



### LESSON 7

# TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF THE JUDEANS

## THE CULTURE OF BABYLON

We learned in Lesson 6 that the term “Judean” was often used to identify the residents of Judea, as well as anyone who adhered to the customs and religious beliefs of Judean culture. We also learned that Judean culture was transplanted from Babylon and reflected Babylonian culture.

Prior to her deportation and captivity, Israel had abandoned God’s laws and culture established through Moses. They abandoned God and chose to pattern their culture after the Babylonian model (1 Sam. 8). This led them into slavery and eventual exile.

While exiled to Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, the Israelites were increasingly inured in pagan beliefs and practices, primarily the popular culture of Zoroastrianism. Later, several thousand were allowed to migrate out of Persia to Judea. They brought with them the tenets of Zoroastrianism. Thus, Babylonian culture was handed down to succeeding generations of religious Judeans called “Pharisees” in the first century. Jesus called that set of customs “the traditions of men.”

### PRACTICES, BELIEFS, AND CUSTOMS OF THE JUDEAN CULTURE

1. **Dualism:** the world is ruled by the competing forces of good and evil with a good god verses an evil god (Satan).
2. **Immortality of the soul:** continued existence of a nonphysical entity which separates from a physical body at death.
3. **Heaven:** an ethereal place of bliss in outer space. The abode of God, angels, and the spirits/souls of the righteous dead.
4. **Hell:** an eternal place of torment and the abode of Satan, demons, and the departed souls of the wicked dead.
5. **Trinity:** a triune godhead – three-part god in unity.
6. **Spiritism:** supernatural spirit beings (angels & demons) and demon-possession.
7. **Preexistence:** the spirit/soul exists prior to incarnation.
8. **Incarnation:** gods and “spirits” can take on flesh bodies.
9. **Occultism:** astrology, numerology, alchemy, sorcery, foretelling, and various other occult practices.
10. **Elite Priesthood:** mystical and elaborate ritualistic system of worship with secret rites and ceremonies.
11. **Babylonian/Jewish calendar.**
12. **Babylonian legal/judicial system.**
13. **Babylonian debt-usury economic/monetary system.**
14. **Babylonian-style central government.**

(As you can see, these doctrines are still practiced in modern culture)

The above list shows some of the Babylonian beliefs and customs that made up Judean culture, most of which have found their way into modern Judeo-Christian theology. In this and future lessons, we will examine some of these beliefs and customs (“traditions of men”) in the light of Scripture.

## THE TRADITIONS OF MEN

The Judean “traditions” are mentioned a number of times in the New Testament.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 15:1-20 and Mark 7:1-23.

1. Matthew 15:2 says the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus why His disciples transgressed (violated) the \_\_\_\_\_ of the elders.
2. What specific violation were the Judean leaders accusing the disciples of committing? (Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:2,5) \_\_\_\_\_
3. According to Mark 7:3, who followed the **tradition**? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Responding to the Judeans’ accusation, Jesus told them in Mark 7:9 they were rejecting the commandment of God, and keeping their own \_\_\_\_\_.

The word “tradition” is translated from the Greek **paradosis** (#3862), meaning instruction or tradition handed down generation to generation. The Judean/Babylonian custom of washing hands was a religious ceremonial ritual symbolizing the purifying of the flesh.

Jesus clearly condemned this tradition as vain (empty) worship, indicating that their motive for keeping this tradition was not from God.

### JUDEAN RITUALISTIC WASHING

The washing (ablution) of hands was not for hygienic purposes, but was a ceremonial ritual strictly adhered to by the Judeans. It was part of their tradition from Babylon. The Jewish/Babylonian Talmud states that eating with unwashed hands is as offensive as committing fornication, and that anyone lightly esteeming hand washing will perish from the earth.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

5. What did Jesus call the scribes and Pharisees who promoted the traditional ritual washing? (Matthew 15:7; Mark 7:6) \_\_\_\_\_
6. In Mark 7:8 Jesus accused these Judean leaders of “laying aside the \_\_\_\_\_ of God” and holding “the \_\_\_\_\_ of men.”

## FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Luke 11:37-41.

1. According to verse 37, with whom was Jesus eating? \_\_\_\_\_
2. According to verse 38 what did Jesus do that made the Pharisee marvel (wonder)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In verse 39 Jesus answered and accused the Pharisees of making clean “the outside of the cup and platter; but your inward part is full of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.”

### RAVENING

The word **ravening** is translated from the Greek word **harpagē** (#724 in *Strong's Concordance*), meaning “pillage.” It refers to the acts of robbery, extortion, plunder, etc.

In the above verses Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocritical practice of making themselves appear clean (pure; righteous) by outward ceremonial ritual while their true inner motives and desires were impure and unrighteous. While appearing righteous and pure, they were actually robbing and stealing from the people. They were nothing more than thieves masquerading as pious, holy men, not unlike the religious and political charlatans of our day.

## FIND THE ANSWERS

4. In Matthew 23:25 Jesus says the scribes and Pharisees are inwardly full of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

In the above verse the word **extortion** is rendered from the same Greek word (#724) that was translated “ravening” in Luke 11:39. In both cases reference is made to the greed and avarice practiced in the Judean system. The elite held positions of power over the people to plunder them – all under the pretense of religion.

The Judean ritual of “washings,” as practiced by the scribes and Pharisees, were meaningless, vain rites meant to imply exceptionalism, purity and authority. It was also to impress gullible followers. Some undoubtedly engaged in the ritual ignorantly thinking that God commanded it. But the ritual was a false **tradition of men** learned from Babylon.

Many who falsely profess to be Christians today practice vain ceremonial ritualism in one form or another. Although it is often completely nonsensical, they believe it makes them approved by God much like the Judeans believed about the Babylonian ritual washings.

### EXCESS

The word **excess** is translated from the Greek word **akrasia** (#192 in *Strong's Concordance*), meaning “want of self-restraint.” It refers to a lack of self control.

In Matthew 15:3-6 and Mark 7:9-13, Jesus condemns **Judean traditions**.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

1. What commandment of God did Jesus accuse the scribes and Pharisees of violating by their tradition? (Matt. 15:3-4; Mark 7:9-10) \_\_\_\_\_
2. According to Mark 7:11-12, Judean tradition held that if a man said to his parents, "it is \_\_\_\_\_" (a gift), he was free from providing for their needs.
3. In Matthew 15:6 and Mark 7:13, Jesus told these Judeans that by their traditions they were making the word (commandment) of God of "none effect" through their \_\_\_\_\_.

According to the Law of God, people were responsible for seeing that the needs of their elderly parents were satisfied. This duty was emphatically underscored by Jesus, who, from the cross, committed the care of his mother Mary to the disciple John (John 19:26-27). But through the Judean tradition of "corban" a Judean could neglect his parents ("make God's word of none effect"). This is an example of how the religious establishment twisted God's Law.

### CORBAN

The word **corban** comes from the Greek word **korban** (#2878 in *Strong's Concordance*), meaning "an offering; a consecrated present (to the Temple fund)." The Judeans had a practice in connection with "corban." By their tradition they taught that money, property or anything dedicated to the temple as "corban," or a vowed or pledged gift, thereafter belonged to the temple and could not be used for some other purpose. However, in reality, the gift or devoted item was kept by the person who made the vow. According to this practice, a son could avoid his responsibility to support his old and indigent parents merely by saying that his property, or some portion of it, was "corban," (it was promised to the temple). By saying, "It is corban," the money or property would be exempt from being used to support his parents when they were in need of help.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

4. In Matthew 15:11 and Mark 7:15, what does Jesus say (in parable form) defiles a person?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. In explaining this, Jesus says the evil things out of the \_\_\_\_\_ of men is what defiles them (Matthew 15:17-20); Mark 7:18-23).
6. In Matthew 15:14 Jesus describes the Judean scribes and Pharisees as " \_\_\_\_\_ leaders of the \_\_\_\_\_."

The Judean scribes and Pharisees, like many in churches today, were concerned with conformity to their religious traditions more than obedience to God. These arrogant, superficial Judeans, who were so concerned that they would be contaminated by contact with their inferiors, or by eating food with ceremonially unclean hands and vessels, were themselves the most contaminating of all. They taught their spurious traditions to others and demanded obedience to them, all the while violating God's Laws. Their "traditions" did not come from God's law. They came from Babylonian culture.

### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

#### **Read Titus 1:10-16.**

1. Verse 10 addresses the subject of unruly (rebellious) and vain talkers and deceivers, especially those of the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In verse 14 Paul admonishes Timothy to not give heed to Judean \_\_\_\_\_ and commandments of men that turn from (pervert) the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. According to verse 15, their mind and conscience is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Verse 16 states, "They profess that they know God; but in works (actions) they \_\_\_\_\_ Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."

The above verses were instructions to Christian elders and overseers concerning the rebuking of false teachers who deceive people with fables (myths) and traditions of men. Those particular deceivers were identified as "those of the circumcision." They were Judeans who practiced the ritual of fleshly circumcision as a sign of elitism/superiority after the Babylonian tradition. The Mosaic law of circumcision was different. It was to signify their covenant with God (Genesis 17:10-11). The Pharisees were obsessed with outward badges, marks, and vesture to signify their positions of authority ... like today's police, military, judges, etc.

### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

5. According to Acts 15:1 & 5, some brethren, who were still confused by the Pharisees, were teaching, "Except ye be \_\_\_\_\_ after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be \_\_\_\_\_."
6. Acts 15:6 tells us that the apostles and elders came together to \_\_\_\_\_ the matter.
7. In Acts 15:24 James said "we (the elders) gave no such \_\_\_\_\_."
8. In Galatians 5:6 Paul declared that circumcision does not avail \_\_\_\_\_.

The Judeans taught (as part of their Babylonian tradition) that circumcision of the flesh made them "clean," and the uncircumcised were "unclean" (defiled). This is yet another example of ritualistic nonsense of the Babylonian traditions. The vain traditions of men will be dealt with in more detail in future lessons.

## THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES

Jesus likened the traditions (doctrines) of the Judean Pharisees and Sadducees to leaven which spreads and infects people's minds.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 16:5-12.

1. In verse 6 Jesus says to His disciples, "Take heed and beware of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."
2. According to verse 12, the disciples understood that when Jesus spoke of "leaven" He was referring to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The word **doctrine** is translated from the Greek word **didache** (#1322 in *Strong's Concordance*), meaning "teaching," derived from the root word **dao** (to teach). The traditions of the Judeans were "passed on" or taught from generation to generation. Thus, the "doctrines" of the Judeans were their "traditions."

### FIND THE ANSWERS

3. In Colossians 2:8 Paul warns the Christians in Colossae by saying, "Beware lest any man spoil you through the \_\_\_\_\_ and vain deceit of the \_\_\_\_\_ of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
4. Paul warns the Christians in Ephesus by saying, "Let no man \_\_\_\_\_ you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of \_\_\_\_\_ ." (Ephesians 5:6)
5. In Hebrews 13:9 Christians are warned to "Be not carried about with divers and strange \_\_\_\_\_ ."

The word **philosophy** in Colossians 2:8 is translated from the Greek word **philosophia** (#5385 in *Strong's Concordance*). **Philo** (love), and **sophia** (wisdom) ... i.e., "love of wisdom." But often that which is labeled "wisdom" is not necessarily wise. In this case it referred to the superstitious sophistry of Judea which came from Babylon (Persia). Therefore, Paul was warning against foreign and corrupt traditions (doctrines) of men. Those became known as the Judean "traditions of the elders" that infected people's minds in those days as they still do today in religion and politics.

The word **vain in** Ephesians 5:6 is rendered from the Greek word **kenos** (#2756 in *Strong's Concordance*), meaning "empty." Thus, Paul was warning against being deceived by the false teachings of the Judeans. Jesus said the Judean establishment was doing this to the people. This is what is going on in the church world today. Modern Pharisees are the church leaders who teach the leaven of Jewish tradition which originated in Babylon.

## MORE JUDEAN TRADITIONS

### FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Responding to Jesus' healing of the dumb (mute) man, the Pharisees in Matthew 9:34 accused Jesus of casting out devils through the \_\_\_\_\_ of the devils.
2. In Matthew 12:24 the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out devils by \_\_\_\_\_ the prince of the devils (see also Mark 3:22 and Luke 11:15).

The above verses show that the Pharisees believed in devils (demons; wicked, invisible enemies of God), supposedly ruled over by a chief devil called Beelzebub (Hebrew "Baalzebub"— Lord of Flies – "Baal" = lord, and "zebub" = flies; things that flit around in the air and are attracted to rot). Baalzebub was a Philistine deity. This pagan concept has a counterpart in today's church world, and we will examine it in more detail in future lessons.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

#### Read Matthew 12:1-8.

3. After observing Jesus' disciples plucking grain, the Pharisees accused them in verse 2 of doing "that which is not \_\_\_\_\_ to do upon the sabbath day."

#### Read Luke 13:10-17.

4. In verse 14 the ruler of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had \_\_\_\_\_ on the sabbath day. He ordered the people to seek healing on a day other than the sabbath.

#### Read John 5:1-17.

5. In verse 10 the Judeans told the cured man that it was not lawful to \_\_\_\_\_ his bed on the sabbath day.

#### Read Mark 3:1-6.

6. According to verse 2, the Pharisees watched Jesus to see if He would heal on the sabbath day, "that they might \_\_\_\_\_ him."

The above verses are typical of many Judean traditions used to control the people and establish a religious hierarchy. The sabbaths of God's law were intended to give rest from commercial labors, not prevent people from caring for one another. However, the Judean religious leaders followed Babylonian tradition rather than God's law. The true purpose and intent of the sabbath was made void by Judean traditions. The rabbis had a saying: "The sins of everyone who strictly observes every law of the Sabbath, though he be an idol worshiper, are forgiven." It is this kind of "vain reasoning" that typified Babylonian religion and led Judeans to ignore God's Law. Is not modern religion plagued with similar "vain reasoning" in its various forms, encouraging disobedience to God?

## CLASS INDULGENCE

### FIND THE ANSWERS

#### Read Matthew 3:1-12.

1. In verse 9 John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees who claimed indulgence from God's judgment, "think not to say within yourselves, We have \_\_\_\_\_ to our father . . ."
2. In verse 7 John called these Judean leaders, "O generation of \_\_\_\_\_ . . ."

In the above Scripture, John the Baptist scolded the Judean leaders for their lack of honesty and humility. He further condemned their claim to "class indulgence" – the idea that Judeans, as a class, were not susceptible to judgement like others (a religious concept deluding many true Israelites today). The word **vipers** comes from the Greek word **echidna** (#2191 in *Strong's Concordance*), meaning "an adder or other poisonous snake." The inference was that the religious teachings (traditions) of the Judeans were poisonous, just as they are today.

### FIND THE ANSWERS

#### Read John 8:31-37.

3. Verse 31 says that many Judeans believed Jesus. In verse 32 Jesus told them, "And ye shall know the \_\_\_\_\_, and the truth shall make you \_\_\_\_\_."
4. After Jesus offered them freedom, the Judeans responded in verse 33, "We be Abraham's \_\_\_\_\_, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made \_\_\_\_\_."

In these verses we see another proof that the Judeans had lost all truth. They claimed to be Israelites who had never been in slavery even though Israel was taken into captivity in Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. They obviously did not consider their years in Babylon as slavery. The only explanation for this is that they had accepted Babylonian culture in place of God's word.

There is a modern equivalent to the delusion of the Judeans. Churches today accept and teach false doctrine derived in part from Jewish/Babylonian traditions. Churchgoers accept the false doctrine. And, like the Judeans, they claim their false doctrine comes from God. But the fact is those teachings are not Biblical.

This was the teaching method of the Judeans. They believed they could attain righteousness through membership in the established religious system ... like churchgoers today believe they are saved by joining a church. Jesus and the disciples condemned this heresy.



## FIND THE ANSWERS

### Read John 8:12-47.

1. In verse 12 Jesus told the Pharisees that He was the \_\_\_\_\_ of the world.
2. In verse 13 the Pharisees claimed that Jesus' words (record) was not \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Jesus told the Pharisees (verse 19) they knew neither Him nor his \_\_\_\_\_.

Nowhere in Scripture is it more clear than in John 8 that the religion of the Pharisees (modern Judaism) was/is not Biblical. The religion and culture of Jerusalem had become the culture and religion of Babylon.

The Judean priests claimed to have the authority of Moses and the prophets. But the fact is their beliefs and teachings came not from Israel but from Babylon/Persia, the seat of Zoroastrianism. When Jesus told the Judeans that their doctrine and traditions were not of God, He was not merely telling them that they misunderstood Scripture. He was plainly stating that their whole religion and society was foreign and not of Israel. It was of Babylon. They claimed to be Israelite culture, but they were not. Today the "holy books of rabbinical instruction" for all Jews is "The Babylonian Talmud" ... an encyclopedic collection of profane and ridiculous historic opinions of rabbis' that are more ungodly than you can imagine.

## FIND THE ANSWERS

4. In Luke 16:15 Jesus told the covetous Pharisees, "Ye are they which \_\_\_\_\_ yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is \_\_\_\_\_ in the sight of God."
5. In Luke 10:29 we see that the Judean lawyer, who had asked Jesus how to inherit eonian life, wanted to "\_\_\_\_\_ himself."

### Read Luke 18:9-14.

6. Verse 9 states that Jesus spoke a parable to those who "trusted in \_\_\_\_\_ that they were \_\_\_\_\_."
7. In verse 14 Jesus indicates that the repentant publican (tax gatherer) went to his house \_\_\_\_\_ more than the self-righteous Pharisee.

There can be no doubt that the Pharisees considered themselves better (more righteous) than anyone else. This was a trait of the Babylonian mentality that shaped their culture. In contrast, God taught Israel that the meek would inherit the land (Psalm 37:11). God considered Moses to be the most meek man in the land (Numbers 12:3).

Jesus essentially told the Judeans that their pride led them to seek esteem of men, that their hearts were not right (not humble or repentant) and this was an **abomination** to God. Jesus spoke against this idolatrous mindset – a mindset still prevalent in Judaism and in the church world today.

## TEACHERS OF BABYLONIANISM

### FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In John 7:15 the Judeans who heard Jesus' teaching said, "How knoweth this man letters (writings; law), having never \_\_\_\_\_."

**Read Mark 6:1-6.**

2. In verse 2 we are told that the people were \_\_\_\_\_ because they didn't understand from where Jesus' wisdom came. Obviously their learning was not from God.

**Read Luke 20:1-8.**

3. According to verse 2 the chief priests, the scribes and the elders questioned Jesus concerning who had given Him \_\_\_\_\_ to do the things He was doing.

The Judean culture was a highly structured and controlled system of laws and rituals. The "teachers of the law" – the priests and scribes (who, for the most part were Pharisees) held power over the people. The court of high priests, called "the council" or "the Sanhedrin" (body of 71 high priests in Jerusalem), was the highest body of priests, equivalent to the U.S. Congress. This class enjoyed great power over the people. They were the Babylonian high command: the enforcers of the "tradition of the elders" (Matthew 15:1-3). They hated Jesus because He represented God's law and truth, and denounced Babylonianism. Thus, the Judeans declared war on Jesus and his disciples. The "Council" claimed the God of Abraham. But their real god was the god of Persian Zoroastrianism, and still is today. Modern churches teach that Judaism is the religion of Moses, and that Jesus was a Jew. Both tenets are as wrong as can be. And they are right to call themselves "Judeo-Christians ... which is to say "Babylonian Christians."

### FIND THE ANSWERS

4. According to John 9:22, the Judeans executed power over the blind man's parents through the threat of putting them "out of the \_\_\_\_\_."
5. According to John 12:42, even some of the chief rulers (Sanhedrin) were fearful of being "put out of the synagogue" by the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. In John 16:2 Jesus tells His disciples they will be put \_\_\_\_\_ of the synagogues.

In the above verses the phrase "put out of the synagogue" is the equivalent of the churches' "excommunication." The Judean leaders feared this because they loved the praise of men (John 12:43). The praise of men was the basis of the power structure of Pharisaism ... the same as the structure of society in modern America.

Lesson 8 will continue to examine the beliefs, traditions, customs and practices of the Judeans in terms of their pagan characteristics and how they can be related to modern organized religion.



### LESSON 7

## TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF THE JUDEANS

### Page 62

1. tradition
2. not washing their hands before eating
3. the Pharisees and all the Judeans
4. traditions
5. hypocrites
6. commandment; tradition

### Page 63

1. a Pharisee
2. Jesus didn't wash before dinner (a violation of Pharisee tradition)
3. ravens; wickedness
4. extortion; excess

### Page 64

1. honor they father and mother
2. "Corban"
3. tradition
4. what comes out of his mouth rather than what enters his mouth
5. heart (the spirit)
6. blind; blind

### Page 65

1. circumcision
2. fables; truth
3. defiled
4. deny

### Page 65 (continued)

5. circumcised; saved
6. consider
7. commandment
8. anything

### Page 66

1. leaven
2. doctrine
3. philosophy; tradition
4. deceive; disobedience
5. doctrines

### Page 67

1. prince (chief or first in rank)
2. Beelzebub
3. lawful
4. healed
5. carry
6. accuse

### Page 68

1. Abraham (indicating racial lineage)
2. vipers
3. truth; free
4. seed (offspring); free

**Page 69**

1. light
2. true
3. Father
4. justify; abomination
5. justify
6. themselves; righteous
7. justified

**Page 70**

1. learned
2. astonished
3. authority
4. synagogue
5. Pharisees
6. out

**NOTES**