

Home Study

Mark's Epiphany



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2021

INTRODUCTION

My spouse has a specific t-shirt that is a favorite. However, when I see it, I am instantly reminded of 3rd grade afternoon recess. When I was a kid, that was the time in the day when we would eat a snack, and then go outside to play. As any typical 3rd graders would do, there would be a clear division between the boys and girls, and the occasional trash talking would happen. Usually, disagreements would end with a “clever” phrase that was a pretty big “dis” (on a 3rd grade level, that is). Most times, it would be something like this: “Well, you know, you are what you eat.” Boom ... drop mic.

So what does this have to do with a spouse’s beloved t-shirt? The shirt dons the logo from Airheads candy. Back in 3rd grade, a person eating Airheads was the perfect setup for the “You are what you eat” slam. Although this trash talk ruled the playground back in 3rd grade, in today’s lesson we see Jesus dismantle this sentiment quite nicely.

TODAY’S READING

Open your Bibles and read Mark 7:1-23. What stands out to you in this passage?

This passage clearly shows another example of Jesus using a situation as a teaching moment. This time, the Lord is showing the Pharisees and scribes, along with his own disciples, that who we are is what comes from within, not what we put into ourselves.

In the days of the New Testament, there were many traditions that the Pharisees and Jews lived by. They were not necessarily all bad traditions. However, the reason behind the traditions was distracting their attention away from the Word and will of God.

Can you think of traditions that people follow today that sometimes create a barrier to following the Word or will of God?

Read again verse 5. The question of the Pharisees and scribes initiates this important question.

The traditions they were speaking of were set in place to keep them from being unclean. The Old Testament Law forbade God’s people from eating certain foods. The Jewish elders added various traditions, though, regarding handling/cooking food items in a variety of ways.

Home Study

Mark's Epiphany



Read verses 6-8 again. Is Jesus arguing against the validity, or the intent, of the elders' cleanliness traditions? Or is the real problem that the Pharisees and scribes were allowing the traditions to twist and distort God's intended Law?

Does it seem to you that Jesus has a different understanding of what it means to be unclean than the Pharisees and scribes do? How so?

What about the truth of the old saying true, though? "Cleanliness is next to godliness." And didn't 2020 teach the whole world to wash for 20 seconds?

Although these aphorisms may be true, what Jesus is saying to the Pharisees and scribes is that it's neither the cleaning/cooking rules, nor even the specific food items that do or don't go into a body, that determine whether a person is truly clean or defiled.

Read again verses 14-15. How can you sum up the point that Jesus is making?

The Lord clarifies his point later in talking to his disciples, who don't quite get it. Read verses 20-23. From Jesus' divine perspective, following well-intended external rules is far less important than being "clean," or spiritually whole, on the inside.

One Christian commentator ([Serendipity Bible](#)) notes that verses 20-23 represent an evil heart, while Mark 12:30 represents a pure, whole, godly heart. Read that verse from chapter 12, and compare Jesus' words in both sections. What do you think of this commentator's note? How does it apply to you right now? How does it apply to where God wants your spiritual life to be?

When looking back to the days on the 3rd grade playground, eating an Airhead didn't actually make one an airhead; but teasing someone surely showed the sinful nature that is within.

You are not what you eat; but you are what you do. And what are humans notorious for being? Sinners!

But here is the good news. God knew who we were, and while we were still sinners (read Romans 5:8), he came down to earth in human form as the Son of Man and Son of God. Jesus lived a perfect life, and died on the cross to take away our sins. He beat death and the devil, and triumphantly rose again three days later. He did these incredible acts of love to cleanse us in ways that were impossible for us to accomplish on our own.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for the incredible love that you show me/us every single day. You continually renew and cleanse me/us with your ultimate sacrifice. I/We humbly ask that you help me/us to see clearly the areas in my/our life/lives that distract me/us from your Word and will for my/our life/lives. Please give me/us wisdom to discern if my/our choices are ones that are

Home Study

Mark's Epiphany



pleasing to you, and bring me/us closer to you, for nothing is more important to my/our life/lives than my/our relationship with you. Amen.