

# Matthew 15:1 - 16:20

## Day 1

The Pharisees Question Jesus. Read Matthew 15:1-14

1. Who came to Jesus and what did they accuse Him of breaking/transgressing? 15:1,2

- How would you compare the Pharisees' heart and concerns to Jesus' heart and concerns for the people? (14:35,36)

**FYI:** "Up to this point, most of Jesus' ministry has been in the region of Galilee. Galilee was separate from Judea, where Jerusalem was. These scribes and Pharisees are an official delegation from Jerusalem, coming to investigate and assess the words and work of this man Jesus."  
- David Guzik

"**Traditions of the elders**" (15:2)"This tradition went beyond the OT books and included all the additions and elaborations that had been created over the centuries by the elders."  
- Africa Bible Commentary (1141)

"The Jews...for the most part attached greater importance to this tradition than to the written law."  
- The New Unger's Bible Dictionary

"The traditions of the elders was the oral tradition based on interpretations of the law. They washed their hands ceremonially to remove defilement, not for hygienic purposes (See Mark 7:2-4)" - The Nelson Study Bible (1601)

2. In response, what did Jesus say that following their tradition was breaking/transgressing? 15:3 (Note: What was often the result when men tried to test Jesus and judge Him?)

- What practice of the Pharisees' did Jesus use to illustrate this? 15:4-6

3. List the words that describe what they were doing to the word of God:

- 15:3
- 15:6

### **Digging Deeper**

What regard did David have for God's word?  
Psalm 119:9-16

4. What did Isaiah prophesy about their outward actions versus inward attitudes? 15:8 (Mark the two titles Jesus used to describe the Pharisees and scribes in 15:7,14.)

- What was wrong with their traditions and teachings? 15:9 (How would you describe what their "teachings/rules/precepts of men" had done to the foundation of the Word of God/Scripture?)

5. What opportunity did Jesus take with this confrontation? 15:10 (How do you think the people felt about these words to the Pharisees?)

- Why won't external rules and rituals, or "no amount of washing", solve the problem? 15:11 (What is the only solution? Titus 3:5,6)

**FYI: Not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man/makes him unclean** "This is not to say that there are not defiling things that we can take into ourselves (such as pornography). But in this specific context, Jesus spoke about ceremonial cleanliness in regard to food."  
- David Guzik

"Jesus' words undermined the whole elaborated system of ritual observances that characterized Pharisaic Judaism."  
- Africa Bible Commentary (1141)

"Jesus faulted the Pharisees at two points in particular.

- They placed a heavy burden or yoke of law upon the people that God never intended (Matthew 23:4 in contrast with 11:29-30)
- Many were hypocrites, in that they were much more concerned with the outward appearance of piety and righteousness than with having a pure heart towards God (Matthew 23:5ff and 23:25-28)."

- Dr. Ralph Wilson [www.jesuswalk.com](http://www.jesuswalk.com)

6. What did Paul say about these kinds of external rules/physical restrictions in the following? Why aren't they in keeping with God's Word or why don't they work?

- Colossians 2:20-23

- 1 Timothy 4:3,4

7. What concern did the disciples bring to Jesus? 15:12 How do you think they expected Him to respond? (Why would Jesus, in love, have purposefully offended the religious leaders?)

8. What fate did Jesus say these religious leaders faced? 15:13

- How were the disciples to deal with them? 15:14a Why do you think Jesus didn't want the disciples to confront them? (Compare Paul's experience in Acts 19:9.)

9. How would others be affected by their teachings? 15:14b (See Isaiah 9:16)

- How does this explain Jesus' harshness with them? See also Matthew 23:15

**Applying the Word:** Why do *religious* rules and regulations often feel much more godly and comfortable than a *relationship* with Jesus Christ? Explain where the focus is with each.

## Day 2

### Read Matthew 15:15-28

#### **Jesus Explains His Teaching**

10. What problem did the disciples have? 15:15,16

- Why aren't external things ("*things that go into the mouth*") a source of defilement? 15:17 (See how this is stated in Mark 7:18,19.)

**"dull/lacking understanding"** *sunetos* Strong's NT:801 denotes 'without discernment,' or 'understanding' (a negative, *sunemi*, 'to understand')"  
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

**Defile/make unclean** *koinoo* Strong's NT:2840 *koinoo*; to make (or consider) profane (ceremonially)

11. What is the real source of what defiles a man? 15:18,19

- Note what is first on the list in 15:19. Why do you think Jesus started there? (See Mark 7:21,22 for another list.)

#### ***Digging Deeper***

In Romans 7:7-25 Paul shares his personal struggle with the law and sin. Why do you think coveting (7:7), in particular, convicted him?

What did he conclude? 7:24

What was the solution? 7:25

12. How did Jesus answer the Pharisees question? 15:20

#### **The Syrophenician Woman**

13. To where did Jesus withdraw? 15:21 How do you think people felt about His going into "unclean" Gentile territory?

- From Mark 7:24, what happened even there?

#### ***Digging Deeper***

For another time when Jesus went into foreign territory, to meet with someone, see John 4.

14. What request did a Canaanite woman make? 15:22 What title did she use to address Jesus? What does this say about her understanding of who Jesus was?

- Amazingly, how did Jesus respond? 15:23a
- How did the disciples respond to her? 15:23b What does this show about their relationship with Canaanites?

**FYI:** "Matthew describes the woman who sought Jesus' help using the ancient label Canaanite, and not the more contemporary label, Syro-Phoenician...This word emphasized the racial tensions that existed between the Jews and Gentiles like the Phoenicians from Tyre and Sidon. The Jews longed for a Messiah who, like Joshua, would rid the land of Gentiles. Many would have regarded the Syro-Phoenicians as similar to the remnant of the seven Canaanite nations that the Israelites had yet to drive out at the time of Joshua's death (Deut. 7:1; Joshua 13:1-7)."  
- Africa Bible Commentary (1142)

15. What explanation did Jesus give for His silence? 15:24

- What did this cause the woman to do? 15:25 How did she address Jesus this time? (*In spite of silence (v. 23) and rebukes (v. 23b,24), what do you think may have motivated/encouraged her to keep asking? How do you picture Jesus in this scene?*)

16. Although Jesus' reply seems harsh, what was He explaining about His mission and her position? 15:26 (Compare Mark 7:27) (*Why do you think He was making such an issue about this? Why was this important to her and the disciples' understanding?*)

- Instead of being discouraged, what did this cause the woman to do? 15:27 What does this reveal about her understanding and trust in Jesus? 15:27
- What did she admit about her standing? How honest and transparent was she now? On what basis was she asking for help?

**FYI: Dogs/little dogs** Strong's NT:2952 *kunarion*; a young puppy

"**little**... softened the traditional Jewish slur towards Gentiles, which called them **dogs** in the most derogatory sense. We read of *nothing else* that Jesus did during this time in Tyre and Sidon. His only divine appointment was to meet the need of this woman of faith and her sick daughter."  
- David Guzik

"His seeming harshness to the Canaanite woman is best understood as not only a test of her faith in the God of Israel, but also as a means to show His disciples that Gentiles also were included in God's plan and that they too could have saving faith."  
- Henry Morris

17. How did Jesus honor the woman? 15:28 (How had the women's relationship with Jesus changed by the end of the conversation?)
- What was extraordinary about her daughter's healing? (Contrast Matthew 13:58)

**Applying the Word:** How willing are you to walk "a hundred miles" to reach out to a person in need? What are ways that we can do that besides literally walking?

## Day 3

Read Matthew 15:29 - 16:4

### **Ministry in Galilee**

18. Where did Jesus go after this and what happened again? 15:29,30

**FYI:** "This crowd may have included many Gentiles."

- Africa Bible Commentary (1142)

19. What kind of atmosphere and response did this event create? 15:31

- Luke describes the crowds in different ways: "as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him" (8:42); "the people were thick together" (11:29); "when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another..." (12:1); "Large crowds were traveling with Jesus" (14:25).

What picture does this give you of the crowds? How would you have felt in these crowds?

### **Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand**

20. Who raised the concern about food in 15:32? Why do you think Jesus shared this concern with the disciples?

- How did the disciples respond? 15:33 (Cf. 14:15b) (Do you think they were saying that it was impossible to feed the people or do you think they were acknowledging their helplessness and appealing to Jesus?)

21. What was the result of this feeding? 15:37,38 (Compare 14:20-21)?

22. What reasons would Jesus have for sending the crowds away? Where did He go after this? 15:39 (Locate on the map)

### **Pharisees and Scribes Request a Sign**

23. What further proof did the Pharisees and Sadducees want from Jesus? 16:1 What was their motive? (See how Jesus felt about this from Mark 8:12.)

**FYI: "the Pharisees and Sadducees:** Their remarkable working in unison shows a real anxiety among them. The Sadducees and Pharisees were long-standing enemies, and the fact that they can come together against Jesus shows that they regard Him as an extremely serious threat."  
- David Guzik

24. What illustration from nature did Jesus use to show their lack of discernment/reasoning? 1:2,3

25. What should they have discerned about Jesus' life/deeds/words? John 14:10-12

- About the times they were in? Matthew 12:28

26. Underline the errors these leaders were making.

- John 3:19-21 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. NIV
- John 5:39,40 "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! 40 Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life. NLT
- John 10:25,26 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.
- John 15:23-25 " 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.' ESV

27. What did Jesus call them and why? 16:4a

- How did He answer their request? 16:4 (Cf. 12:39,40)

#### ***Digging Deeper***

What phrases from Romans 1:18,21,25,28 describe the refusal to believe?

**Applying the Word:** When you encounter a problem in your life, how quickly do you remember the Lord's ability in meeting other needs in the past?

## Day 4

Jesus and the Disciples. Read Matthew 16:5-20

### Jesus Warns the Disciples

28. What problem did Jesus and His disciples encounter next? 16:5

- What warning did Jesus give the disciples? 16:6 How literal a meaning did they give this? 16:7

**FYI:** "Usually, in the New Testament leaven symbolized evil (e.g., moral corruption, (1 Corinthians 5:6ff; or Jewish legalism Galatians 5:9...)" - Irving Jensen (59)

"Leaven is a substance which instigates a decay process and thus symbolizes false doctrine." - Henry Morris

"The doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees was hypocrisy, legalism, political opportunism, and spiritual hardness." - The Nelson Study Bible (1603)

29. What did Jesus identify as the disciples' problem? 16:8

- What two incidents did Jesus remind them about? 16:9,10
- How was He trying to get the disciples to apply these miracles? 16:11,12 (Why do you think Jesus was being so patient with the disciples, but turned away from the Pharisees and Scribes?)

### Jesus Questions Peter

30. What question did Jesus ask His disciples? 16:13 How would the previous events and location have added to the significance and seriousness of this question?

**FYI:** "Caesarea Philippi was located north of the Sea of Galilee, at the base of the southwest slope of Mount Hermon. The place had long been associated with idol worship. The site for pagan worship centered on a massive stone facade, which Jesus referred to in His play on words concerning 'rock.'" - The Nelson Study Bible (1604)

31. What understanding and measure of respect were the people giving Jesus? 16:14 What were they missing?

32. How did Peter answer Jesus' question? 16:15,16 (Compare what the disciples had said earlier. 14:33)

- What did Jesus want Peter to recognize about this? 16:17 (See John 6:65) How would that be a further encouragement to Peter?

**Christ** Strong's NT:5547 *Christos*, from NT:5548; anointed, i.e. the Messiah

33. What did Jesus say about Peter's confession of faith? 16:18a (What are believers called in 1 Peter 2:5?)

34. What would Peter be opening? 16:19a

- What judgements would he make? 16:19b (In Matthew 18:18, who else was given this authority?)

**FYI:** "The **"keys"** here are not literal keys, of course, but rather a metaphor for the message that would open the way to salvation for those hearers who would respond. A similar figurative use of a "key" is in Luke 11:52, where Jesus charged the lawyers of His day with taking away 'the key of knowledge.' Peter, representing all the apostles, used these keys (i.e., the gospel message) to open the door to the Jews at Pentecost, then to the believers of Samaria, then to the Gentiles... (Acts 2:14-41; 8:14-17; 10:17-48)." - Henry Morris

**"Binding and loosing"** is a Hebrew idiom for exercising authority. To bind = to declare what shall be binding (eg. Law and precepts) and what shall be not binding... This power was given to the others (John 20:23) and exercised e.g. in Acts 5:1-1-16)." - The Companion Bible (1346)

"The Jewish rabbis of that day...'**bound**' or '**loosed**' an individual in the application of a particular point of the law." - David Guzik

35. What problems would declaring Jesus divinity have created? 16:20 (What was Jesus waiting for? John 7:8,30)

**Applying the Word:** How would you answer Jesus' question: "Who do you say that I am?"