

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

THIRD DIVISION

III 4:35-7:23 *WHERE* DOES THE MESSIAH WANT TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM?

THIRD SECTION: *THE HEART?*

Mark 6:30-7:23

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III. 4:35-7:23 WHERE DOES THE MESSIAH ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM?

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III 4:35-7:23 WHERE DOES THE MESSIAH WANT TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM?

THIRD SECTION: *THE HEART?*

Mark 6:30-7:23

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Reaching the depths others don’t

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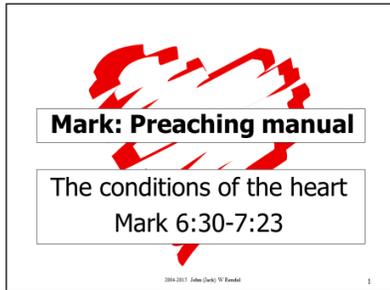
With their lips they honor me but their *hearts are far away* from me...
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Questions that aid in the study of this section, Mark 6:30-7:23

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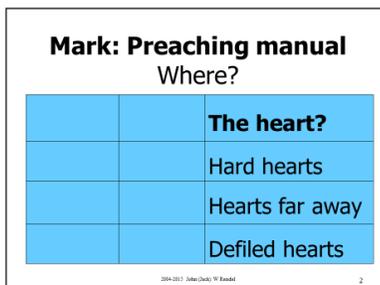


Not just miracles “out there”

We have noted already, in the first scenes of this division of the gospel, 4:35-7:23, that Jesus did great things in the universe, calming the seas, casting out demons, and healing and raising the dead. Later we noticed that he, as well as, the disciples, and John the Baptist had made a tremendously positive impact on contemporary society, in the town where Jesus had lived many years, in the cities in general, and even in the court of Herod the king. Jesus was not satisfied with doing great miracles, nor even preaching nice things, for he wanted to go a great deal further and deeper.

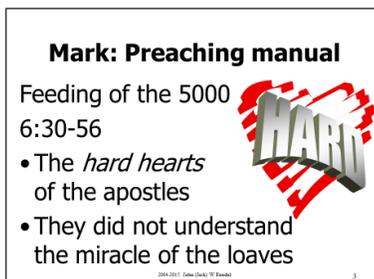
Reaching the depths others don't

Jesus wanted to reach that deepest part of people, their soul, their very heart of hearts. He was not happy with the idea of setting up a "circus of miracles". Nor did he want people to consider him the most intelligent and moral philosopher of the world. But he did want to put his finger on the main problem of us human beings. There is where he wants to establish his kingdom, in the heart of men and women.



Let's take it in sections.

I. Jesus fed five thousand 6:30-56



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The *hard hearts* of the apostles

The portion that covers verses 30 to 56 of chapter 6 is a longer story than others, and has its own sections. Jesus made an effort to get away from the people with his disciples, but the people found him once more, and finding themselves in a desert place he fed the 5000 who were with him. He sent off the twelve once more, but upon arriving at the other side the same thing happened; the people found them.

The mercies of God are unfathomable. Jesus and his followers had dedicated a great deal of time to the needs of the people in many places. In some places they were rejected. They sought time alone away from the bustle of the multitude. I understand their need. After traveling and ministering a great deal in the years 2000 and 2001, I needed some time alone, away from people, to find time with God.

What occurred to that little band would have bothered me. The people went in search of Jesus desperate to hear him, to be healed and to receive his help. Jesus had a great deal of patience and ministered to them. Being in great need he fed them as well. Jesus performed the great miracle of distributing a few loaves of bread and fish among 5000 men, not counting women and children.

In that act of dividing the loaves of bread there is much to learn. One of them has to do with prayer. At the moment of taking the five loaves of bread and two fish, Jesus raises his eyes to heaven. You remember that while in the synagogue in Nazareth, that the people asked where he had obtained his wisdom and the miracles that he did. Here we have the answer. He had received all these things from heaven. Who can calm the winds and the sea? God alone, who is in heaven. Who can cast out "Legion"? Only God in heaven. Who can heal and raise from the dead? Only God in heaven. Then Jesus blessed the loaves of bread and fish; he broke them, and with the aid of his disciples, distributed them among 5000 men! Who can take 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and multiply so little for so many? Only God in heaven. What's more, they collected 12 baskets of pieces that were left over. The people were completely satisfied! No partial answers here!

Mountain top prayer

But the themes of prayer and dependence on God don't end here. After saying good-bye to the people and sending his disciples to the other side in a boat, we see in verse 46 of chapter 6, that Jesus went up into the mountain to pray. How much time he was there we do not know. What we do understand is that aside from those quick glances at heaven, Jesus set apart time to pray. In Luke 6:12 we are told that Jesus spent the night in prayer. The life of prayer includes moments of lightning glances up to heaven for God's help. But it also means times of refreshing and supplication, waiting in the presence of our heavenly Father.

Regular prayer and crisis prayer

The prophets Daniel and Nehemiah knew both situations. Daniel was used to praying 3 times a day at his open window looking out in direction of Jerusalem. It was his habit to speak with God every day. But there were moments of crisis also, as in the case of the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had in chapter 2 of the prophecy of Daniel. The king could not remember his dream, and because the wise men and magicians of his kingdom could not recount him the dream, he was going to

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execute them all. Daniel called his 3 colleagues and Hebrew friends, and they began to pray that God would reveal the dream to them.

Nehemiah's crisis prayer

Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the Persian king. The king noted a certain sadness on his face one day and he asked him why he was sad. He was never allowed to be sad while serving the king, so he was frightened. But in that moment he prayed to God asking him to help him with an answer. God gave him grace in the eyes of the king and the king helped him in his task of returning to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. At the same time whenever we read the book of Nehemiah we find several occasions where the prayers of Nehemiah are mentioned.

When we work we work and when we pray God works

Oh that we would know more of that life of prayer! I hope that a spirit of prayer and supplication will fall upon us and upon our churches! I hope that the Lord will give us a desire to pray for our churches to grow in number and in spiritual strength! Oh that we would place prayer goals before us! Someone said that when we work, we work; but when we pray, God works! This saying will have its limits but in spite of that, it contains a mountain of truth! Have you ever thought about what would happen if you began to pray that 10% of your city, or of the county, would come to know the Lord and would begin to attend your local church? Have you thought what might occur if the Lord called 2% of your church to missionary work? For us who live in a county with a population of 33,000 inhabitants, 10% would represent 3,300 attendees at our church! And 2% of 3,300 would be 66 people for missions! What a blessing!

But some of us will say that the idea of a church of 3,300 is impossible. Impossible for whom? For us it is impossible. For God it is possible. When would God do such a thing? We do not know when, nor even whether he will do it. The Lord knows these things. Let us pray!

Hard Hearts Not Dull Minds

In that act of breaking the loaves of bread there are many other things to learn. But we leave this for now and look at something else. Later when Jesus came walking on the water and found them in the boat they are frightened, thinking that they had seen a ghost. Jesus tells them that it is he, and not to be afraid. At that point the wind died down. Jesus entered the boat. But they were overwhelming amazed and the evangelist explains the reason they were amazed, because they had not understood the miracle of the loaves of bread, because their hearts were hardened (Cf. 6:51-52). The version, The Bible of the Americas, says their "mind was dull", but the translation of greater use is "hard hearts". "Their heart was hardened" is the translation in the King James Authorized Version, and in the New American Standard Bible, as well as other versions. (In passing I can say that "hard hearts" is the rendering in the three Spanish versions the Reina Valera of 1909, of 1960 and the Reina Valera Actualizada.)

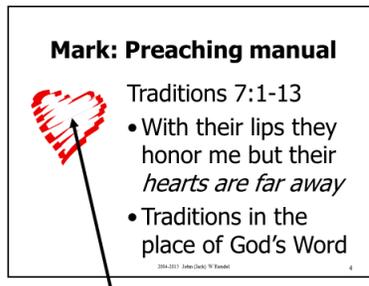
The problem of the hard heart does not begin with the disciples of Jesus. God exhorted his Hebrew people saying, *8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years (Hebrews 3:8-9 KJV)*. In the prophet Zechariah the Lord described Israel like this, *Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone (a diamond) (Zechariah 7:12 AV/KJV1769)*.

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From bullying to love

As a boy there were moments when I believed that my calling on this earth was to bully my younger brother. And when my father disciplined me, I have to admit that the reaction inside me was to harden my heart. Fortunately with time and probably with my parents' prayers I stopped bothering him and began to love him just as I should.

II. A discussion about tradition erupts 7:1-13



With their lips they honor me but their *hearts are far away* from me ...

Some of the religious leaders gathered around Jesus at that time. John Mark names the Pharisees, but also does mention specifically scribes from Jerusalem. The Scribes were learned men in the law of Moses. Besides this fact, they came from Jerusalem. We suppose they represented the orthodox vision of Judaism. They had come from the city that was the heart of the nation, but not only of the nation, but also of the religious life of the nation.

Low level conversation

Now instead of entering into conversation with Jesus upon the "heavy things" of spiritual life, as for example the character of God, love, justice, and sin, they began to complain that the disciples ate with unclean hands, not having washed. John Mark added that the Jews washed their hands very carefully, according to a tradition of the elders. What they obeyed with so much care was not the law of Moses given by God, but a tradition given by the elders of the nation. Now if that tradition was observed because they wanted to be clean of bacteria to avoid physical filth fine, but if to wash their hands, according to the tradition, was in order to be acceptable to God, no. God never required such thing.

Maybe we have some acceptable and worthwhile traditions because they do us good, but we should never convert those traditions into the word of God! Let's not claim or imply that man made traditions are God's word!

Light weight and mistaken

How sad to think that these scholars in the law were occupied with such light weight and mistaken ideas! Why didn't they speak with Jesus about prayer, and its importance? Why didn't they talk to him about spiritual circumcision, that of the heart? Why didn't they speak about the faith in God? How sad to think that the nation was guided by men, of such shallow spirituality!

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Hypocrites

Jesus gave them a shock! He called them hypocrites. He said that Isaiah was right when he wrote that the people honored God their lips but their hearts were far away from Him. Here we have the second problem that the evangelist brings to light in this part of his gospel. The first problem was a hard heart (6:51-52). Here Jesus uses a prophecy to bring out the issue of the heart "far from God" (7:6-7). The Pharisees and scribes had abandoned the commandment of God to cling to the traditions of men. In the end these elders, from whom they had received these traditions, were men and not God. We should honor our parents and our leaders but they cannot and should never take the place of God.

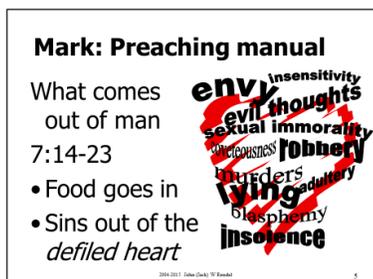
Every church runs the danger of falling into the same trap. We should be on our guard that what we teach as the word of God be what the Bible really teaches. If we teach some tradition or counsel apt for our life and society, everyone should know that is our tradition or counsel and not revealed word of God.

Another example

Jesus gave them another example of what they taught. Moses taught that a man should honor his parents but they said, if a man gives something to God and calls it a sacrifice to God, when he could have helped his parents, he earns acceptance by God. It was a system of brownie points with God! But by doing this he dishonored his parents, by not helping them. And I wonder if there were not a bit of greed lurking behind all this, that of the religious leaders, because the priests received a share of the sacrifices of the people. It was supposed that the man, that gave the sacrifice, was accepted by God. But his parents suffered and the priests gained.

Jesus added that they invalidated the word of God with their tradition that they transmitted from generation to generation. And they did many other similar things!

III. What comes out of a man defiles him 7:14-23



The sins that come out of a contaminated heart defile the man

Then Jesus launched into some teaching that would declare all foods clean, because what enters a person goes to the stomach and not to the heart. But those words were going to bring him problems with the leaders of the people. Foods do not contaminate a person because they pass through alimentary canal and eventually eliminated. What does contaminate a person is what comes out of the heart.

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We are now approaching the third theme in our discussion about the state of the human heart. The human heart is contaminated. First we saw that the heart is hard. Second we saw that it is far from God and now, and in third place, that it is contaminated.

Alone with his disciples Jesus spoke to them about the things that come out of people that contaminate them: evil thoughts, adultery, the fornication, murder, robbery, greed, lying, lasciviousness, envy, evil talk, pride, and foolishness. Now these certainly are weighty matters, of great importance.

Eating what?

Jesus did make it very clear that these things did not come from foods but from the heart. He stated clearly that these evils come out of the heart. To some of us who feel we really do not have any taboos about food, it is surprising to learn just how sensitive an issue is eating meat amongst some people of the various religions of the world. That is why Paul writes in Colossians that we should not let anyone judge us about holy days, new moons, foods, and rules about not touching and not tasting. We don't need to offend those people who hold to these rules, but rather not labor, ourselves, under what we know they prohibit.

We return to the initial question. Where does the Messiah want to establish his kingdom? Well, it seems that he not only wants to establish it in the universe, but in society, and, most of all, in the hearts of people.

Following is a list of Bible references on the heart for further study on the subject.

References about the heart: 6:52; 7:6-7; 21-23

References	Observations	Questions
Deuteronomy 6:4 (11:18; 30:14, 17)		
Deuteronomy 4:29 (Jeremiah 29:13)		
Leviticus 19:17 (I Peter 1:22)		
I Samuel 16:7 (Acts 1:24) (I Chronicles 28:9)		
Psalms 19:14; 51:10, 17		
Psalms 66:18		

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Psalms 139:23		
Proverbs 3:5		
Proverbs 4:23		
Jeremiah 17:9		

Matthew 5:8; 6:21; Romans 10:10; Acts 15:9; Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:23

Jeremiah 17

Jeremiah mentioned the heart 3 times in chapter 17 of his prophecy. In 17:1 the sin of Israel is described as written with a pencil of iron on the tablet of his heart. *The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars...* (AV/KJV1769).

On the other hand we see in Jeremiah 17:13 what the Lord said about those who abandon God. *O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth (dust), because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters* (AV/KJV1769).

They messed up our roads

When I was boy in Nigeria, one of the things that I did with my African friends was to create roads and highways, in the sand and dust behind our house. With our hands we "plowed" roads and highways for our toy cars. Then we put the toy cars on these roads; we made appropriate motor noises; and we pushed the toys along our roads. After a while we tired of playing with cars and we went inside to look for another entertainment. But some hours later when we returned to our highways in the dust, we were very upset because the adults had walked all over our creation, ruining it all. All that remained was a confusion of foot prints where a short time before we had developed a complicated system of highways. This anecdote does remind us that any thing written in the dust does not last.

The word of God through Jeremiah in chapter 17, verse 5, condemns anyone who trusts in man and who does not set his heart on God. The religious leaders of the days of Jesus had hearts separated from God. They had placed their confidence in human traditions.

In Jeremiah 17:9 God says that the heart of man is more deceitful than anything else and that there is no remedy for it. It sounds like the state of contamination that the Lord Jesus expounded in chapter 7 of the Gospel of Mark.

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Finally we see in verse 10 of chapter 17 of Jeremiah that it is the Lord who searches the heart and pays each person what he deserves.

Questions that aid in the study of this section, Mark 6:30-7:23

1. Why would the Lord be interested in establishing his kingdom in our hearts?
2. What 3 conditions of the human heart are mentioned in this section?
3. How does the heart change into a heart with these 3 conditions? What brings about these conditions?
4. How do these conditions of the heart explain why Jesus and his associates are rejected in spite of all the good they do?
5. Which of these 3 conditions of the heart do you struggle with most?
6. What other parts of the Bible describe the heart in these terms?