

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### Mathew: Jesus As Israel's Messiah And His Kingdom

#### Part XV: Christ As Israel's Messiah Seen By The Opposition To His Ministry, Matthew 11:2-16:12

#### M. Christ As Israel's Messiah By His Response To Opposing Legalistic Leaders

(Matthew 15:1-20)

##### I. Introduction

- A. Jesus withdrew from His nation's hostile religious leaders (Matt. 12:14-15), from His hostile townsfolk (Matt. 13:53-58) and from wicked Herod Antipas (Matt. 14:1-13), but hostile religious leaders still confronted Him.
- B. Matthew 15:1-20 shows how Jesus' **response** to fault-finding, legalistic religious leaders who critiqued Jesus' *disciples* revealed Himself to be the righteous Messiah from God (as follows):

##### II. Christ As Israel's Messiah By His Response To Opposing Legalistic Leaders, Matthew 15:1-20.

- A. One day Israel's leading religious leaders from Jerusalem approached Jesus to critique His **disciples** for their violation of the traditions of the elders in not washing their hands before meals, Matthew 15:1-2.
- B. This critique was actually critique of Jesus Himself: since He had not directed His disciples to practice this ritual, the leaders' critique of Christ's disciples indirectly critiqued Jesus' leadership of them!
- C. If Jesus was the true Messiah, He would be **righteous**, and since the religious leaders implied He was **NOT righteous**, before withdrawing from them (Matthew 15:21), Jesus **countered their legalism**, Matthew 15:3-20:
  1. Jesus exposed His critics' hypocrisy in violating God's commandments by their traditions, Matt. 15:3-9:
    - a. Christ asked the leaders why they transgressed the commandment of God by their tradition, Matt. 15:3.
    - b. To prove His claim, He referred to their tradition whereby, though Exodus 20:12 told Israel to honor their parents, when one's parents needed financial help, the children could claim their money was devoted to God so they could keep it from going to their parents, Matt. 15:4-6a; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 55.
    - c. Jesus thus called His critics hypocrites, and cited Isaiah 29:13 to show how well Isaiah had written that Israel had a pretentious worship of God, honoring Him with her lips but in motive she was far from Him, and in vain worshiped Him, teaching as doctrines the mere commandments of men, Matthew 15:7-9.
  2. Then, Jesus countered the religious leaders' charge on violating their traditions, Matthew 15:10-11, 15-20:
    - a. Regarding the tradition of washing one's hands before meals, Jesus explained to the crowds that not that which entered the mouth defiled a man, but that which came out of it defiled him, Matthew 15:10-11.
    - b. Jesus explained this parable in Matthew 15:15-20: (1) when one ate food, it was in time eliminated from the digestive track, doing no sin, Matthew 15:15-17. (2) However, out of man's mouth come defiling things from an evil heart, sins like evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness and blasphemies, Matt. 15:18-19. These defiled a man, not his eating with unwashed hands, Matt. 15:20.
  3. Jesus also explained the spiritual state of His critics, and how we are to relate to them, Matthew 15:12-14:
    - a. His response to His critics offended them, for they sensed "that His words were directed against them" (Ibid.), and Jesus had exposed the religious leaders' error in front of the crowd, Matthew 15:12.
    - b. When the worried disciples told Jesus that these influential religious leaders had been offended at His response to them (Matt. 15:12), He explained the spiritual state of His critics, and how we must relate to them: (1) Jesus explained the religious leaders had not been put in leadership by God the Father, that they would be uprooted in judgment, Matthew 15:13. This implied that the disciples were not to be worried at the offense these leaders expressed at Jesus' response. (2) Jesus also told His disciples to "leave" them alone (*aphiemi*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 58; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 125-126), Matthew 15:14a: as blind leaders of the blind, they could only lead others into trouble with God, so fear over how they viewed Jesus' words only led one to heed them to one's harm, Matt. 15:14b.

***Lesson:*** Jesus countered the legalistic charge of Israel's religious leaders by explaining how their rituals actually violated God's commands, revealing Himself and His disciples to be upright before God. Christ further exposed the godless spiritual state of these leaders, warning His disciples to stop following them for their own welfare.

***Application:*** May we (1) trust in Christ as God's true, righteous Messiah. (2) If we are criticized for something God in Scripture has NOT critiqued in us, the critique is actually against GOD'S LEADING of US, a critique of GOD HIMSELF, so we must not fear it! (3) Note also that unbiblical criticism often arises from hypocrites, so watch for this! (4) Legalistic critics are hardened in spiritual darkness, so we must cease being concerned about their views or else we will tend to heed them, resulting in our own descent into darkness and eventual trouble with God!