

Mark 7

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 24 August 2010 07:47

Then more we read of how Jesus acted and spoke, the more we realise Him to be a tough and resolute Saviour! Yes, He had compassion – but in the right place, with the right people, at the right time. He was not the wimpish, foppish individual so many modern commentators make Him out to be. We see this reality in chapter seven. If you are a Christian, remember to act as a true man or woman and not in some feigned attitude of pretended humility.

Verses 1-4

1.

Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

2.

And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed hands, they found fault.

3.

For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.

4.

And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

Once again, Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem to watch Jesus as he went about His daily tasks of preaching and healing. As before, they did not come to praise God, but came to gather evidence to charge Jesus with. We can have no doubt that this was a centralised effort by the Sanhedrin to get rid of Him. He was too dangerous to stay alive! He taught things with authority, making the priests seem stupid and irreverent by comparison. He did miracles no Pharisee could do. He cast out demons with power others did not have. And, overall, His teaching showed up the Jewish leaders for what they really were – unholy, useless, and without authority.

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As they watched and waited, they jumped on an opportunity to accuse Him. His disciples were eating food but did not appear to wash their hands first! In Jewish tradition this was unthought of. It was not against God's law, but it offended Jewish leaders, who liked nothing better than to devise laws to trip up the nation. We see this today in pro-homosexual laws, in which Christians are made into criminals, by laws that are no laws, but insincere and tyrannical attempts to destroy believers. Though the laws have no rhyme or reason behind them, they are used against the people in order to give 'freedom' to a very small number... and religious 'leaders' are colluding in this satanic movement. The same happened in Christ's day, when a very small number of Pharisees and scribes had enormous power over the people forced to obey them.

Is the "tradition of the elders" more important to you than God's word? God's word has freedom; men's traditions have control over minds and hearts. Which is better? Or, rather, which is valid and holy? Most Christians today obey the 'tradition of the elders' or their denominations. They have little real idea why they do or say what they do or say! It is expected of them so they say or do it. They think as they have been taught to think, even though it is not found in scripture, or is a twisting of it. Many teachings held today are the result of this man-made substitute for truth, even amongst the finest of teachers.

God's word is far more radical than Christians think! Follow Christ and scripture and you may not be in line with your friends, church, denomination or current theology. Follow truly and you may even be shunned! It is the price we pay for truth. The reaction of the Pharisees is found today in legalistic Christian 'leaders' and pastors who think every believer should be like them! If they do not follow their particular slant on scripture, they are less than charitable. The Pharisees had many petty laws devised to control the people, and this is the aim of modern spiritual 'rulers'... some of whom do not even realise they are replacing truth with human ideas, or Christian freedom with their own brand of enforcement.

Verses 5-13

1.

Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?

2.

He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

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3.

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

4.

For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

5.

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

6.

For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

7.

But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

8.

And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

9.

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

The irate Pharisees and scribes asked Jesus why His disciples did not comply with tradition, by eating without washing their hands. Of course, to us in the West, we would certainly wash our

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hands if they were dirty. Some wash their hands before every meal, even when their hands are already clean, but this is more to do with upbringing and a false notion of hygiene. But, these men were not really interested in Jesus' answer – they only wanted to build a case against Him.

Jesus must have been angry, too, for He said, 'Isaiah was right to prophesy about you being hypocrites! He said the people honour God with their words, but they despise Him in their hearts.'

How many Christians and 'leaders' do that today? Many. They openly claim to obey God, and even speak against those who fail, and yet their hearts are sinful and darkened. Jesus warned that such people worship in vain and substitute man's invented teachings for God's truth/doctrine.

The meaning of "in vain" is to act fruitlessly; it is based on a root meaning to manipulate, or to search for something that is not attainable, or to punish someone. All these meanings fit the case of the Pharisees and scribes! Today, many things taught and believed by modern day Christians are of this kind. My own ministry was given to me by God to test the spirits and to help put right the errors of the modern churches. This is done simply by going back to what God actually says in His word.

These errors can go back many centuries, to the Reformation and beyond! How many Christians understand that the Reformation was only the beginning? How many understand that the reformers were brave and holy men, but only had partial answers? How many understand that we must *continue* reforming, in every age? And, sadly, how many modern Christians are stuck in the past, holding traditions that have no use; traditions that warp the truth of God's word, regardless of how genuine teachers are? These are just substitutes for truth, and should not exist.

Without hesitation I can say that many Christians hold to these traditional values and teachings, which sound good but which, on examination, are often very flawed. Jesus was blunt about it – doing this means that people who claim to be Believers *put aside* God's actual word in favour of man's teachings. Do you see how serious this is, and what a condemnation it is of supposed 'faith'? Jesus mentions the washing of pots and pans taking the place of genuine teaching. Today we can include such things as meetings without scriptural warrant (such as regular prayer meetings and not extempore, God-called prayers; Christmas and Easter, and so on), unholy attitudes, poorly thought-out actions, etc.

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Jesus goes even farther, by saying that by adhering to these things, people “reject the commandment of God” to keep their own ideas of what God says. Too many today have a light view of what it means to believe. They think they can believe what they wish, even when evidence is given to show that what they believe is man-made and therefore ungodly. A huge number of people think that looking at Greek and Hebrew words in a concordance will give them authority to believe their deceptions. In my experience, this can often be a great folly, for they know nothing of Greek and Hebrew idioms, grammatical constructs, contemporaneous sayings and meanings, and so on, which can have immense implications for interpretation. Concordances only give indications, so by trying to be ‘clever’ some Christians can fall foul of truth. Such folks would no doubt have supported Pharisees.

Jesus then gave them examples of their hypocrisy: ‘Moses said to honour your parents, and, those who curse their parents deserve death. But, *you* say that if a man offers a gift to the temple (a korban) or to you, he need not support his parents.’

Recognise this kind of falsity in modern Christianity? I saw a TV programme a few days ago. In it a well-off couple were linked with a single mother with a young girl. She lost a company she started and became unemployed, thus accruing many debts over the next five years, and no hope (something I have much experience of!). Not only did the couple kindly pay off the mother’s debts, but they bought her new furniture and clothes, then started up a brand new company with a large investment, and even bought her a brand new van to get going! This was an unsaved couple showing deep compassion for an unsaved mother! Do we see this kind of kindness amongst Christians? Rarely. Some give gladly, but not on such a grand scale to make a real difference.

I have often said that Christians love to give ad hoc gifts to missionaries they do not know, or to charities who use money on many things. But, Christians in severe need are ignored, or are given small gifts that are fine, but do not deal with the root problems. So, their difficulties continue.

Added to this I remember an unsaved person say on TV “Never be mean spirited”. If we can help fellow believers, then do it, for, after helping parents, this is one of our main duties before God, and comes before giving to charities and churches. Often, what we might think is almost nothing, or easily given, may provide another with peace of mind and the end to many years of suffering.

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When we do not apply God's word as it is given, we make it "of none effect", which is another way of saying we show disrespect and disdain for Him and His word. There were so many ways that these fake believers acted, Jesus could not mention them all! Look hard at your ways (just as I examine my own ways) to see if we can discard them in favour of going back to what is real and holy. It is when we do this, that God rewards our faith.

Verses 14-16

1.

And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:

2.

There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

3.

If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus then turned from the Pharisees to speak to the crowd, who He motioned to come closer. 'Listen to me,' He said, 'and understand. Nothing that goes into a man can cause him to sin. It is what comes *out* of him that causes him to sin. If any have spiritual ears, let them hear what I say and live by it.'

What goes in? Everything you read, or see, or hear. You might not realise it, but nothing encountered by our senses is lost; it is all retained by our brains. It does not mean we necessarily accept it, but it is how our brains work! Sometimes, when a Christian suffers from dementia (or one of several other brain-damages, including strokes), he or she might say or do something that horrifies relatives or friends, who think that what comes out 'must' be the product of secret sin. This is a very sad misconception. Our brains can sift out what is unholy and push it into a deep recess of our memories, if our faith hates it. (There is much more to this than can be covered in a short Bible study). So, good and bad remains in our bodies, recorded.

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But, in dementia, parts of the brain are damaged and the usual safeguards are lost, so 'sinful' words or actions might emerge. But, they are not sin... they are just memories we cannot get rid of because they entered the brain. To be 'sin' we must entertain them in our hearts and then use them deliberately. This is what Jesus referred to.

Note: However, if we harbour thoughts about sins, this is equal to doing them. This applies to sexual sins, also. It is how some men and women 'suddenly' claim to be homosexual... they harbour secret thoughts about the sin and continually fantasize about it, until the pressure of sin within erupts and the person 'must' act out what he or she has fantasized about. The reason this particular sin takes so long to 'germinate' is that it has a natural taboo placed there by God and those who indulge in it know this is so.

Verses 17-23

1.

And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

2.

And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

3.

Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

4.

And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

5.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

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6.

Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

7.

All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

To escape the crowds, Jesus entered into a house to be alone. The disciples took the opportunity to ask him what His parable meant. Jesus expressed a sense of exasperation – ‘What? *You* don’t understand either?’ Many modern Christians lack understanding because they have ‘instant’ minds – everything must be broken down and given to them in easily-digested chunks; anything more complex causes them to close their minds, as they try to avoid genuine and lengthy study!

Jesus continued: ‘don’t you understand that anything that comes into a man from outside his body and mind cannot cause him to sin; this is because it does not enter into his heart. Rather, it enters his belly and leaves when he uses the toilet.’ In other words, what goes into the body can be expelled mechanically.

Jesus then said ‘But, what comes out of a man’s heart can cause him to be sinful; this is because out of the heart and mind come all kinds of sin... evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, greed (covetousness), deceit, unbridled lust, shamelessness and insolence (lasciviousness – an excellent appraisal of homosexuality), a bad nature (an ‘evil eye’: bringing disease and wickedness; again this applies to homosexuality), blasphemy, pride, foolishness (doing what is stupid, senseless, reckless, thoughtless).’

This is just a sample list of sins and things hated by God! They all come from within a man or woman, defiling them; that is, making them sinful and attracting God’s anger. These sins do not arise on their own – they are harboured in the mind and heart, so they come from the persons themselves, when they give in to temptation.

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So many Christians think they can get away with sin, especially if they think it is done secretly. In many cases of sin, the results can come as disease, such as STDs, HIV, chest infections, heart defects, systemic collapse, and so on. But, by far the worst results are in the soul, which is tainted and made weak by sin. And, of course, God's wrath comes upon the one who wilfully sins. There is no escaping the penalty for sinning without repentance.

Verses 24-30

1.

And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.

2.

For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:

3.

The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

4.

But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

5.

And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.

6.

And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

7.

And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid

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upon the bed.

Jesus then travelled west to the Mediterranean coast, close to Tyre and Sidon. Tyre ('a rock') was a huge, rich Phoenician city, and very powerful. Sidon ('hunting') was a wealthy Phoenician city about 20 miles north of Tyre.

When He reached the area Jesus "entered into an house", probably owned by a supporter. He hoped to stay quietly, without fuss, but "he could not be hid". A woman came to know He was staying, and went to see Him; her daughter was possessed by a demon. It is often thought that you must be very wicked to be possessed, but this is a fallacy. All a demon needs is a small chink in our armour, a minor show of interest in the occult, watching horror films, committing sin, etc. It does not take much, no matter what age we are. Of course, demons cannot possess a Christian, but they can, and do, influence or oppress them, sometimes badly.

The mother went to the house and lay prostrate before Jesus, as she begged Him to cast out the girl's demon. We are told the mother was a "Syrophenician by nation". Syro shows a Syrian background, so her national identity was one of a mixture of Syrian and Phoenician. In other words she was not a Jew, the significance of which can be seen in the next verse.

It might surprise some believers that Jesus did not simply follow her and do the deed. But, this time, He initially rejected the request. "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast (it) unto the dogs."

Jesus was being quite blunt; He was saying that He came to preach to, and heal, the Jews, the children of God. What He had to give the Jews was 'bread' meant only for them. Those who were not Jews were called 'dogs'. The root of the word for dogs indicates more accurately why: they were of 'impure mind'. This is loosely connected with Sodomites, too. This division between God's children and all others was well-established by God. Jesus was not quoting some unreasoned racism, but God's denial of those who were not His.

In a similar way, today, we can reject all other religions and call their followers spiritual 'dogs', who impudently believe their false gods rather than the true God. Sadly, too many Christians

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allow poor attitudes towards other religions, as if they owed them respect. NO OTHER RELIGION deserves respect of believers. Rather, they deserve the opposite, for they reject God and teach heresy and devilish doctrines that are an abomination. I know for a fact that most Christians allow 'small' errors to go unchallenged. In truth, we must ALWAYS challenge EVERY untruth, no matter how small we think it is. This is because anything that is not of God is of Satan, and must not be tolerated. At the very least we must state our disapproval.

Jesus was telling the woman that His ministry was solely for the Jews, who were God's children. Only believers are His children. But, the woman, with love for her daughter and a level of faith in Jesus, was not put off! She agreed with Jesus, but then, calling Him 'Lord' (kyrios – the one to whom all things belong; the master, a title of reverence; she might possibly have applied it to mean 'Messiah' or 'God'), she boldly added that even the dogs can eat crumbs that fall off the children's table!

This quick reply was the kind of boldness we should all know in our own lives – faith coupled to a bold expectation of good from the Lord. If we expect what God promises then we will get what we pray for, when the time is right. All too often we complain that God will not answer our pleas, when, what is happening, is that God HAS heard the prayer, but is waiting for the right time to act, in His own way. What we think of as the 'last chance' may only be another step towards the time when God gives us our answer!! God never answers out of time, or when it is too late; He ALWAYS answers our pleas at *exactly* the time when we really need it, not when we think we need it. Like this woman, just have true faith.

As a reward for her faith, Jesus told her to go back home, for the demon was removed. Note that the demon did not require Jesus to be physically present; His power was, and is, absolute. Today, many think they must meet together in the same room before prayer has any power (re prayer meetings). This is a fallacy, for prayer, in itself, has no power at all! The power is not in the prayer, but in God. He says that if we ask without doubting, we will receive. The power, then, is in *compliance*, not in the prayer itself... a lesson so many Christians need to learn! Thus, God's power acted even when He was not physically present. And so the mother went home and found her daughter laying quietly on the bed, the demon gone.

Verses 31-37

1.

And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

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2.

And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.

3.

And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;

4.

And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.

5.

And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.

6.

And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;

7.

And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

After that, Jesus returned to the Galilee area, going through the middle of Decapolis. You will remember that He had gone there before; it was the area where he cast out a legion of demons into swine.

When He was there, a man with a speech and hearing problem was brought to him. His friends or relatives had to speak for him, and they asked Jesus to heal him. Taking him aside Jesus put

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His fingers into both of the man's ears. Then He spat on his finger and touched the tip of the man's tongue. Sighing, Jesus looked upwards and said "Ephphatha" ('Be opened'). The man could immediately hear and speak.

What intrigues me about this episode is that "he sighed". Why? The word 'sighed' indicates that Jesus was expressing sorrow or grief. I doubt if His sorrow was with the deafness or speech problem, for He would have witnessed these commonly. I can only assume (because there is no other background) that Jesus was sighing for the state of the man's soul, and the souls of all His kinsmen, the Jewish nation, to Whom He had been sent; most wanted all the benefits of healing but not salvation. The word 'be opened' was an imperative – a command; so the healing *had* to occur.

Though Jesus told the people not to tell anyone else about the miracle, they, of course, told everybody! And when he insisted they remain quiet, they told people all the more, because they were so amazed by the miracle and thought it was alright to spread the news, when, all along, what really mattered was salvation, not just healing or casting out of demons.

Today, Christians do not understand that there are times when we should remain silent. For myself, for example, I always refuse to debate people or to argue scripture. This is because I know God's word and will not haggle over it, giving credence to what is not His word. There are also times when I say nothing, because the Spirit holds me back. I see no scriptural warrant to witness to everyone, only to witness or speak as the Lord directs, or to be silent at times. Again, a tough lesson to learn, but necessary, showing a total reliance on the prompting of the Spirit and not on our own desires or theories.

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