

# Wash your Hands - and your Mouth

Week 35 ~ Notes for November 13th

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## Background

Subject	Matt	Mark	Luke	John
Things that Defile	15:1-20	7:1-23		

## Discussion

This short exchange between Jesus and some Pharisees appears, more or less identically, in both Matthew and Mark. At first glance the telling-off that the Pharisees receive seems to have little to do with modern life. In this week in late 2021, this week of the [CoP26 Climate Change Conference](#) that's happening just down the road from where I write, it can be difficult to muster up the enthusiasm to have yet another go at the Pharisees. And yet...

Read Mark's account of this incident in chapter 7. In v5 a (possibly?) innocuous question is asked by the Pharisees and 'teachers of the law' – why, exactly, *don't* you lot obey the ceremonial rules? Jesus blasts them with a quote from Isaiah and calls them hypocrites. "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions".

1. The Adventist Sabbath School lessons for this quarter in 2021 are on the [Book of Deuteronomy](#). This book, and its partner, Leviticus, are the source of many of these rules on cleanliness and purity. Was Christ referring to those Levitical/Deuteronomical rules? If not, then what?
2. In particular Jesus takes the Pharisees to task on the idea that their giving to God (see [Korban](#) for details on the workings of this system) negates the requirement to look after their own parents. He expressly quotes the Commandment to honour your father and your mother.

A few years ago I was walking the Camino de Santiago, in northern Spain and found myself in the town of Leon. I spent a Sabbath morning exploring the magnificent cathedral and wrote this on [my blog](#).

*The audio guide said that in the 13th century, when the cathedral was built, the town was a mere 5000 people. That's smaller than my home town in Scotland. I'm never entirely sure if this is a genuine sacrificial act of community worship or some feudal game of "who has the best cathedral" played by the ruling classes, whilst the peasants would really rather just have some more food. I suspect the latter but I suppose we'll never know.*

How important it is to you to "give to the church" (or some similar organisation)? Does that giving mean that you can't fulfil your responsibilities elsewhere? Don't we, as Christians, value "sacrificial giving"? What principle do you draw from Christ's complaint to the Pharisees?

3. Adventists traditionally hold to some of the rules and regulations from the Torah, but not others. For example the commonly observed injunction to not eat shellfish has its roots in [Fundamental Belief #22](#) where "we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible

and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures" (emphasis mine). How does this directive square with the text in parentheses at the end of v19: "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean".

Mike L sent me a message earlier this week about v19 which he kindly allowed me to quote here (and he wanted to add that these thoughts are his opinions and are not academically researched conclusions!).

*Not sure if you're planning to venture into Mk 7:19? The final phrase is a can of worms...*

*Bible Gateway gives a variety of translations, many of which are (in my opinion) rather contrived. Some are highly contrived given the difficulty of translating the Greek. "Meats" is basically just "food"*

*"Thus he declared" is taken by many to be implied, but is definitely not in the Greek.*

*Transliteration of the Greek:*

*"...into the stomach  
and into the drain/ sewer it (the food)  
goes out  
cleansing/purging  
all the foods*

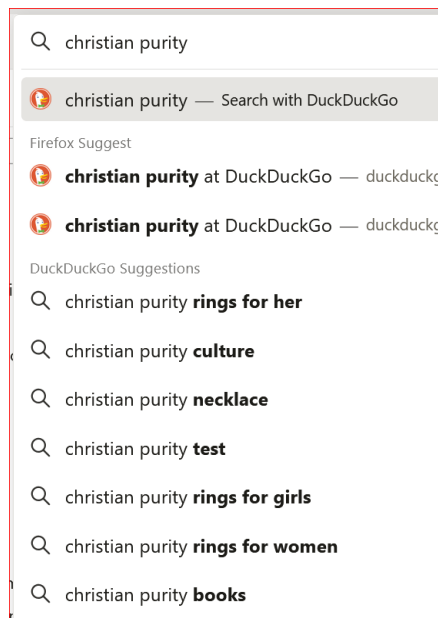
*As far as I can see there is no justification for statements like "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean - NIV etc).*

*I've always wanted to argue that it's now OK to eat pork and prawns - but I find no justification for this. As I read the Greek it seems to me it is the cleaning out of the stomach and bowel that is being referred to here. Perhaps the GNV and ISV are closest to the original meaning?*

What are your thoughts on this text and its meaning?

# 'Purity'

The notion of 'purity' was important to the Jews and is important to Christians today. But quite what we mean by that word 'purity' can be contentious. My guess would be that your initial gut reaction to hearing the phrase 'Christian purity' would be to think of sexual purity and sexual purity only. I fired up my favoured internet search engine (DuckDuckGo) and started typing the words *Christian* and *purity*. The autopredict gave me this:



It would appear that the wisdom of the crowd (*aka* autopredict) would agree with my guess.

Following a few of the first page search results was a dispiriting experience. I visited a [Focus on the Family page](#) that stresses the importance of 'chastity' and referenced further pages on '[What to do if Your Teenage Daughter is Having Sex](#)' (if there was a 'Teenage Son' version of this page it was not immediately obvious). Focus on the Family was founded by James Dobson, a prominent evangelical supporter of a certain Donald J Trump, a man of (how shall we put it?) questionable sexual purity. The athiests [had a field day](#).

## Questions

- Does 'purity' in modern Christian culture mean more than sexual purity? If so, what else?
- Take another look at the phrases suggested by my web browser - 'for her', 'for women', 'for girls'. Is purity only a woman's problem?
- 'Purity culture' is pervasive across the church. Take a look at the following articles:
  - '[7 Lies That Purity Culture Teaches Women](#)' (from CBE International, a Christian organisation that promotes equality within the church).
  - '[How an Abstinence Pledge in the '90s Shamed a Generation of Evangelicals](#)' (from the New York Times).
  - '[How Should Christians Have Sex?](#)' (also from the New York Times).

How do these articles make you feel?

- And lest we think that we're immune from the darker side of sexual issues here are some disturbing articles from within Adventism: ['The Great Institutional Sin'](#) and ['Pipim Sexual Abuse Victim: The Story from a First-person Observer'](#).
- What actually *is* important in
  - a discussion on 'purity' in general?
  - a discussion on 'sexual purity' in particular?
- In recent years there has been a huge cultural shift in our understanding of sexual and power relationships. The #MeToo movement has upended many old norms. What have you learned from this shift?