

Q7. There is the body of a person and the heart of a person. Explain what is meant by both. How are they connected and how do they function differently.  
Mark 7:17-19

Q8. Are there any foods now that are religiously unclean for the Christian?

Q9. Where do our major problems lie? Who is responsible?

Q10. What does this say about bureaucracy? Will bureaucracy be successful in solving our problems? Why? Why not?

## ***The Best News Ever***

*A Series in the Gospel of Mark*

# **14. The Heart of the Problem**

Mark 7:1-23

*Jesus is attacked here by a fact-finding commission of theologians from Jerusalem sent to investigate the campaign of healing and teaching by Jesus and His disciples which by now had become widely known and influential in Galilee. They seemed biased and suspicious from the start and had a niggling and fault-finding attitude. They attacked Him on matters of ritual and not matters of faith. The ritual was not drawn directly from the Biblical Law but from the body of explanatory tradition that was growing up around the Law, later to form the Mishnah and Gemara, the modern Jewish Talmud.*

*Family, local, denominational and other Christian traditions, practices and habits, need to be continually held under the scrutiny of God's Word so that the spirit and essence of the faith is not lost in well-meaning but dated or skewed applications of it.*

*Here Jesus severely criticises the emphasis of the religious leaders in His day, on petty external concerns, which actually worked against fulfilling the true God-given laws and distracted attention away from the real problem and source of sin.*

*This passage also raises issues relating to a Christian critique of religious and other bureaucracy today and the power of it to address problems successfully.*

Q1. There had been previous delegations of Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem sent to scrutinise John the Baptist and Jesus. What were they previously concerned about?

John 1:19, 25

Mark 3:22

Mark 2:18

Mark 2:23-24

Did they attack Jesus directly or attack Him through His disciples?

Q2. What did the concern of this delegation from Jerusalem focus on? Mark 7:1,5

*The Old Testament Law laid down a series of great moral principles in the ten commandments and the Torah, which a person must interpret and apply for themselves. In the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, a class of legal experts came into being - the Scribes, who had a passion for definition. They wanted these great principles amplified, expanded and broken down, until they issued into 1000's of little rules and regulations governing every possible action and life situation. These were referred as the "Oral Law" or Traditions of the Elders". In the third century AD they were written down, the summary being known as the Mishna.*

*The washing of hands was not to do with hygiene, but purely religious purity. Hand washing was required before every meal and between each course. The water for handwashing had to be kept in a separate large stone jar. To wash, hands were held finger tips upward. The minimum amount of water used had to be at least 1 ½ egg shells in capacity, poured to run from the finger tips to the wrist. The wet hands were then rubbed fist in palms. The water was then unclean. The same amount of water then had to be poured, with hands held down, from the wrist to the finger tips. To fail to do this meant that participants were unclean in the sight of God.*

Q3. Why do you think Mark took the time to explain the Jewish practice of hand washing? Mark 7:3-5

Q4. Did Jesus follow this custom of handwashing? Mark 7:5-8

What did He think about it?

What particularly disappointed Him about the practice?

Q5. What had their traditions done to the Law relating to caring for a person's aged mothers and fathers? Remember this was an age when there were no pensions, hospitals or nursing homes. Mark 7:9-13

Do you think Jesus just couldn't be bothered washing His hands or was he defiant against and taking a definite position against the tradition of the elders?

Why? What was Jesus more interested in?

Q6. Where did Jesus locate the main problems of the world – in a person's environment or in the human heart? Mark 7:14-15

Explain

Does a person inevitably have to succumb to the problems of their environment?

What does Jesus see as the greater and inevitable cause of our problems?