

RUSSELL SANDERS
10-8-2021
MATTHEW 15:1-20
Lesson 1

We will now have a short series of lessons on Matthew 15:1-20. Some parts need clarification to expand our understanding. This passage also has some very important things that Jesus said that apply even now to our daily life.

Verses 1-2 says, ***“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying ‘why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.’”*** Jesus did not directly answer their question. Instead, he turned the question against them by accusing them of being the ones who transgress God’s commandment.

Let’s first look at verse two about the washing of hands. In order to know that the disciples did not wash their hands before a meal (bread) means they were carefully watching and scrutinizing everything Jesus’ band was doing while in the vicinity of Jerusalem. They were fault finding.

Jerusalem was where you would find the strictest and the most devout Jews who followed the Law of Moses and the various traditions that had evolved over 1400 years of observance. Some of the traditions were written in the Talmud which was a book (of scrolls) written by scribes over a lengthy period of time. The Talmud is “extrabiblical” not a part of the Bible or scripture. However, the Jews held the Talmud at the same level of authority as scripture. The Talmud was the basis for much of their tradition.

Ceremonial washing was part of the tradition. It included the requirement to wash ones’ hands before eating anything. To eat something without first washing was considered as defiling ones’ body. They would be unclean. Following traditions would make them a “good and righteous man” in peoples’ eyes and among their peers. They thus considered this to be a very serious charge against Jesus and his disciples. They were out to discredit him any way they could.

Tomorrow we will see how Jesus turned this around on them. We will also clarify the meaning of verse five.

We should not be faultfinders like the Pharisees and Scribes. We should look for the good in people. We may recognize their faults, but we should not beat them down about it. Love, understanding, and compassion toward everyone should be how we live.