, the snobbish Hyacinth bouquets, but actually inside it's very different.

Jesus is accusing these religious, keen religious, pious people of being Hyacinth bouquet Jews of his day.

But this critique of them is something that is quite appropriate, a posit really, for us as well. There are keen, sharp warnings here that face each one of us.

Because Hyacinth bouquet Christians are found all over the place. People who put on the veneer, the facade of Christian piety, Christian devotion, Christian zeal and enthusiasm, Christian uprightness, people who make a show of their devotion, people who put on the outside of moral rectitude, people perhaps who are very quick to speak down or against those who fail morally or whatever it is.

[5 : 38] People who are quick to enforce various rules and regulations for their piety and their devotion. And yet inside their heart pumps sin into every crevice of their life.

As Jesus rebuked these Hyacinth bouquet Jews, hear the words of rebuke for the Hyacinth bouquet Christians of today.

In Jesus' day, the religious leaders, Pharisees and scribes, as they were called, two different sorts of groups, but allied in some of these things, insisted on all sorts of ritual washings before meals, before certain events, before going to synagogue and various sacrifices and all that sort of stuff.

Not just for hygiene. It's not like mum and dad saying, have you washed your hands? If not, go back to the bathroom, wash your hands before you eat dinner. Not that sort of ritual washing. Not for hygiene purposes.

But rather for just ritual purposes. You would only use so much water. Water was scarce in Israel, in the Middle East, in those days. But there were strict rules in their traditions about how much water.

[6 : 51] Possibly just a fistful or a handful would be used just to wet in effect your hands, maybe up to the wrist. Not really for hygiene. Just for the ritual laws.

And this is a rule that's not in the Old Testament. It's over and above the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, in Exodus, for example, you'll see laws for the priests to have to go through ritual washings.

But in effect, what's happened in the 1400 years from those laws of the Old Testament time of Moses through to Jesus' day is that the tradition has evolved and got stricter and tighter led by these Pharisees and scribes in the years leading up to and in Jesus' day to make in effect these ritual washings that originally applied just to priests to apply to all.

And indeed, that added ritual washings as well, more than what the Old Testament required of earlier times. In fact, these traditions that have arisen in Jesus' day kept on going beyond Jesus' day for another period of time as well.

So that's the background or the situation that is facing Jesus in chapter 7. When the Pharisees and some of the scribes who'd come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of Jesus' disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them.

[8 : 09] Not for hygiene, but the ritual washing. Note that these Pharisees and scribes have come from Jerusalem and Jesus is in Galilee in the north, well out of the way of Jerusalem.

Probably, the implication is, they've come to hear about this Jesus, see for themselves some of the words they've heard on the grapevine way back down in Jerusalem. That is, there's a sense in which they're coming out to spy on him.

Such is his fame already by this stage in Mark's gospel. But as we see from their accusation to Jesus, some of your disciples are eating with defiled hands.

That is, they're not accusing the disciples, they're accusing Jesus about his disciples. So it looks like they've come as opponents. They've come to check him out, to spy him out, to trip him up.

That's the situation. Now Mark, who's writing this gospel, recognises that not every reader would understand those Jewish traditions. He's clearly writing for people who are not Jews by background, Gentiles they would be called.

[9 : 12] Puts in brackets for us in verse 3 and 4, for the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders. And they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it.

And there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups and pots and bronze kettles, for example. That's just describing those laws which are not Old Testament laws but come from what's called here the traditions of the elders.

That expression occurs in verse 3 that I just read. You can see it again in verse 5. Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders?

And then in verse 7, notice how quoting Isaiah, the same thing, they're described as human precepts and doctrines. And then later on in verse 8, the tradition or human tradition and in verse 9 to the Pharisees he says, your tradition.

That is, it's clearly distinguished from Old Testament law. The Old Testament had a body of law, Jews counted them as 613 laws and in addition to that by Jesus' day there are these traditions of the elders, human traditions or your traditions Jesus says to them that they've added to the Old Testament law.

[10 : 37] And by 200 AD or in fact these traditions of the elders had been written down codified into a book or collection of documents which is called the Mishnah still part of some Jewish traditions even today.

One of the reasons that led to these traditions of the elders and their good intentions don't get that wrong. The good intention is to do what they call fencing the law.

You see, if the law says don't do that the traditions of the elders will say, well, to stop us doing that point let's build a fence around it and we won't do anything inside the fence and that'll make sure that we never get to the point that we're not allowed to do.

So don't take the name of the Lord in vain says the Ten Commandments. Let's never use the name of the Lord. That way we'll never use it in vain unwittingly or wittingly.

So Jews even to today will not use the name Yahweh or Jehovah the name of the Lord in the Old Testament because they don't want to take the name of the Lord in vain. They'll call him Lord instead.

[11 : 47] So that's fencing the law. You can see that there's an element of good intention there. It is for proper piety for strict religious devotion but Jesus doesn't have a lot of time for it.

See in verse 5 the Pharisees and the scribes asked Jesus why do your disciples not live according to the traditions of the elders but eat with defiled hands and Jesus responds to them.

He could have a lenient view about these laws. He could say yes that's an added devotion that's not in the Old Testament it's good but you don't have to do it. No he doesn't have that sort of view at all.

His view of the tradition of the elders is actually that it's significantly bad even though it's well intentioned. In verse 6 he says to them that Isaiah the prophet 750 years before Jesus prophesied rightly about you hypocrites pretenders play actors for as it's written this people honors me with their lips but their hearts are far from me in vain do they worship me teaching human precepts as doctrines.

The quotes from Isaiah 29 verse 13 his accusation is that they pay lip service but their hearts are far from God. That's an amazing accusation to make to the religious leadership of his day the people who are keenly pious and devout it's just lip service your hearts are far from God that is their holiness is hollow it's a facade of piety it's just a veneer of devotion they are hyacinth bouquet Jews it is all about appearances and is not about the heart.

[13 : 35] Now we might wonder well wonder why is Jesus so strong in this rebuke and accusation when their desire is to be even more rigorously religious and pious why is Jesus so scathing why are these human traditions added to the law so bad well I think we see two reasons coming out in this passage the first is the issue of authority the human traditions have been set up at least as an equal authority to the laws of the Old Testament from God himself see additional laws may be well intentioned there may be good reason for keeping some of those additional laws but they undermine God's authority in the laws that he gave in the Old Testament see what Jesus goes on to say in verse 8 and 9 you abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition verse 9 he says you have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition you abandon it you reject it you see in one sense you might add a few laws to the

Old Testament or to Christian morality thinking this is a good thing but in the end you abandon the real laws of God is what Jesus is accusing them of now this is a very appropriate lesson for us it seems to me that at least in the Anglican church around the world today we face a crisis of authority what is our theological and moral authority is it the Bible as I believe and we ought to believe or is it as others claim human reason or is it our experience or is it our tradition they're the four authorities that are often paraded in Anglican circles I guess in Roman Catholic circles you might add in the Pope as well or other things and sometimes people say well they're all equal authorities that's the genius of

Anglicanism I've heard people say a lot of hogwash if you might think my thinking that we have these authorities of scripture tradition and reason in particular the three they mention it's philosophical nonsense at least logical nonsense at least you can't have three equal authorities in the end if they're not exactly the same in which case why not just have one authority they will clash there must be one overarching authority and you see if reason is your authority then in the end you cut out anything that looks to you to be unreasonable so the people who say that reason is my authority in the end deny the miracles and deny the power of God deny the resurrection of Jesus and so on if experience is your authority from my observation of some people then you're more likely to end up down the track of immorality actually because I've heard many people say well our experience of sexual immorality of homosexuality of this that or the other is that it seems to be loving and nice it must be alright if tradition is your authority then in the end you keep on perpetuating the errors of the past and they become more and more obsolete and old fashioned that's just one example in the end our authority is God's word to us in the scriptures and that is Jesus argument to these Pharisees not human tradition but God's word and in the end if you add even well intentioned laws to

God's law then you end up with a clash of authority and that's why Jesus rebuke is so scathing and so strong here the Pharisees had set up human laws good things in a sense it had become a firm body of tradition that in a sense they held to as more important than the Old Testament laws themselves they'd ended up with an alternative human authority and Jesus rebukes them for such and he gives now an example not the example of ritual cleansing a completely different example in the next few verses to show his point in a sense there are in the Old Testament some laws about making vows not many but a few you could make a vow offer a sacrifice at the same time a votive offering to be called and you could in a sense devote some of your property or possessions in a sense specially to God by the time of

Jesus day it seems that there's a strongly developed tradition and widespread practice of vows of devoting your possessions or property sometimes to God or to the temple for use but sometimes you just make a vow that would in a sense prohibit the use of those possessions by anyone else and in particular where this was insidious and somewhat evil is where perhaps an adult child fully grown I guess maybe family whatever would make a vow that all their possessions in a sense were devoted maybe specifically to God and the temple but it could be just generally devoted a vow that protects that property and what would happen then is that your elderly parent or parents who were in need of you for financial support because they didn't have pensions in those days or government helping them they didn't have superannuation were deprived of your concern or welfare for them and some people might well make that vow deliberately to stop their parents being supported by them and in a sense therefore they break the command of honouring parents and that's exactly what

[19 : 46] Jesus rebukes in the verses that follow by way of example you see he says in verse 10 for Moses said honour your father and your mother and whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die quoting from the ten commandments in Exodus five and quoting from later on in Exodus as well but you say this is the human traditions that if anyone tells father or mother whatever support you might have had from me is korban that is an offering to God something that's vowed or devoted to God then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother that is you've placed the vow on your property which means that your parents will not be supported by you and you ought even as an adult support your parents thus making void verse 13 says the word of God through your tradition that you've handed on and you do many things like this you see that's one example that shows the human tradition is an alternative authority to

God's word and that the human tradition has taken precedence over God's word and so in the end they actually break one of the ten commandments of all the laws and that's why Jesus rebuke is so strong they've made void God's word you can't add to God's word without actually diminishing it and that's what their mistake is well now he moves back to the issue of ritual cleansing in verse 14 he called the crowd again and said to them listen to me all of you and understand there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile but the things that come out are what defile these additional laws of ritual cleansing and here's perhaps the second mistake have misunderstood the nature of human sin they've undermined God's word true but they also it seems have misunderstood the nature of human sin as though by abundance of rules and regulations by legislation you can somehow make somebody pure and clean to stop them sinning as if somehow by good deeds and rules and laws you can make a person holy that is their whole system of salvation is wrong and empty it's as if cleansing is simply an external matter

Jesus in fact has already demonstrated what he's said he says there's nothing outside of you that you can touch or if your hands get dirty or whatever it is that'll make you unclean it's the heart that's unclean that's what he's really saying Jesus already in Mark's gospel has touched a leper in chapter one he's touched a bleeding woman in chapter five he's touched a corpse in chapter five all of those things would have ruled him ritually unclean in the old testament but Jesus in a sense by being perfection in human form has shown that even touching those things doesn't actually make him unclean on the inside that is this uncleanness this sinfulness is an issue of the heart not an issue of the externals now as so often in this gospel the disciples fail to understand in verse 17 when Jesus had left the crowd and entered the house his disciples asked him about the parable they don't understand what he was on about and he says to them in verse 18 then do you also fail to understand do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile since it enters not the heart but the stomach and goes out into the dunny literally into the lavatory or the latrine or in this translation a little bit more proper into the sewer that is the unclean things that will come into you in effect just pass through you and out uncleanness is located in the heart so it doesn't matter what food you eat and in the old testament there are laws about clean foods and unclean foods what the jews couldn't eat they were very strict laws Jesus saying in the end that doesn't really make you unclean the heart is what matters that's the issue and the end of verse 19 perhaps not Jesus words at this point they're in brackets for us here maybe Mark's comment thus Jesus declared all foods clean prawns pork other fish with scales and so on declared clean here is Jesus overthrowing part of the old testament law you can read about it in Leviticus you can read about it in Deuteronomy 14 it's there in God's law and Jesus is overthrown it so here is Jesus in one sense doing exactly what he accuses the Pharisees are doing making void the word of God the law of God it's an astonishing thing really embedded in this story Jesus has accused the Pharisees of making void the word the law of God for example honoring parents by their human traditions and now Jesus it seems is making void the word or law of God himself by declaring all foods clean isn't Jesus just now a hypocrite himself for doing exactly what the Pharisees were doing well by making all foods clean in one sense we have to jump back to those laws and forward to where they're really overturned later on in the new testament in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 10 but because of who Jesus is and the significance of his death and resurrection and the openness now of the gospel to Gentiles as well as Jews those laws that were to set Jews apart from Gentiles are abrogated by Jesus or own authority as the son of God he exercises an authority in a sense over God's law he fulfills it in himself those laws of unclean and clean foods were obligatory up to Jesus but in the Acts of the Apostles we see so dramatically that because of Jesus death and resurrection those

laws have now been fulfilled and all foods now are clean in a sense that's a side issue here Jesus concludes with a damning assessment of the human heart in the final verses of this passage in verse 20 he said still to the disciples in the house it is what comes out of a person that defiles for it's from within from the human heart that evil intentions come fornication theft murder adultery avarice wickedness deceit licentiousness envy slander pride folly gulp what a list all those things coming out of your heart all these evil things come from within and they defile a person thoughts and actions in that long list that long category of sin all of them clear sins from the old testament all of them things that come from the human heart you don't end up being greedy or lustful or adulterous or foolish or slanderous because of what your hands touch or if you fail to wash them with a bit of water it comes from the heart not from outside no external laws no ritual measures are going to change the human heart and here in a sense is the nub of the matter for the pharisees and the scribes by adding human traditions their whole system of being right with God was what we might call salvation by good works keep this law this law this law that law these laws these jots and tittles of the laws every little bit of the law and you can be right with God is their whole system and Jesus says you've got it wrong you've made void God's word you've misunderstood the nature of sin you've misunderstood what God is on about because our evil comes from our heart and because our hearts are evil we will not live according to every law and word of God we fail we fall short with all the best will and effort and intention and education in the world tomorrow morning you might get up and resolve firmly that today you will be perfect and keep every word of God's law and tomorrow night when you go to bed and put your head on the pillow before you fall asleep if you're honest with yourself you will have to say I failed I haven't loved my neighbor with all my heart soul mind and strength I haven't loved God with everything I've got and there may be a whole host of other things if you're honest with yourself because it comes from within and no amount of effort to keep laws and rules and regulations will change my heart the pharisees and the scribes have got it wrong they think that by doing right things you can become perfect and get right with God and it's underestimating the evil within our hearts the wrongdoing that we do we cannot conquer our hearts rules and regulations are on the outside but the battle against sin is within and their whole system is wrong that's why Jesus is so scathing of them not because they've just added a few well-intentioned laws but because they've overthrown the whole system of how a person can be in a relationship with God not by good works because we fail and fall short but by God's grace and mercy and as the new testament teaches us through cleansing of the heart not by dipping hands in a ritual bowl of water that's not going to cleanse the heart the one thing that cleanses the human heart of evil and sin is the blood of Jesus shed for us on the cross this passage doesn't give us the answer but the gospel does the new testament does the bible does the powerful blood of

jesus shed for us not only forgives our sins in the past but washes our hearts and consciences pure not that we become instantaneously perfect but that on that final day standing before the heavenly throne room of god not only will we be forgiven but will we be perfect how do we appropriate that blood of jesus shed on the cross for us not by just trying to do good works not by keeping up religious appearances not by extremes of piety and devotion but by simple faith and trust repentance of our sins trusting in jesus death to forgive and ultimately to perfect that we can have an eternal relationship with god because of jesus dying for us in a few minutes anthony will be baptized he'll go underwater in a sense the biggest ritual washing that you could do in one sense indeed jews of jesus day would often go into mikveh ritual baths and submerge themselves underneath before offering sacrifices but it's just an outside thing it symbolizes the inside though that the faith that anthony has in the lord jesus christ and his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead washes not just the outside ritually but is washing the heart internally so that with confidence in god's mercy and grace on that final day anthony along with all of god's people in christ will stand perfected washed from the inside by very powerful blood indeed hyacinth bouquet christians are very concerned to keep up appearances but followers of the lord jesus christ know that it's the heart that matters and god knows our hearts and god offers to wash our hearts with the blood of his son so that they'll be cleansed from evil from eternity in god's heaven amen take care yeah why haven't you honest

[32 : 52] Maine rhode in■■■ question dwelling on on the gross level NAT squared γ gar him Thank you.