**How can worship be in vain?** Empty ritual strips worship of its meaning and power, for God desires worshipers to come to him in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). Naturally, worship is vain if it is directed toward a false god. Worship can also be vain when it consists of a rote adherence to human rules and teachings without honest, thoughtful heartfelt praise to God. (The Quest Study Bible, Page 1392)

**2. The Perversion of the Word of God (7:8-13): Jesus says the Pharisees twist God's laws to avoid the responsibility of financially supporting their own parents!**

**a. Traditions versus Truth (Vs. 8-9).** *8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." 9 And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!*

In earlier times the Hebrew held the written Law of God, the Torah, in such esteem that they would not write down their reflections on it, lest they should tempt later generations to consider their words as important as God’s Law. But as time went on, written commentaries on the Law, collected in the Talmud, assumed greater authority than the Torah itself. (The Nelson Study Bible, Page 1656)

**b. The Law versus Loopholes (Vs. 10-12).** *10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' 11 But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), 12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother.*

**Corban** – A Hebrew/Aramaic word meaning “offering.” By using this word in a religious vow an irresponsible Jewish son could formally dedicate to God (i.e., to the temple) his earnings that otherwise would have gone for the support of his parents. The money, however, did not necessarily have to go for religious purposes. The Corban formula was simply a means of circumventing the clear responsibility of children toward their parents as prescribed in the law. (The NIV Study Bible, Page 1535)

**C. The Conclusion (V. 13).** **They had exalted their words above God’s Word.** *13 Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." (NIV)*

# *RISING STAR MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH*

***2800 E. 36th Street***

#### Tucson, AZ 85713

## *Sermon Notes*

## *April 19, 2015*

***Traditions of Men or the Truth of God?***

***Mark 7:1-13***

**Sermon Notes:** [www.risingstarbaptist.org](http://www.risingstarbaptist.org)

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***Vision: A Local Church with a Global Reach***

***Motto: One Mind, One Heartbeat, One Direction.***

## *Rev. Amos L. Lewis*

***Senior Pastor***

**Traditions of Men or the Truth of God?**

**Mark 7:1-13**

**I. INTRODUCTION –** As born-again believers we should be known as people of the Book or the Bible. We should base our beliefs and behavior on the Bible. We must be careful that we don’t try to be more spiritual than God by adding to or subtracting from the Bible. In other words, we must guard against all sorts of man-made rules to govern people’s behavior based upon our own personal convictions or the way we were raised. On the other hand, we must not go looking for loop holes in the Bible to justify our carnal lifestyle so we can indulge our sinful nature or the flesh. The balanced approach is to let God be God and let the Bible speak for itself. When God says something is wrong, it is wrong. When God says something is right, it is right. Everything in between is left up to the Holy Spirit and the conscience of the believer. God has called us to liberty but we must use our liberty to glorify God and help people and not become stumbling blocks but stepping stones. Let’s not be guilty of placing our man-made traditions above the truth of God’s Word.

**II. EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT -** In our text today, we see Jesus talking the religious leaders about inner holiness and not just external acts righteousness.

**A. The Confusion (7:1-5): The godless Pharisees demand to know why Jesus does not always observe their laws and regulations for outer cleansing.**

**1. The Religious Leaders (Vs. 1-2).** *1 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and 2 saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed.*

The religious leaders sent some investigators from their headquarters in Jerusalem to check up on Jesus. The delegation didn’t like what they found, however, because Jesus scolded them for keeping the law and the traditions in order to look holy instead of to honor God. The prophet Isaiah accused the religious leaders of his day of doing the same thing (Isaiah 29:13). Jesus used Isaiah’s words to accuse these men. (Life Application Study Bible, Page 1746)

**2. Their Rituals (Vs. 3-4).** *3 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. 4 When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)*

This washing had nothing to do with cleaning dirty hands but with a ceremonial rinsing. The ceremony involved someone pouring water out of a jar onto another’s hands, whose fingers must be pointing up. As long as the water dripped off the wrist, the person could proceed to the next step. He then had water poured over both hands with the fingers pointing down. Then each hand was to be rubbed with the fist of the other hand. **Tradition of the elders** – This body of extrabiblical laws and interpretations of Scripture had in actuality supplanted Scripture as the highest religious authority in Judaism. (The MacArthur’s Study Bible, Page 1473)

**3. Their Rational (V. 5).** *5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"*

**B. The Clarification (7:6-12).**

**1. The Prophecy in the Word of God (7:6-7): He reminds them of Isaiah's prediction that God's people would honor the Messiah with their lips but hate him in their hearts (Isa 29:13)!** *6 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'*

The meaning of “hypocrite” (*hupokrites*, Gk.) is “actor.” It referred to someone who acted out the part of a character in the theater. The early actors wore masks to assume the identities of the characters they were playing. Jesus rightly calls the Pharisees hypocrites because of their pretense and the masking of their true selves behind their external rituals. Like the people of Isaiah’s day, they look and sound good on the outside, but the inside (that which truly matters to God) is ugly. Jesus’ most blistering sermon was directed against the Pharisees and their hypocrisy (cf. Matt. 23). (The Baptist Study Edition, W. A. Criswell, 1406)