

Jesus Teaches about Justice

Key Verse: *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”*
—**Matthew 15:8**

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 15:1-9

dicion.” (vss. 3-6) Here Jesus made an important distinction between the commandments of God and the traditions of men.

Traditions and commandments of men are neither given, nor authorized, by God. These may include many things such as outward ceremonies or procedures, calling religious leaders “father,” “holy father,” or “rabbi.” On the contrary, Jesus instructed his disciples: “Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”—Matt. 23:8,9

Other traditions of men include false teachings not found in the Bible, such as eternal torment in a fiery hell. On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter explained that King David had prophesied many centuries before of the

IN TODAY’S LESSON, CERTAIN of the scribes and Pharisees had come to Jesus and asked why his disciples “transgress the tradition of the elders,” because “they wash not their hands when they eat bread.” (vs. 2) Jesus answered: “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? ... Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradi-

“resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.” (Acts 2:29-31) In other words, when Jesus died on the cross, his soul abode in “hell,” until he was raised from the dead on the third day. Hell is not a place, but rather the condition of death. Death is described elsewhere in the Bible as a “sleep,” or peaceful unconsciousness.—I Kings 2:10; John 11:11-14; I Cor. 15:20

Continuing in our lesson, Jesus then called the multitude, and said unto them, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” (Matt. 15:10,11) Jesus further explained that “those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; ... For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.”—vss. 18-20

In this passage, the word heart is used as a symbol of our affections, will, sentiments, and motives. In the Old Testament we are told: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23) Our heart condition is like the soil of a garden, and our thoughts are like seeds. Cultivating the soil of our hearts, and then planting the proper seeds of thoughts, so that they are in accord with the will of God, is a necessary, daily task for the Lord’s people.

Our Key Verse shows it is not sufficient that we merely profess to be serving God. Samuel was told, “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” (I Sam. 16:7) Do we sometimes have an unloving or unkind thought? Do we listen to or participate in gossip regarding others? If so, we may be drawing nigh to God outwardly with our lips, but in our hearts departing from him. Let us strive each day to have God’s spirit of grace and truth enter into our hearts and transform them into that which is pleasing and acceptable to him. ■