



LESSON 7

Traditions and Practices of the Judeans

THE CULTURE OF THE JUDEANS

We learned in lesson six that the term "Judean" was often used to identify someone who adhered to the culture and religious beliefs of those living in Judea. We also learned that the religion of the corrupted Judeans contained many pagan beliefs and rituals.

Prior to her Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, Israel had mingled with pagan cultures and religions time and time again. After repeated warnings, God finally divorced Israel and brought about her exile into captivity.

While in Assyria, Babylon and Persia the Israelites absorbed additional pagan beliefs and practices, including the popular teachings of Zoroaster. Thousands later moved to Jerusalem and Judea carrying with them these ritual perversions which then were handed down from generation to generation in the form of "traditions."

The above list summarizes some of the pagan practices, beliefs and customs which became part of the Judean culture, most of which have found their way into modern Judeo-Christian theology. In this and future lessons, we will examine some of these beliefs, customs and practices ("traditions of men") in the light of Scripture.

Practices, Beliefs and Customs Existing Within the Judean Culture

1. Dualism: the world is ruled by the antagonistic forces of good and evil with a good god versus an evil god (Satan).
2. Immortality of the soul: continued existence of a nonphysical entity which separates from a body at the time of death.
3. Heaven: an eternal place of bliss and the abode of God, angels and the departed souls of the righteous dead.
4. Hell: an eternal place of torment and the abode of Satan, demons and the departed souls of the wicked dead.
5. Trinity: a triune godhead — three-part god in unity.
6. Angelology: the hierarchy of celestial supernatural spirit beings (angels).
7. Demonology: the existence of evil supernatural spirit beings (demons, devils) and demon-possession.
8. Pre-existence of the soul prior to embodiment.
9. Incarnation: gods and "spirits" taking on flesh bodies.
10. Astrology, numerology, alchemy, sorcery, foretelling and various other occult practices.
11. Highly structured mystical priesthood, and an elaborate ritualistic system of worship with secret rites and ceremonies.
12. Babylonian calendar and observance of days.
13. Babylonian-style legal/judicial system.
14. Debt-usury economic/monetary system.
15. Babylonian-style central government.

THE TRADITIONS OF MEN

The "traditions" of the Judeans are mentioned a number of times in the New Scriptures.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 15:1-20 and Mark 7:1-23

1. Matthew 15:2 says the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus why His disciples transgressed (violated) the _____ of the elders.
2. What specific violation were the Judean leaders accusing the disciples of committing? (Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:2,5) _____
3. According to Mark 7:3, who followed this **tradition**? _____
4. Responding to the Judeans' accusation, Jesus told them in Mark 7:7 they were worshipping in vain and "teaching for doctrine the commandments of _____."

The word **tradition** is translated from the Greek word **paradosis** (#3862 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "transmission, i.e. a precept; specifically the Judean traditional law." This refers to teachings (doctrines, precepts, customs, etc.) that are handed down from generation to generation. "The washing of hands," a religious ceremonial ritual, was one such tradition.

Jesus clearly condemned this **tradition** as vain (empty) worship, indicating that their motive for keeping this tradition was improper.

The Ritual of Washing

The washing (ablution) of hands was not simply done for hygienic purposes, but constituted a **ceremonious ritual** strictly adhered to by the Judeans. It was part of their **traditional law**. The Jewish Talmud puts the one eating with unwashed hands on the same plane as one committing fornication, and states that the one lightly esteeming hand washing will perish from the earth.

FIND THE ANSWERS

5. What did Jesus call the scribes and Pharisees who promoted the tradition of washing? (Matthew 15:7; Mark 7:6) _____
6. In Mark 7:8 Jesus accused these Judean leaders of "laying aside the _____ of God" and holding "the _____ of men."

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Luke 11:37-41

1. According to verse 37, with whom was Jesus eating? _____
2. According to verse 38 what did the Pharisee observe that made him marvel (wonder)?

3. In verse 39 Jesus says, "Now do you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and platter; but your inward part is full of _____ and _____."

Ravening

The word **ravening** is translated from the Greek word **harpagē** (#724 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "pillage." It refers to the acts of robbery, extortion, plunder, etc. — a seizing by force.

In the above verses Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocritical practice of making themselves appear clean (pure; righteous) by outward ceremonial ritual while their true motives and desires were impure and unrighteous. While appearing righteous and pure, they were actually robbing and stealing from the people. They were nothing more than common thieves masquerading as pious, holy men, not unlike the religious and political charlatans of our day.

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. In Matthew 23:25 Jesus says the scribes and Pharisees are inwardly full of _____ and _____.

In the above verse the word **extortion** is rendered from the same Greek word (#724) that was translated into the word **ravening** in Luke 11:39. In both cases reference is made to the greed and avarice of Judean scribes and Pharisees who used, without restraint, their positions of power over the people to plunder them — all under the pretense of righteousness.

The Judean tradition of "washing," as hypocritically practiced by the scribes and Pharisees, was nothing more than vain ceremonial ritualism used to put on an appearance of purity and righteousness. In some cases it was intentional deception to hide inner wickedness. Others undoubtedly engaged in the ritual ignorantly, thinking it would make them ceremonially righteous (a false **tradition of men** taught to them).

Many professing Christians today practice vain ceremonial ritualism in one form or another. Although it is often completely nonsensical, they believe it is necessary to please God.

Excess

The word **excess** is translated from the Greek word **akrasia** (#192 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "want of self-restraint." It refers to a lack of self-control.

In Matthew 15:3-6 and Mark 7:9-13, Jesus condemns another **tradition** of these Judean scribes and Pharisees.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. What commandment of God did Jesus accuse the scribes and Pharisees of violating by their tradition? (Matt. 15:3-4; Mark 7:9-10) _____
2. According to Mark 7:11-12, Judean tradition held that if a man said to his parents, "It is _____," he was free from providing for their needs.
3. In Matthew 15:6 and Mark 7:13, Jesus told these Judeans they were making the word (commandment) of God of "none effect" by their _____.

According to the Law of God, people were responsible for seeing that the needs of their elderly parents were satisfied. This duty was emphatically underscored by Jesus, who, from the cross, committed His mother Mary to the disciple John for care and support (John 19:26-27). Through the tradition of "corban," Judeans were able to avoid or shun ("make of none effect") this commandment of God. This is a good example of how man attempts to replace or supersede God's Law.

Corban

The word **Corban** comes from the Greek word **korban** (#2878 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "a votive offering; a consecrated present (to the Temple fund)." The Judeans had developed a culpable practice in connection with "corban." By their tradition they taught that money, property or anything dedicated to the temple as "corban," or a votive (vowed or pledged) gift, thereafter belonged to the temple and could not be used for some other purpose. However, in reality, the gift or devoted item was kept by the person who made the vow. According to this practice, a son could avoid his responsibility to support his old and indigent parents merely by saying that his property, or some portion of it, was "corban," a gift dedicated to God or to the temple. By saying, "It is corban," he would not have to use such property to support his parents who might be in such desperate straits and request or need his aid in the future.

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. In Matthew 15:11 and Mark 7:15, what does Jesus say (in parable form) defiles a person? _____
5. In explaining the parable, Jesus says the evil things out of the _____ of men is what defiles them (Matthew 15:17-20); Mark 7:18-23).
6. In Matthew 15:14 Jesus describes the Judean scribes and Pharisees as " _____ leaders of the _____."

The Judean scribes and Pharisees, like many within Christendom today, were more concerned with conformity to their human traditions than obedience to God. These arrogant, superficial Judeans, who were so concerned that they would be contaminated by contact with their inferiors, or by eating food with ceremonially unclean hands and vessels, were themselves the most contaminating of all. They taught their spurious traditions to others and enforced obedience to them, even to the point of violating God's righteous Law. Their "traditions," products of their evil hearts, were evidence of their defiled, ungodly condition.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Titus 1:10-16

1. Verse 10 addresses the subject of unruly (rebellious) and vain talkers and deceivers, especially those of the _____.
2. Verse 14 indicates they give heed to Judean _____ and commandments of men that turn from (pervert) the _____.
3. According to verse 15, their mind and conscience is _____.
4. Verse 16 states, "They profess that they know God; but in works (acts or deeds) they _____ Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."

The above verses are applicable to Christian Israel today. They are instructions to Christian elders and overseers concerning the rebuking of false teachers who deceive people with Judean fables (myths) and commandments of men. These deceivers are identified as "those of the circumcision." This further identifies them as Judeans, since the ceremonial ritual of fleshly circumcision was a strict requirement according to their tradition. To them, anyone not circumcised in the flesh was "unclean" and not to be associated with.

FIND THE ANSWERS

5. According to Acts 15:1, Judeans were teaching, "Except ye be _____ after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be _____."
6. According to John 7:22, the Judeans circumcised on the _____ day.
7. 1 Corinthians 7:19 says, "Circumcision is _____, and uncircumcision is _____, but the keeping of the commandments of God." (see Galatians 5:6)

The Judeans falsely taught (as part of their tradition) that circumcision of the flesh must be strictly observed, and they considered as "unclean" and "unsaved" those who were not circumcised. This is yet another example of ritualistic nonsense and an attempt by man to achieve his own righteousness. This vain tradition of men will be dealt with in more detail in future lessons.

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

Jesus likened the traditions (doctrines) of the Judean Pharisees and Sadducees to leaven which spreads and contaminates.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 16:5-12

1. In verse 6 Jesus says to His disciples, "Take heed and beware of the _____ of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."
2. According to verse 12, the disciples understood that when Jesus spoke of "leaven" He was referring to the _____ of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The word **doctrine** is translated from the Greek word **didache** (#1322 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "instruction," which is derived from the root word **dao** (to teach). Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon defines this word as "that which is taught." The traditions of the Judeans were "passed on" or taught from generation to generation. Thus, the "doctrines" of the Judeans were their "traditions."

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. In Colossians 2:8 Paul warns the Christians in Colossae by saying, "Beware lest any man spoil you through _____ and vain deceit, after the _____ of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
4. Paul warns the Christians in Ephesus by saying, "Let no man _____ you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of _____." (Ephesians 5:6)
5. In Hebrews 13:9 Christians are warned to "Be not carried about with divers and strange _____."

The word **philosophy** in Colossians 2:8 is translated from the Greek word **philosophia** (#5385 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "specifically Judean sophistry." Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines **sophistry** as "fallacious reasoning; reasoning sound in appearance only." **Fallacious** means "deceptive or misleading." Therefore, Paul is warning against traditions (doctrines) of men that deceive others — precisely what the "tradition of the elders" did in those days (the same as they do today in the form of "Judeo-Christian" doctrines).

The word **vain** in Ephesians 5:6 is rendered from the Greek word **kenos** (#2756 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "empty." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon defines this word as "devoid of truth." Thus, Paul is warning against being deceived by false teachings that lead to disobedience (to God). Jesus said the Judean rulers were doing this to the people. (This is precisely what is going on in Christian Israel today.)

OTHER JUDEAN TRADITIONS

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Responding to Jesus' healing of the dumb (mute) man, the Pharisees in Matthew 9:34 accused Jesus of casting out devils through the _____ of the devils.
2. In Matthew 12:24 the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out devils by _____ the prince of the devils (see also Mark 3:22 and Luke 11:15).

The above verses show that the Pharisees believed in devils (demons; wicked spirit beings) who were ruled over by a chief devil, called Beelzebub. This doctrine was foreign to Hebrew theology. It came from Babylonian religious mythology (particularly from the teachings of Zoroaster). This deceptive pagan concept, which is prevalent within Christendom today, will be examined in greater detail in future lessons.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 12:1-8

3. After observing Jesus' disciples plucking corn, the Pharisees accused them in verse 2 of doing "that which is not _____ to do upon the sabbath day."

Read Luke 13:10-17

4. According to verse 14 the ruler of the synagogue, angry because Jesus had _____ on the sabbath day, ordered the people to seek healing on a day other than the sabbath.

Read John 5:1-17

5. In verse 10 the Judeans told the cured man that it was not lawful to _____ his bed on the sabbath day.

Read Mark 3:1-6

6. According to verse 2, the Pharisees watched Jesus to see if He would heal on the sabbath day, "that they might _____ him."

The above verses are an example of the many Judean regulations (traditions) concerning what could and could not be done on the sabbath day. The sabbath (indicating a rest) was originally intended to be a spiritually upbuilding time. However, the Judean religious leaders gradually made it a burden by greatly increasing the sabbath restrictions (traditions). The true purpose and intent of the sabbath was made void by these Judeans. They turned the people into slaves to tradition rather than allowing the sabbath to serve men. The rabbis had a saying: "The sins of everyone who strictly observes every law of the Sabbath, though he be an idol worshiper, are forgiven." It is this kind of vain reasoning that leads to disobedience of God's Law. Is not modern Israel plagued with similar "vain reasoning" in its various forms and experiencing mass disobedience to God?

Racial Indulgence

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 3:1-12

1. In verse 9 John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees who were seeking escape from wrath, "think not to say within yourselves, We have _____ to our father . . ."
2. In verse 7 John called these Judean leaders, "O generation of _____ . . ."

In the above passage of Scripture, John the Baptist scolded the Judean leaders for their lack of a sincere repentant attitude. He further condemned their belief in "racial indulgence" — the idea that they needed no repentance and would escape wrath because they were descendants of Abraham (a concept deceiving many Israelites today). The word **vipers** comes from the Greek word **echidna** (#2191 in *Strong's Concordance*), meaning "an adder or other poisonous snake." *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* further defines this word as "cunning, malignant, wicked men." The inference is that the religious teachings (traditions) of these Judeans were poisoning the minds of others, just as they are doing today.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read John 8:31-37

3. In verse 32 Jesus told the Judeans, "And ye shall know the _____, and the truth shall make you _____."
4. After Jesus offered them freedom, the Judeans responded in verse 33, "We be Abraham's _____, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made _____."

In these verses we see another example of the erroneous Judean belief in racial indulgence. They believed they were blameless simply on the basis of being Abraham's descendants. They did not consider themselves to be in bondage; thus, they did not need Jesus to set them free. The word **free** is rendered from the Greek words **eleutheros** (#1658) and **eleutheroo** (#1659), meaning to be "exempt" from obligation or liability. They considered themselves exempt (free) from bondage on the basis of their ancestral lineage; as a result, they saw no need for repentance and reform (like many today).

This leads us to yet another false teaching of the Judeans — that of self-righteousness. They believed they could attain righteousness by their own efforts through observance of ritual. This was nothing but the humanist doctrine of "personal salvation" — man "saving" himself by works. Jesus and the disciples strongly condemned this heresy.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Romans 9:31-10:4

1. In verse 32 Paul states that Israel (including the Judeans) did not attain righteousness because they sought it not by _____, but by the _____ of the law.
2. In verse 3 Paul states that they went about to establish their own _____ without submitting themselves unto God's righteousness.

In the above Scriptures, Paul was addressing those in Israel (many of whom were Judeans) who were trying to prove their own righteousness through the keeping of the traditions rather than submitting to God's righteousness (faith in Christ). In effect, they were placing their form of righteousness (faith in traditions) over that of God's way (faith in Jesus).

The word **righteousness** is translated from the Greek word **dikaiosis** (#1343 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "equity: specifically justification," which in turn is derived from #1342 (**dikaios**), meaning "equitable; innocent, holy." By doing the "right things," men are justified. Today, Judeo-Christian churches teach people they can be "saved" by mystery and ritual — respond to an alter call, say the "sinner's prayer," be a member of the "right" church, be baptized a certain way, say the right creeds, etc. (traditions of men).

FIND THE ANSWERS

3. In Luke 16:15 Jesus told the covetous Pharisees, "Ye are they which _____ yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed (right) among men is _____ (not right) in the sight of God."
4. In Luke 10:29 we see that the Judean lawyer, who had asked Jesus how to inherit eternal life, was "willing to _____ himself."

Read Luke 18:9-14

5. Verse 9 states that Jesus spoke a parable to those who "trusted in _____ that they were _____."
6. In verse 14 Jesus indicates that the repentant publican went to his house _____ rather than the self-righteous Pharisee.

In the verses above the words **justify** and **justified** are rendered from the Greek word **dikaioo** (#1344 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "to render (i.e. show or regard as) just or innocent." It comes from the same root word (**dikaios**, #1342) Paul used in Romans 10:3 (see above).

Jesus essentially told the Judeans that seeking their own righteousness outwardly (to get esteem from men) while their heart was not right (nonrepentant) was an **abomination** (#946 ; " a detestation, i.e. idolatry") to God. Jesus used the examples of the Judean lawyer and Pharisee in the Scriptures above to illustrate this idolatrous mind set — a mind set prevalent in Judeo-Christianity today.

System-Trained "Teachers of the Law"

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In John 7:15 the Judeans who heard Jesus' teaching said, "How knoweth this man letters (writings; law), having never _____."

Read Mark 6:1-6

2. After questioning the source of Jesus' wisdom and acknowledging His common ancestry, the people were _____ at Him (verse 3).

Read Luke 20:1-8

3. According to verse 2 the chief priests, the scribes and the elders questioned Jesus concerning who had given Him _____ to teach the people.

The Judean culture provided for a highly structured and tightly controlled system of higher education, limited exclusively for training the "teachers of the law" — the priests and scribes (who, for the most part, were Pharisees). They made a systematic study of their law (human traditions) and its exposition their occupation. Thus, this special class of Judeans enjoyed great power over the common people. By not being a part of this group, Jesus was not considered a "learned" man by many Judeans and was denounced by those in power for His lack of "accepted" authority, as were His disciples. A very similar set of circumstances exists within Christendom today, with its "experts" of theology and law who have undergone rigorous educational training. They, too, exercise tremendous power over the people, and they use that power to control, deceive and plunder them. Ironically, it is the people's recognition and submission to these feigned experts' authority that gives them this devilish power over them.

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. According to John 9:22, the Judeans executed power over the blind man's parents through the threat of putting them "out of the _____."
5. According to John 12:42, even some of the chief rulers were fearful of being "put out of the synagogue" by the _____.
6. In John 16:2 Jesus tells His disciples they will be put _____ of the synagogues.

In the above verses the phrase "put out of the synagogue" is translated from the Greek word **apesunagogos** (#656 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "excommunicated." This illustrates the kind of power these so-called "learned" men had over the people, not unlike our situation today. Churches and religious leaders have always controlled people through the threat of excommunication, as well as the fear of eternal damnation in hell.

Lesson 8 will continue to examine the beliefs, traditions, customs and practices of the Judeans in terms of their pagan characteristics and how they can be related to modern organized religion.



LESSON 7

Traditions and Practices of the Judeans

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1. tradition
2. not washing their hands before eating
3. the Pharisees and all the Judeans (indicating widespread observance)
4. men
5. hypocrites
6. commandment; tradition

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1. a Pharisee
2. Jesus didn't wash before dinner (a violation of Pharisee tradition)
3. ravaging; wickedness
4. extortion; excess

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1. honor thy father and mother
2. "Corban"
3. tradition
4. what comes out of him rather than what enters him
5. heart (thoughts and feelings of the mind)
6. blind; blind

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1. circumcision
2. fables; truth
3. defiled
4. deny

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5. circumcised; saved
6. sabbath
7. nothing; nothing

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1. leaven
2. doctrine
3. philosophy; tradition
4. deceive; disobedience
5. doctrines

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1. prince (chief or first in rank)
2. Beelzebub
3. lawful
4. healed
5. carry
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1. Abraham (indicating racial lineage)
2. vipers
3. truth; free
4. seed (offspring); free

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1. faith; works
2. righteousness
3. justify; abomination
4. justify
5. themselves; righteous
6. justified

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3. authority
4. synagogue
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6. out

Notes:

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