

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 55 – February 24th – Mark 7:1-23

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Mark

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|-------------------|--|
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| France, RT | <i>The Gospel of Mark</i> (The New International Greek Testament Commentary), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2002 |
| Guelich, Robert A | <i>Mark 1-8:26</i> (The Word Biblical Commentary, vol 34A), Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1989 |
| Lane, William L | <i>The Gospel of Mark</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974 |
| Taylor, Vincent | <i>The Gospel According to St Mark</i> , Macmillan NT Commentaries, London, 1952 |

Mark 7:1-20

Cf. Mt 15:1-20. "In the sequence of miracle stories around the lake in 6:31-56 Jesus has appeared as a figure of powerful action rather than a teacher, and has met with popular acclaim. With the beginning of chapter 7 we return to a situation of controversy and of teaching, the two closely woven together." France.

Verse 1

Καὶ συνάγονται πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ
τινες τῶν γραμματέων ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ
Ἱεροσολύμων

συναγω **gather (together), assemble**
γραμματεως, εως m **scribe, expert in**
Jewish law, scholar; town clerk

Suggests that the incident occurred in Galilee. "Matthew's phrase ἀπο Ἱεροσολυμων Φαρισαῖοι καὶ γραμματεῖς suggests a single group coming from Jerusalem to Galilee. Mark's wording, however, divides the group into the (presumably local) Φαρισαῖοι and τινες τῶν γραμματέων ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολυμων. Judging from the area of their concern, the scribes from Jerusalem were themselves also Pharisees, and no distinction between the two groups is discernable in the pericope. The local Pharisees are already established in the narrative as the focus of opposition to Jesus in Galilee (2:16, 24; 3:6). Local scribes have also been mentioned in 2:6, 16, but the reappearance here of *Jerusalem* scribes (first encountered in 3:22), indicates a reinforcement of the local opposition by a delegation from the capital. The fact that in both instances they are described as having arrived (καταβάντες, 3:22; ἐλθόντες here) from Jerusalem indicates that they have come specially to investigate and/or dispute with Jesus." France.

Verse 2

καὶ ἰδόντες τινὰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ὅτι
κοινᾶς χερσίν, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἀνίπτοις, ἐσθίουσιν
τοὺς ἄρτους –

ἰδόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl ὁρᾶω
see, observe

κοινος, α, ον **common, unclean**

Key word to the theme of this section.

χειρ, χειρος f **hand**

ἀνίπτος, ον **not washed according to ritual**
law

ἐσθιω and ἐσθω **eat**

ἄρτος, ου m **bread, food**

France says that the practice of washing hands before eating "was a matter of scribal development, and it is uncertain how far it had progressed by the time of Jesus. It is unlikely that ritual handwashing was yet the norm among ordinary people, and it may well be that what the Pharisees were here expecting of Jesus and his disciples was their own distinctive practice. Surely a self-proclaimed religious teacher might be expected to require of his followers at least as rigorous a ritual practice as the Pharisees expected of theirs."

Verse 3

οἱ γὰρ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ πάντες οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐὰν
μὴ πύγμῃ νίψωνται τὰς χεῖρας οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν,
κρατοῦντες τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων

Ἰουδαῖος, α, ον **a Jew, Jewish**

"The inclusion of πάντες οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in this description along with the Pharisees is more impressionistic than historically exact, since there is no evidence that the sort of precautions described were yet observed by Jews in general, if indeed they ever were. It was precisely the observance of such rules which marked out the members of the Pharisaic party from the general populace." France.

ἐὰν μὴ except, unless
 πυγμῆ, ἡς f fist (πυγμῆ of doubtful meaning with the fist, to the wrist)

Cranfield suggests that πυγμῆ νιψῶνται is a reference to minor washing before eating in contrast with βαπτίζονται which refers to a more serious ablution. He adds "πυγμῆ might be explained as a not very felicitous way of saying 'up to the wrist'. Perhaps more probably it means 'with a fistful' with reference to the small amount of water necessary for the minor ablution. Other explanations have been suggested, and the problem cannot be said to have been definitively settled." The difficulty of the phrase gave rise to several textual variants.

νιψῶνται Verb, aor midd subj, 3 pl νιπτῶ
 wash; midd wash oneself
 κρατέω hold, hold fast
 παραδοσίς, εὼς f tradition
 πρεσβύτερος, α, ον elder

"What is meant is the Jewish oral tradition or oral law, which was regarded as the 'fence for (preserving the integrity of) the Torah." Cranfield.

Verse 4

καὶ ἀπ' ἀγορᾶς ἐὰν μὴ βαπτίζονται οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν, καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἐστὶν ἃ παρέλαβον κρατεῖν, βαπτισμοὺς ποτηρίων καὶ ξεστῶν καὶ χαλκίων καὶ κλινῶν –

ἀγορά, ας f market place

Black takes this phrase to mean 'anything from the marketplace', but Cranfield thinks it better to understand it as 'when they come from the marketplace.'

βαπτίζονται Verb, aor midd subj, 3 pl
 βαπτίζω baptise, wash
 ἄλλος, α, ον adj other, diverse
 παρέλαβον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl
 παραλαμβάνω receive, accept
 βαπτισμός, ου m ritual washing, ablution, baptism; washing (of hands)

Some MSS have ῥαντίζονται (sprinkle, wash) rather than βαπτίζονται – Cranfield thinks the term was substituted for the sake of Gentile readers who might not understand Jewish customs. France suggests, "A Christian scribe confronted by βαπτίζομαι as a term of Jewish ritual washing might well have wished to substitute a less 'Christian' word."

ποτηριον, ου n cup
 ξεστης, ου m jug, pitcher, pot
 χαλκιον, ου n (copper) vessel, bowl
 κλινη, ης f bed, couch, stretcher, sickbed

"The evidence is strong both for and against the inclusion of καὶ κλινῶν. It is perhaps a little more likely that scribes omitted the phrase (referring to the legislation on unclean beds in Lv. 15) because it seemed inappropriate with a list of food vessels than that it was added subsequently in order to provide a fuller list of Jewish purification rituals (the washing of the bed is not explicitly mentioned in Lv. 15)..."

"The inclusion also of beds [dining couches?] (if original ...) is incongruous, but presumably represents a desire to offer an even more comprehensive account of Jewish purification rites by including also the theme of Lv. 15." France.

Verse 5

καὶ ἐπερωτῶσιν αὐτὸν οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς· Διὰ τί οὐ περιπατοῦσιν οἱ μαθηταὶ σου κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, ἀλλὰ κοινὰς χερσὶν ἐσθίουσιν τὸν ἄρτον;

ἐπερωτῶσιν Verb, pres act ptc, m dat pl
 ἐπερωτῶω ask, interrogate, question
 περιπατεῶ walk, live

"The use of περιπατεῶ with reference to a person's way of life reflects Jewish usage (cf. *halak*): it is frequent in Paul (e.g. Rom 6:4; 8:4)." Cranfield.

παραδοσίς, εὼς f see v.3

"Jesus will pick up the term παραδοσίς in his response, but will describe it pointedly not as τῶν πρεσβυτέρων but as τῶν ἀνθρώπων (as opposed to the word *of God*, v. 8) and as ὕμων (vv. 9, 13), thus questioning the automatic assumption by the Pharisees and scribes that there is authority inherent in tradition as such." France.

Verse 6

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Καλῶς ἐπροφήτευσεν Ἡσαΐας περὶ ὑμῶν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, ὡς γέγραπται ὅτι Οὗτος ὁ λαὸς τοῖς χεῖλεσίν με τιμᾷ, ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ' ἐμοῦ·

καλῶς adv well, truly

προφητεῶν prophesy

"This 'contemporising' use of OT texts is typical of much NT interpretation, and presupposes a typological understanding of continuity in the relationship between God and his people such that earlier events and situations appropriately serve as models for a later era of fulfilment, even though in themselves they had no predictive force." France.

ὑποκριτής, οὐ m hypocrite

"The thought here is probably not so much that the people concerned were consciously acting a part as that there was a radical inconsistency in their lives." Cranfield.

γράφεται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφῶ
write

The quotation is from LXX Isa 29:13.

λαός, οὐ m people, a people

χείλος, οὐς n lip

τιμῶν honour, reverence

πορρῶ adv far away, far

ἀπεχῶ be distant

Verse 7

μάτην δὲ σέβονται με, διδάσκοντες
διδασκαλίας ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων·

ματην adv in vain, to no purpose

σεβομαι worship

διδασκῶ teach

διδασκαλία, ας f what is taught, teaching,
doctrine

ἐντάλμα, τος n commandment, rule

"The contrast in Isaiah between lips (words) and heart is not taken up as a regular form of expression in the gospels, but reflects an important prophetic theme (cf. Is. 1:12-17; Hos. 6:6; Am. 5:21-24; Mic. 6:6-8, etc.) and corresponds to the charge elsewhere in the gospels that scribal religion is more concerned with external correctness than with fundamental attitudes and relationship to God (Mt. 23:23-28; Lk. 11:37-44). The priority of the internal over the external will be picked up as the focus of the alternative approach commended by Jesus in vv. 14-23, where the word καρδία will recur prominently in vv. 19 and 21." France.

Verse 8

ἀφέντες τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ κρατεῖτε τὴν
παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

ἀφιημι leave, forsake

ἐντολή, ης f command, order, instruction

"Jesus challenges the authority of the oral law radically. It pretended to be a fence to protect the Law from infringement, but in actual fact it tampered with the Law. Jesus charges the Pharisees and scribes with actually disobeying the Law of God through their exaggerated reverence for the oral law. For the Pharisees the oral law was equally binding with the written law: Jesus rejects its authority – he calls it merely 'tradition of men' ... His attitude to the written Law itself is expressed in the phrase τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ: it confronts men with divine authority." Cranfield.

Verse 9

Καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· Καλῶς ἀθετεῖτε τὴν
ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα τὴν παράδοσιν ὑμῶν
τηρήσητε·

καλῶς see v.6

"Should probably be translated 'well enough', 'all right', the sense being: 'You are making a good job of rejecting the commandment of God...' To take the sentence as a question and render: 'Are you acting rightly in ...?' seems less satisfactory." Cranfield. France speaks of a note of sarcasm.

ἀθετεῶ reject, set aside

παράδοσις, εως f see v.3

στήσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl ἵστημι set,
establish

Many MSS read τηρήσητε. It is difficult to decide which is the original reading – the external evidence is finely balanced and both make good sense in context.

Verse 10

Μωϋσῆς γὰρ εἶπεν· Τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ
τὴν μητέρα σου, καί· Ὁ κακολογῶν πατέρα ἢ
μητέρα θανάτῳ τελευτάτω·

τιμῶν honour, reverence

Ex. 20:12a = Deut 5:16a.

κακολογεῶ speak evil of, curse

ἢ or

θάνατος, οὐ m death

τελευτάτω die

Ex. 21:17 (LXX 21:16).

Verse 11

ὁμοῖς δὲ λέγετε· Ἐὰν εἴπῃ ἄνθρωπος τῷ πατρὶ
ἢ τῇ μητρὶ· Κορβᾶν, ὃ ἐστὶν Δῶρον, ὃ ἐὰν ἐξ
ἐμοῦ ὠφελῆθῃς,

ὁμοῖς an emphatic contrast with Μωϋσῆς
Κορβᾶν Corban (Hebrew term for a gift set
apart to God)

Cranfield says "To declare something *korban* was to fix upon it the character of an offering dedicated to God. It did not always mean that the thing concerned had actually to be offered; rather that it was withdrawn from its originally intended use and was no longer available for a particular person or persons." Cranfield suggests, "Jesus here has in mind a situation in which a man repents of a harsh vow which would deprive his parents of all the help which they would normally expect from their son, but is told by the scribes to whom arbitration of his case has been submitted that he must abide by the vow."

δωρον, ου n gift, offering
 ὅς ἐαν whoever, whatever
 ὠφεληθῆς Verb, aor pass subj, 2 s ὠφελεω
 gain, profit, benefit

Verse 12

οὐκέτι ἀφίετε αὐτὸν οὐδὲν ποιῆσαι τῷ πατρὶ ἢ τῇ μητρὶ,

οὐκέτι adv no longer, no more
 ἀφιμι allow, tolerate, permit
 οὐδεις, οὐδεμια, οὐδεν no one, nothing;
 οὐδεν not at all
 ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιεω

"This example drawn from a quite distinct area of law and ethics [from the food laws] serves merely to illustrate and to hold up to criticism the disproportionate concern for the authority of scribal tradition out of which the accusation in v. 5 has sprung." France.

Verse 13

ἀκυροῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ παραδόσει ὑμῶν ἢ παρεδώκατε· καὶ παρόμοια τοιαῦτα πολλὰ ποιεῖτε.

ἀκυρωω cancel, disregard, annul

τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ is not a reference to the Scriptures as a whole but to a specific divine pronouncement – the fifth commandment.

παρεδώκατε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl
 παραδιδωμι hand or give over

"Perhaps παρεδώκατε is used here rather than παρελαβετε [cf. v.4], because the scribes are here thought of not just as passive recipients of a tradition but as having had an active and responsible part in the matter." Cranfield.

παρομοιος, ον like, similar
 τοιουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative pronoun and
 adjective such, of such kind, similar

I.e. the example is illustrative of a general tendency among the scribes.

Verse 14

Καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος πάλιν τὸν ὄχλον ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· Ἀκούσατέ μου πάντες καὶ σύνετε.

προσκαλεσάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m
 nom s προσκαλεομαι call to oneself,
 summon, invite
 πάλιν again, once more
 σύνετε Verb, pres act imperat συνημι and
 συνιω understand, comprehend

Jesus uses their accusation as an opportunity for instructing the crowds.

"The words indicate that what follows is specially important and also that it calls for careful thought." Cranfield. It is important not only to listen but also to understand.

Verse 15

οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ἔξωθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτὸν ὃ δύναται κοινῶσαι αὐτόν· ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκπορευόμενά ἐστιν τὰ κοινοῦντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

For the οὐ ... ἀλλα ... form cf. 2:17, 22; 10:43; 12:25.

ἔξωθεν prep with gen from outside, outside
 δυναμαι can, be able to, be capable of
 κοινοω defile, make unclean

Jesus explains his meaning in vv 18-23.

Verse 16

Of v.16 (εἰ τις ἐχει ὠτα ἀκουειν ἀκουετω) Metzger writes, "This verse, though present in the majority of witnesses, is absent from important Alexandrian witnesses. It appears to be a scribal gloss, introduced as an appropriate sequel to verse 14."

Verse 17

Καὶ ὅτε εἰσηλθεν εἰς οἶκον ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου, ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ τὴν παραβολὴν.

ὅτε conj when, at which time
 ἐπερωταω ask, interrogate, question
 μαθητης, ου m disciple

For παραβολη see on 4:2 and 11. Cf. 4:10-12, 33-34.

Verse 18

καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοὶ ἐστε; οὐ νοεῖτε ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἔξωθεν εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς τὸν ἄνθρωπον οὐ δύναται αὐτὸν κοινῶσαι,

οὕτως and οὕτω adv. thus, in this way

Here used inferentially – 'then.'

"καὶ ὑμεῖς indicates that the disciples at least should have been able to understand the παραβολή. But their failure to grasp the significance of Jesus' ministry is now, in contrast with 3:31-35; 4:11-12, an increasingly prominent theme of the narrative, highlighted in 6:52 and further developed in 8:17-21, and one which threatens to put them on a level with the uncomprehending crowds with whom they were so sharply contrasted in 4:11-12. What differentiates them is not an inherent ability to grasp spiritual truth, but the fact that they are privileged to receive special instructions from Jesus." France.

ἄσυνετος, ον without understanding, dull

Cf. 4:13; 6:52; 8:17, 21.

νοεω understand, perceive, discern

Verse 19

ὅτι οὐκ εἰσπορεύεται αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν καρδίαν ἀλλ' εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν, καὶ εἰς τὸν ἀφεδρῶνα ἐκπορεύεται; – καθαρῖζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα.

"Whereas in English 'heart' tends to connote emotion, in both Hebrew and Greek it conveys equally, and perhaps more strongly, the spiritual and intellectual processes, including the will. It refers to what makes people what they really are, their individuality. It is thus particularly with the heart that a person relates to God, and a purported relationship with God which bypasses the heart is a mockery. It is the heart, in this sense, which Jesus declares to be unaffected by what comes in from outside. Food is of merely nutritional significance, and has in itself no bearing on a person's relationship with God." France.

κοιλία, ας f stomach

ἀφεδρῶν, ωνος m latrine

A rare word.

καθαρίζω cleanse, make clean

The variants καθαρίζων and indicatives καὶ καθαρίζαι (-εται) are best understood as attempts to 'correct' the syntax by scribes who did not recognise the parathetical nature of the clause.

βρῶμα, τος n food, solid food

"The words καθαρίζων πάντα τα βρώματα are best explained as the evangelist's own comment, drawing out the implications of Jesus' words with an eye on the contemporary problem of what was to be the church's attitude to Jewish ideas about clean and unclean foods." Cranfield. France speaks of "The revolutionary significance of this declaration, and its relevance to the relations between Jews and Gentiles in the early days of the Christian movement"

If Mark's chief source was Peter, it is interesting to consider the contribution to his understanding from the vision given Peter in Acts 10:9ff.

Verse 20

ἔλεγεν δὲ ὅτι Τὸ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκεῖνο κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον· ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that

Verse 21

ἔσωθεν γὰρ ἐκ τῆς καρδίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων οἱ διαλογισμοὶ οἱ κακοὶ ἐκπορεύονται, πορνεία, κλοπαί, φόνοι,

ἔσωθεν adv. within, inside, from within
διαλογισμός, ου m thought, opinion,
reasoning, dispute

Described first by a broad term οἱ διαλογισμοὶ οἱ κακοὶ followed by a list of examples.

κακος, η, ον evil, wrong, harmful

"The evil thoughts, which are the origin of evil acts." Cranfield. France suggests, 'evil machinations.'

πορνεία, ας f sexual immorality

κλοπή, ης f theft

φόνος, ου m murder, killing

Verse 22

μοιχεῖαι, πλεονεξίαι, πονηρίαί, δόλος, ἀσελγεία, ὀφθαλμὸς πονηρός, βλασφημία, ὑπερηφανία, ἀφροσύνη·

"The first part of the list reflects (though less clearly than Matthew) some of the commandments of the decalogue." France.

μοιχεία, ας f adultery

πλεονεξία, ας f greed, covetousness

πονηρία, ας f wickedness, uncleanness

δόλος, ου m deceit, treachery

ἀσελγεία, ας f sensuality, vice,

debauchery

πονηρός, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

ὀφθαλμὸς πονηρός "probably denotes 'envy' or 'grudgingness', 'illiberality'; cf Lk 11:34 = Mt 6:22f ..." Cranfield.

βλασφημία, ας f slander, blasphemy

ὑπερηφανία, ας f arrogance, pride

ἀφροσύνη, ης f folly, foolishness

Used in LXX of the *nabal* – the 'fool' who has no perception of ethical and religious claims – who neither knows God nor wants to know him. Cf. Lk. 12:20; Eph 5:17-18.

Verse 23

πάντα ταῦτα τὰ πονηρὰ ἔσωθεν ἐκπορεύεται καὶ κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

ἔσωθεν see v.21.