



Study 9: Jesus—The Heart-Focussed Man

Mark 7:1-30

Personal Preparation 1

It seems that for the religious leaders, Jesus doesn't fit the category of what a good Jew should be like, let alone what the true Messiah should be like! We've already seen how the Pharisees have criticised Jesus and his disciples for their loose, 'law breaking' behaviour (see 2:23-3:2). Now their criticism continues. But Jesus isn't about to just accept their judgment on him. He has his own judging to do.

Read Mark 7:1-13

1. What problem do the Pharisees and teachers of the law have with Jesus' disciples?
2. Mark the author of this gospel, provides further explanation in verse 3 of certain Jewish practices. From this explanation, what do we learn about the Jewish custom?

There was no actual scriptural instruction for Jews to perform this ceremonial washing. It seems that the Pharisees took a passage directed at the priest's duties at the temple (See Exodus 30:19-21; 40:12) and sought to have this applied in the daily normal life of every Jew.

3. What judgment does Jesus give on the religious leaders? v6-7
4. What does it mean to be hypocritical?
5. From verses 8-13, what is so evil about the hypocrisy of the religious leaders?

Do you think you are ever in danger of being hypocritical? What do you need to do to rectify that?

Jesus: The Heart-Focused Man, Group Discussion Questions

Is there something you particularly like to keep clean - car, oven, your hands, windows, the lawn etc?

We might like to keep certain possessions clean but the cleanliness that is the focus on this passage, is on a totally different level.

Read Mark 7:1-23

1. In Personal Preparation, you've already seen that the Pharisees' cleanliness regulations were drawn from laws directed at priests at work in the temple. Try to get in the mind of the Pharisees – what would be their motive for wanting to have such passages applied to the every day life of everyone in Israel?

2. From what we've seen so far in Mark (see 2:18-3:2) what would the Pharisees and teachers of the law be thinking about Jesus?

3. Jesus turns their judgment back on them. From Jesus' words to them, what is the trap they have fallen into?

4. Why is this such a harsh condemnation on the Pharisees and the teachers of the law?

5. Are there any rules that Christians have insisted on – that in the end threaten to become unhelpful and go against the word of God?

6. In verses 14-22, Jesus gives more teaching which further confronts the Pharisees' concept of cleanliness. If you were in the crowd (v14) and didn't get to hear Jesus' later explanation given to the disciples, what might you take verse 15 to mean?

7. In their confusion (v17) it seems that the disciples were thinking along the lines of the crowd. Was Jesus talking about what happens when you go to the toilet? In fact, no. So what is Jesus talking about?

8. With what Jesus says in verses 18-19, what is so ground breaking about it?

9. What do Jesus' words (v20-23) say about what is really going on inside people?

10. Jesus speaks of those things that come out of a person's heart and make them unclean and unacceptable to God (v20-23). If someone was talking to you about the things they are *doing* in order to be good enough for God and go to heaven, how do these verses confront that understanding?

11. At this point of time Jesus doesn't give the answer for how he is going to make unclean hearts clean – for those in Israel and for anyone in the world. But how does Jesus provide the solution?

12. As you think about your own heart– do any of the list of v21 – sound familiar to you? You might want to get into smaller groups to discuss this. What should be the response of those who follow Jesus?

Pray

- Give thanks that Jesus is not concerned about outward show and religiousness, but about what goes on in the heart.
- Pray that our family and friends would come to know cleansing of heart that Jesus can bring as they place their trust in Him.