

(Matt. 15:1) – The “**SCRIBES AND PHARISEES**” were concerned with Jesus’s popularity because of Him healing and feeding the people. They saw their power and influence among the people waning. And when we consider how Christ preached a message that was diametrically opposed to their message of salvation and righteousness by the works of men, their hatred and anger towards Him grew to the point that, not only did they want to discredit Him, but they also wanted Him executed. And when they were successful, little did they know that His death would fulfill the eternal purpose of God Who, before the world began, determined the death of Christ as the way whereby He would save His chosen people from their sins (Acts 2:23-24; Rev. 13:8).

We need to understand that Christ’s popularity among the multitudes was due only to His healing and feeding them physically. This caused them to conclude that He was a great prophet, and to want to escort Him to Jerusalem and anoint Him king of Israel (John 6:14-15). They wanted a king to liberate them from Roman bondage, heal their diseases, and feed them. They saw in Him the solution to all of life’s problems here on earth. This is just the way that many false professors today see Jesus. They tell people that no matter their difficulty, whether financial, marital, family, children, job, health, addictions, etc., come to Jesus and He will solve their problems. They really have no concern over their greatest problem, the problem of sin.

The people of our Lord’s day (like people today) did not see in Christ the answer to the age-old question, “How should man be just with God?” (Job. 9:2; 25:4). They did not see in Jesus the Savior of souls held captive by sin, Satan, the flesh, and the world. They did not see in Him the One Who could put away their sin, work righteousness, and bring them to God by the sacrifice of Himself. They did not see their need of Him as the only way to God and the only Mediator between God and sinful men (Matt. 1:21; 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 9:26; John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). They did not believe Him to be God manifest in the flesh (Matt. 1:23; John 1:14; Matt. 13:55; 1 Tim. 3:16). There was no awareness that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Passover Lamb (John 1:29). We know that all of the animal offerings on Jewish altars could never put away sin (Heb. 10:1-4), but the offering of the body of Christ accomplished the complete removal and forgiveness of all the sins of those in whose stead He suffered, bled, died, and arose. Through His one offering for sin, all of the redeemed have been fully justified and have access into the presence of God (Heb. 10:9-22).

(Matt. 15:2) – These legalists were always looking to accuse Jesus of breaking their law. Here, they accused Him and His disciples of eating with unwashed hands, a disobedience of one of the traditions of the elders. This was purely a ceremonial ritual and had nothing to do with physical cleanliness. They reasoned that since a Jew might

have touched a Gentile, or touched something a Gentile touched, they were to wash their hands to cleanse them of this defilement and contamination. They did not understand that the defilement of sin is within us and not in the things we touch.

(Matt. 15:3-6) – The Lord, then, began to expose their own hypocrisy and inconsistency in their self-proclaimed law-keeping by referring to one of the many examples of their law-breaking. Why did they transgress the law of God by not honoring and providing for their aged parents? God had commanded children to honor and care for their parents (Exod. 20:12; 21:17). The elders of Israel, however, had made a law that essentially said that if a person's mother or father sought financial or material help from a grown child, and that grown child cried, "Corbin," meaning "it is a gift" reserved for the Lord (Matt. 7:11), they were free from any obligation to help their parents. They ignored the law of God and clung to their own self-righteous and selfish traditions and judged themselves to be righteous (Luke 18:9). But the Lord here used the Scriptures to expose them.

(Matt. 15:7-8) – The Lord then quoted Isaiah 29:13-14 (cf. Ezek. 33:31), showing that their hearts were not right with God. They were outwardly religious and did indeed appear righteous unto men, but within, they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matt. 23:28). This describes the kind of guile (dishonesty) and hypocrisy that is natural to unregenerate and unbelieving people. *"BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME"* – Those whose hearts are made right with God are those who are given life from God and convicted by the Holy Spirit of their sinfulness, their need of righteousness by God's grace in Christ, and who are given the gift of faith in Him to cleanse them from all their sins by His blood alone (Heb. 10:19-21). We know that we cannot keep the law of God perfectly, but in Christ we have the perfection of righteousness by His obedience unto death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. This is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (Rom. 4:6-8; 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21). And when God the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life and faith, we submit to Christ as our only righteousness before God and repent of all works-righteousness (Php. 3:3-9).

(Matt. 15:9) – Without the truth of God revealed in the Gospel of His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, all worship is *"VAIN"* (empty and worthless). It is, in reality, idolatry as it does not reflect and honor the glory of the living and true God Who reveals Himself in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). To teach any other way of salvation but that which is totally by God's free and sovereign grace in Christ and based upon HIS righteousness alone is *"TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN,"* and this is a false gospel which is deadly to the souls of sinners (Gal. 1:6-9). Our only hope of salvation comes by God's grace in Christ as He is revealed in the truth of the Gospel (Rom. 10:13-17).