

## MARK 6:45-7:23

Jesus walks on water and teaches about purity

*He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.*

Job 9:8

1. There are two primary incidents of hardness of heart in the OT—the hardening of the Pharaoh’s hear, and the incident at Massah and Meribah. *Read Ex 17:1-7*. What did Moses mean when he said the Israelites’ hearts were hardened?
2. ***Read Heb 3:7-19*. Who was this written to? How were they in danger of being hard-hearted?**
  - The sea was a place of terror for the Jews and other ancient people. What’s more, there was a local rumor that the last thing a boatman saw before drowning in Galilee was a ghost on the water.<sup>1</sup>
  - The language for “pass by” in this passage (48) calls to mind the theophanies of Moses (Ex 33:19) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:11).<sup>2</sup>
3. *Read 6:45-56*. At the start of this passage, the apostles still hadn’t had any rest after their first preaching/healing/exorcism trip. Why, after dispersing the crowd, did Jesus send the apostles away in a boat?

**The apostles spent all night struggling against the wind trying to cross the Galilee. They did nothing to land themselves in this situation; and in the end, Jesus was in the same boat with them.**
4. How and why were the disciples’ hearts hardened? What had they failed to understand about the loaves?

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Notes for me from Porter, S. E., & Evans, C. A. (2000), *Dictionary of New Testament Background* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press:

- **The logical extension of Paul’s conception was that all things are pure to the pure, precisely the formulation attributed to him in Titus 1:15 (“To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted”).**
- **In his letters and in letters attributed to him there is an express connection between named vices, which are cataloged, and “impurity” (Rom 1:24; Gal 5:19; Eph 4:19; 5:3; Col 3:5). Early Christianity saw a shift in the understanding of the medium of impurity: no longer foods but moral intentions conveyed the danger of defilement. And those intentions are as specifically identified in the NT as impure foods are discussed in rabbinic literature, because the danger in both cases was understood to be an impurity that made a real and dangerous separation from God.**
- **There is no question, therefore, of purity being abstracted into the realm of intention. Rather, intentionality of practice, as well as observation of the integrity of one’s body, are together held to define an ambit of purity. On such an understanding, one’s body was indeed a temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor 6:18–20; cf 1 Cor 3:16–17), and a**

**rigorous attitude toward marriage is coherent with the emphasis that a new purity is required by God for the inheritance of his kingdom (see Mt 5:27–28, 31–32; 19:3–12; Mk 10:2–12; Lk 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10–16).**

- In addition to the Laws of Moses, the pharisees developed a notion of tradition in which the laws and deliberations of the great teachers of Israel formed a chain reaching back to Moses on Sinai, adding to the Mosaic Law.<sup>3</sup> In the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, these laws were written down in what is called the Mishnah, along with a commentary, the Gemara. Together these form the Talmud. **The Jews considered tradition and scripture equally authoritative. They put a high enough weight on the traditions that one rabbi put it, “The scriptures are water, the Mishnah wine, the Gamara spiced wine.”**<sup>1</sup>
5. *Read 7:1-23.* See the handout, *Classification of the Laws of Moses*. What types of laws is Jesus addressing in this passage?
  6. Paul says in Gal 2:24, “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith” (NASB). How did the ceremonial law serve as a tutor? Why is it no longer necessary?
  7. According to Gary Delashmutt and Dennis McCallum of Xenos Christian Fellowship in Columbus, Ohio,

When we make moral rules or absolutes that are not in scripture, we have created a form of legalism. Over time, these rules tend to erode the authority of God’s word by obscuring it. Examples include Jewish hand washing (Mk 7), prohibition of drinking, dancing, movies, card playing, and in some Brazilian churches, even the wearing of sleeveless blouses by women and attending soccer games by men.

These rules don’t necessarily protect us from sin—and they exact a cost in outreach by creating a Christian subculture that is needlessly different from the rest of society. Ultimately, we have to decide which is more important—that we make it as difficult as possible to sin, or that we make it as easy as possible for others to come to Christ!<sup>4</sup>

Do you agree? Can you think of other examples of extra-Biblical prohibitions Christians follow? Are there any that you follow?

8. The pharisees wished to extend the laws of ritual purity applied to priests in the OT to all Israelites, thus making actual the vision of a priestly people.<sup>3</sup> We know their vision was a good one (1 Pet 2:4-5). If they were just pursuing it the wrong way, how does Jesus want *us* to go about it?
9. If Jesus was so explicit about rejecting the kosher laws, why did they become an issue in the early church, necessitating Peter’s rooftop vision (Acts 10) and eventually the Jerusalem compromise (Acts 15:24+)?

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<sup>1</sup> David Hewitt, *Mark* (Baker: Grand Rapids), 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Mark* (John Knox: Louisville), 1983.

<sup>3</sup> *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Ed. Raymond Brown et al. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, NJ), 1990.

<sup>4</sup> [www.xenos.org/classes/principles/cpu2w5.htm](http://www.xenos.org/classes/principles/cpu2w5.htm).