



**The heart is deceitful  
above all things, and  
desperately wicked: who  
can know it?**

**—Jeremiah 17:9**

## **Mark Chapter 7**

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- Defilement Comes from Within
- Jesus Casts out Demon from Syro-Phoenician Woman's Daughter
- Jesus Heal's a Deaf Mute

# Mark Chapter 7

## Context

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- In Chapter 7, a second delegation of Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem to Galilee (100 miles, first one was in Mark 3:22) to confront Jesus and discredit Him in response to His widespread popularity which was threatening their system of self-righteousness.
- After over 2 years of ministry, and coming off this peak of popularity and amazing miracles, Jesus' ministry is now becoming more intense as many followers cannot accept the hard message and leave,
- The Pharisees now increase the pressure to discredit Him.

# Mark Chapter 7

## Key Themes

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- **Spiritual Hypocrisy (v.8 is the theme)**
  - Living by the Rules (made by man), Not the Heart
  - Placing appearances over reality and living a lie
- **Defilement comes from Within**
- **Salvation is extended to the Gentiles;**
- **Discipleship depends on Faith and Humility and is centered Entirely on Jesus**

## Mark Chapter 7:1-5

# Religious Traditions

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- The traditions of the elders consisted of extrabiblical rules (written in the **Talmud**) that had been passed down from the time of Babylonian captivity intended to ensure that no one broke the laws of Moses
- However, over time these rules and regulations began to undermine and become more important than the law it was intended to protect, and people began to measure their spiritual condition in terms of obeying these rules more than their sincere love for God and humble obedience to His Word. (Like fasting, only required one day per year on “Day of Atonement”, but Pharisees extended this to 2 days/week)
- **Pharisees**: Sincere committed Jews; Strict (rigid) followers of the oral traditions (Talmud); most Scribes were also Pharisees; term means “Separated Ones”. i.e. Bible said do not work on Sabbath, they defined what was “Work”.
- **Saducees** were political group who did not believe in many of the Bible doctrine and disappeared after 70 AD.
- **Sanhedrin**: Council of 71 members, dominated by chief priests and Saducees

- **The Talmud** had a traditional ritual that required ceremonial (not hygienic) hand washing rituals before eating, however, this was not the law of Moses (which only applied to **priests** before entering the tabernacle (Ex. 30:19; 40:12) or people being cured of **leprosy**) and the Pharisees were angry that Jesus allowed His disciples to openly disregard this ritual.
- The **traditional hand washing** was not for the physical cleanliness, but because they thought food would be defiled by contact with spiritually unclean hands, such as a gentile or careless Jew in the marketplace.
- Jesus probably told His disciples not to wash purposely, and therefore the Pharisees were not concerned about the disciple's practice as much as Jesus' teaching.
- Jesus responded to the Pharisee's criticism by calling them **hypocrites (v6)**, because while they looked and claimed to be holy and righteous, their hearts were unrepentant and far from God.
- **Jesus widens the perspective to tradition in general by including other containers (v.8). Matthew 23:25**
- Like Chapter 4 (Parable of the Sower), this passage includes an extended teaching, a call to "hear" & "understand", inside/outside distinctions, a parable and emphasis on the Word.
- Jesus teaches that the real source of hard-heartedness is the traditions of manmade religion and sin in the heart.

## Mark 7:6-8

# God Cares about the Intent of the Heart

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- Jesus quotes from **Isaiah 29: 13** “**This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.**”
- Jesus knew that neither He nor His disciples needed to follow these traditions, and the only authority was the scriptures and to worship God with all your heart.
- Jesus is condemning ritualistic or legalistic churches, even if these same churches emphasize scripture and the gospel.
- Like the Jews of Isaiah’s day, the Pharisees substitute tradition for truth (v8).
- Read: **1 Sam. 16:7** & **1 Chronicles 28:9**

# “the LORD looks at the heart.”

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1 Samuel 16:7

- <sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. **The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.**”

1 Chronicles 28:9

- <sup>9</sup> “And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for **the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you;** but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.

## Mark 7:9-13

# Jesus Gives an Example using “Honour your father and your mother” & Corban

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- Jesus illustrates by contrasting the tradition of Corban with God’s word
- Corban is a gift (often a sacrificial offering) dedicated to God.
- Jesus explains Corban for us – if a Jew devoted some of his resources to God by calling them “Corban”, those resources could not be used for anything else, including helping their family (i.e. aging parents). The Pharisees considered this to take priority over the Fifth Commandment.--
- Jesus reminds them that it’s **God’s Will in the 10 Commandments that we honor our parents. Long life depends on it** (Ex. 20:12; Deut 5:16) **& Those who do not honor their parents must DIE** (Mark 7:10; Ex 21:17; Lev 20:9)
- In Mark 7:13b “...And many such things you do.”, **Jesus widens the perspective and applies the principle of Corban to religion in general**. It is as idolatrous as the religion of Isaiah’s day.



## Mark 7:9-13

# Jesus Cancels the Food Laws of Lev. 11

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- After God set Israel apart for a special purpose at Sinai (Ex. 19:3-6), **certain foods were declared unclean** for Israel not because they were unhealthy or evil, but because God made food laws a sign of Israel's separateness (Lev. 20:25-26). Uncleanness could be transmitted by contact from unclean food to people, cooking utensils and their contents (Lev. 11:24, 33-35).
- Jesus is amazingly saying that He has the divine authority to change the laws, and **He is cancelling and replacing the food laws** by a new covenant promised by the prophets (Jer. 31:34; Mark 2:18-28).
- v 19 **"...thus purifying all foods."** had vast implications. In saying this, Jesus radically redefined the food laws and stated that it's **not what a man eats that separates him from God, but what a man is in the motives of his heart.**
- **The cancelling of food laws is symbolic of the cancelling of the whole Law which separated Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:13-15),** and was so important that Peter had to learn it twice, Cornelius in **Acts 10: 28** and again in **Galatians 2:11-13** when Paul has to correct him for not eating with Gentiles.

## Mark 7: 15, 20-23

# Uncleanness (SIN) Comes from Our Hearts

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- **“There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him, but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man...For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed**
  - **Evil thoughts** - Deceit
  - **Adulteries – marital infidelity** - Lewdness
  - **Fornications - pornography**
  - **Murders** - An Evil Eye – envy, self-centered jealousy
  - **Thefts** - Blasphemy
  - **Covetousness – greed** - Pride
  - **Wickedness** -Foolishness.”
- This list of Sins **begins with EVIL THOUGHTS**, and implies that this first item leads to all the other specific sins. Combines Actions & Attitudes – Sermon on the Mount warns of attitudes as well as actions are sin.
- **The implications are that everyone is “unclean” and under the judgement of God. It is the “HEART” or the inner thought life and motives of a person that makes them unclean and is the source of sin.**

## Mark 7: 14-23

# Jesus Explains Parable to the “Insiders”, “New Israel” and Does Not Explain it to the “Outsiders”, or Unbelievers

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- Jesus tells the parable to the crowd and then explains it to the disciples “**Inside**” the house - Mark 7:17 (3:31-35; 4:20, 34) who He calls “**without understanding**”(v.18)
- Jesus’ explanation is amazingly clear and complete and deals with:
  - Hand Washing - the Isaiah quote (heart);
  - Unclean Foods
  - Also with the idea of “devoted or “holy things” such as Corban.

# The Importance of the Mind

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## Proverbs 4:23

- “**Guard** your **heart (mind)** with all diligence, For out of it *spring* the issues of life.”

We must be diligent in what we allow our minds to receive (TV, books, games, conversations, etc.)

## Proverbs 23:7

- “**For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.**”

Your thoughts will determine your character

## Isaiah 26: 3

- “You will keep *him* in perfect peace, whose **mind** is stayed on You, Because he **trusts in You.**”

We must keep our mind focused on **TRUSTING Jesus** and the Word.

# The War is Against Thoughts

## The Battle is for Truth

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- **2 Corinthians 10:3-6** “<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.
- <sup>4</sup> For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down **strongholds**, <sup>5</sup> casting down **arguments** and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**,

Any thought that is contrary to God's Word must be taken captive

The Spiritual Armour weapons are used against **THOUGHTS!**

**Spiritual Strongholds are lies or false beliefs (THOUGHTS) from Satan. Sin is what creates Strongholds.**

The only way to defeat falsehoods is by the “**Sword of the Spirit**” or the Truth of God's Word. [John 17:17](#)

# Strongholds = INCORRECT THINKING

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- Literally speaking a Stronghold is a reference to a fortress to defend cities from invading armies.
- Satan establishes wrong ways of thinking in our minds and they become strongholds and keep us captive in sin. (i.e. Evolution; Philosophy; Feminism; Emotional damage from upbringing or relationships that create lies we believe).
- This state of mind, in particular, **takes the form of an argument, a false logic or speculation (that is contrary to the Word of God)**
- **When we sin, we give Satan an opportunity (Eph. 4:27) to build a stronghold in our minds.** It may be that we rationalize the sin and as a result feel no need to confess it.
- To destroy strongholds, we must first identify them and then replace the lies with the truth of the Bible.

# Class Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of religious **traditions** or beliefs that are similar to the issues of the Pharisees?
2. Are some rules and traditions good?
3. When can traditions become dangerous?
4. **Hypocrisy** – Does the way we appear to others take priority over the reality of who we are to God? Are we concerned about serving God or serving man. Are we living a lie? Do we practice what we preach – see Matt. 23:1-36
5. **If all evil comes from the heart** and our thoughts, Romans 12:2 calls for a “renewing of our mind”, what we think is who we are and determines our actions. **How can we put this principle to righteous living?**

## (Mark 7: 24-30)

# Jesus Casts Out Demon from Woman's Daughter & Shows that Gentiles are also Included

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- Jesus now goes from the Jews (who He says are no cleaner than anyone else) to the Gentiles, to the region of Tyre and Sydon (Mark 7:24) and does a parallel journey similar to the one He did with the Jews earlier (crowds; casting out demons; healing sickness with authority).
- One difference is the **emphasis on preaching is absent**, suggesting that Jesus is not taking the gospel to the Gentiles (until after the Cross), but instead **showing the disciples that the gospel will be for everyone, including Gentiles**.
- After Chapter 6 we are left wondering that if even the disciples can still have hard hearts, how can anyone be the kind of follower Jesus wants. In Chapter 7, **Jesus shows us that even a Gentile can be a true follower if they are humble and trust in Jesus with their heart**.
- The woman is Gentile by birth and culture ("Greek, Syro-Phoenician) and **is similar to Jairus** in that she fell at His feet and begged for healing for her young daughter who was demon possessed, who was not present.
- Another example of **demon possession and exorcism**, however, **this time it is in a child!**



## (Mark 7: 24-30)

# Jesus Casts Out Demon from Woman's Daughter & Shows that Gentiles are also Included

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- Jesus replies in a parable of the **priority of Israel, as children of God** (Ex 4:22, Deut 14:1, 32:6; **Is 1:2**, Jer 31:9, **Hos 11:1-3**). In Matthew 15:24 Jesus says, “**I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** – therefore, in this context, the “Children” are referring to the Jews or the lost sheep of Israel.
- “Dogs” – play on words – Jews have 1<sup>st</sup> claim to the Kingdom blessings (Rom. 1:16), woman recognizes that and just asks for the leftovers. Consistent with **Romans 11:17**, Gentiles are the wild olive branches grafted in to share the blessings that belong to Israel.

## (Mark 7: 24-30)

# Jesus Casts Out Demon from Woman's Daughter & Shows that Gentiles are also Included

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- **In the context of the feeding miracles, “bread” suggests redemption** and the verb translated “eat all they want” in Mark 7:27 is the same as “were satisfied” in Mark 6:42 & 8:8
- Romans 9-11 is devoted to showing that God saves the Gentiles without breaking any of His promises to Israel, consistent with Jesus’ teaching here (Gen 12:3 – covenant).
  - “Little Dogs” (v.27 & v 28) - GENTILES second
  - “Little Crumbs” (v 28) - BREAD – redemption/salvation
  - “Little Children” (v 28) - JEWS/ISREAL first
- Jesus does not mean “dogs” in an insulting derogatory sense, because in the Greek, dogs refers to household pets, and was intended to mean that others took preference over her.

## (Mark 7: 24-30)

# Jesus Casts Out Demon from Woman's Daughter & Shows that Gentiles are also Included

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- The woman showed **SAVING FAITH** by responding with an acknowledgement Jesus is **Lord**, and that she and her child were extremely lowly, humble and dependent on Jesus' grace which she had no right to.
- The privileged **Pharisees** by refusing to admit they were sinners in need of a saviour (Mark 2:17; 7:1-13) showed themselves to be "**outsiders**". However, the response of this apparent outsider, the **Gentile woman** and her daughter, resembles that of "**insiders**".
- Matthew 15:28 "**O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.**" Jesus rewards her "faith" by healing her daughter and casting out the demons from a distance.

# Class Discussion Questions

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1. Do we make judgements on people we consider “outsiders” like the gentile woman? i.e. murderers? Is love and forgiveness limited to only those who are not very bad? Are we really any different than the Jews who thought the Gentiles were “unclean”.
2. Parable of the Good Samaritan – Luke 10:25-37 – The “Samaritan” was hated like the Gentiles, and it was two Jewish religious leaders who passed him by. Who is our neighbor and how do we treat them?

## (Mark 7: 31-37)

# Jesus Heals a Deaf Mute

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- After healing the demon possessed girl, Jesus departs Tyre and Sidon and went to the region of Decapolis, the place where Jesus healed the demon possessed man in Mark 5: 1-20.
- Jesus was brought a deaf and mute man to heal. Since we know that Jesus is not concerned to perform miracles except in so far as they teach, **the deafness of the man is significant.**
- Jesus has taught and shown that what sets the “insiders” and New Israel apart from “outsiders” is how they Hear, Understand and Believe, (Mark 4:1-34, especially 4: 10-12).
- **Mark uses the healing of the deaf mute and the blind man to show how Jesus enabled the disciples to “see” and “hear” the message of the feeding miracles: that He is the Redeemer Christ ( Mark 8:17-21). Remember the judgement in Mark 4:12**

(Mark 7: 31-37)

# Jesus Heals a Deaf Mute

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- The detailed description of how Jesus “sighed” as He looked up to heaven to show the source of His power, and said “**Be opened**” seems to make the miracle look difficult, as if to say, the **real miracle isn't the physical healing, but it's the opening of Spiritually Deaf Ears** to establish communication with someone who cannot hear or understand.
- The strong word for “**sigh**” links to **Mark 8:12**, indicating Jesus exasperation with the **spiritual deafness** of mankind, and the word “**Ephphatha**” is significant because it implies the opening of the whole person, not just the ears.
- Jesus took the metaphors of “deafness” and “blindness” from Isaiah, who prophesied that at the true return from exile, spiritual deafness and blindness would be cured (**Is. 29:18; 35:5-6**).