

Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Session 12, Walks on Water, Human Traditions (Mark 6:45-7:23) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Jennings, Mark, Session 12, Walks on Water, Human Traditions (Mark 6:45-7:23), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Mark Jennings analyzes Mark 6:45-7:23, focusing on the miracle of **Jesus walking on water** and his subsequent **confrontation with the Pharisees** regarding human traditions. The discussion of the water-walking miracle highlights **Jesus' divine identity** and the disciples' lack of understanding despite witnessing his power. The conflict with the Pharisees centers on their emphasis on **oral traditions** like ceremonial handwashing over **God's commandments**, illustrated by the example of *Corban*. Jennings emphasizes that **true defilement comes from within**, from the heart, rather than from external practices.

**2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Jennings, Mark, Session 12 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament →
Gospels → Mark).**



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3. Briefing Document: Jennings, Mark, Session 12, Walks on Water, Human Traditions (Mark 6:45-7:23)

Briefing Document: Mark 6:45-7:23 - Walking on Water and Human Traditions

Overview: This lecture by Dr. Mark Jennings delves into two significant episodes in Mark's Gospel: Jesus walking on water (Mark 6:45-56) and the subsequent confrontation with Pharisees regarding human traditions (Mark 7:1-23). Jennings emphasizes the theological implications of the miracle on the water, highlighting Jesus' divine identity, and analyzes the conflict over ritual purity, underscoring Jesus' critique of misplaced religious priorities.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

I. The Miracle of Walking on Water (Mark 6:45-56): Revelation of Divine Identity and Disciples' Lack of Understanding

- **Context after the Feeding of the 5,000:** The miracle occurs immediately after the feeding, which Jennings notes was likely witnessed only by the disciples. This sets the stage for another demonstration of Jesus' power, following their own experience of exercising his authority.
- *"We've just seen in Mark chapter 6, we've been talking about the sending out of the twelve and how the twelve, the apostles, are able to do amazing things... And they're unable to think about that in any terms outside of a human matter... So, Jesus does this miraculous... feeding of the 5,000 men plus women and children. And as we talked about, only the disciples would have seen that miracle."*
- **Similarities to Calming the Storm:** Jennings draws parallels between this miracle and the earlier calming of the storm, noting the presence of wind followed by its cessation and a revelation of Jesus' divine nature in both.
- *"I think the key idea as we look at this is we have some similarities between this event and the other on-the-lake miracle event, which was the calming of the storm. In both situations, we're going to have wind, and we're going to have an immediate cessation of wind. We're also going to have a revelation of who Jesus is, a self-depiction of his divine nature."*
- **Divine Identity through Symbolic Language:** Jennings connects Jesus walking on water to Old Testament passages (Job 9:8, Isaiah 43:16, Psalm 77:19) that depict

God as the one who treads on the waves. He also sees echoes of the Exodus story, contrasting Moses needing the waters parted to cross with Jesus walking unaided.

- *"Job 9:8 commentaries often remark here that God treads on the waves of the sea... When Moses needed to cross the sea, it required God parting the waters so Moses and the Israelites can walk on land... Yet here, Jesus does not require the parting of any water for him to walk across. He is able to walk on the waves. The laws of gravity that would require him to sink are not in play here. He does what God can do, which is tread upon the water."*
- **The "Passing By" Motif:** Jennings interprets Mark's statement that Jesus "was about to pass by them" (Mark 6:48) as a further indication of his divine identity, referencing similar language used in Exodus 33:18 (God passing by Moses) and 1 Kings 19 (God passing by Elijah).
- *"I think that about to pass by them, that phrasing is Mark's way of indicating the divine identity message being given here in Jesus. Think of Exodus 33, 18, when Moses asked God to show him his glory, and God passed by him. Or in 1 Kings 19, when God says he is about to pass by Elijah. I think this pass-by language is used to sort of capture the divine passing by human perception. It's at least a hint of it, I believe."*
- **"Ego Eimi" ("It is I"):** Jennings notes the potential connection of Jesus' words "It is I, don't be afraid" (Mark 6:50) to the Greek phrase "ego eimi," which can also be translated as "I am," potentially alluding to God's self-revelation in Exodus 3:14. While acknowledging potential overstatement, he sees at least a "subtle or an echo mentioning of it."
- *"And I wonder on this, it is I language, which the Greek of that would be ego eimi. The Greek of that could be translated most rightly, it is I, but could also be translated I am. Well, if it's the latter, I am, if that's the preferred way of saying, well that brings up Exodus 3 immediately and God's revelation of the divine name, I am who I am. Now it could be overstating the point... But it's hard not to see at least a hint of that..."*
- **Disciples' Lack of Understanding and Hardened Hearts:** Despite witnessing the miracle, the disciples are "completely amazed" (Mark 6:51) but had "not understood about the loaves" (Mark 6:52), indicating a failure to grasp the deeper significance of Jesus' actions. This is attributed to their "hearts were hardened," a term often associated with opposition to Jesus.

- *"They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves. Their hearts were hardened. Notice that phrasing... whatever the loaves were meant to communicate... they'd missed it. They are simply amazed at what Jesus can do... And then we are told why they couldn't understand, for their hearts were hardened."*
- **Summary of Jesus' Ministry:** The end of Chapter 6 provides a summary of Jesus' healing ministry upon landing in Gennesaret, highlighting the widespread recognition and desperation of the people.

II. Conflict over Human Traditions (Mark 7:1-23): Critique of Misplaced Religious Priorities

- **Confrontation with Pharisees and Teachers of the Law:** A group from Jerusalem confronts Jesus about his disciples eating with "unclean and unwashed" hands, adhering to the "tradition of the elders."
- *"Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were unclean and unwashed... the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders."*
- **Explanation of Pharisaic Traditions:** Mark provides a parenthetical explanation of these ceremonial washings, indicating his audience might not be familiar with these Jewish customs rooted in oral tradition and an extension of priestly purity laws to everyday life.
- *"Parenthetically, the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash, and they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers, and kettles... Keep in mind that this sits within this idea where the Pharisees saw the observations that were commanded to the priests in the law regarding the handling of utensils in the temple to apply to all people, all the Jews."*

- **Jesus' Accusation of Hypocrisy:** Jesus responds not by defending his disciples' actions but by condemning the basis of the Pharisees' question, accusing them of hypocrisy and quoting Isaiah 29:13, stating their worship is in vain and their teachings are merely "rules taught by men."
- *"He replied Isaiah was right about you. Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites. As it is written, these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain. Their teachings are rules taught by men."*
- **Setting Aside God's Commands for Human Traditions:** Jesus directly accuses the Pharisees of abandoning God's commands in favor of their own traditions.
- *"You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."*
- **The Example of Corban:** Jesus illustrates his point with the practice of "Corban," where individuals could dedicate possessions to God, effectively exempting them from the obligation to care for their aging parents, thus nullifying the fifth commandment.
- *"For Moses said, honor your father and your mother. And anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death. But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corbin, that is a gift devoted to God, then you no longer let him do anything for his mother, for his father or mother... Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down..."*
- **True Defilement Comes from Within:** Jesus teaches the crowd that external things cannot defile a person; rather, it is what comes out of the heart – evil thoughts and actions – that makes one unclean.
- *"Nothing outside a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather, it's what comes out of a man that makes him unclean... For from within, out of a man's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean."*
- **Mark's Interpretation of "All Foods Clean":** Jennings notes Mark's parenthetical comment that in saying this, Jesus "declared all foods clean," interpreting this as Mark's extrapolation of Jesus' teaching consistent with the early church's understanding, even if Jesus didn't directly address kosher laws.

Conclusion:

Jennings' lecture highlights the power and identity of Jesus as revealed in the miracle of walking on water, contrasting it with the disciples' slow understanding. The subsequent confrontation with the Pharisees exposes the dangers of prioritizing human traditions over the core principles of God's commands, particularly love and honoring one's parents. Jesus' teaching on true defilement emphasizes the importance of inner transformation over external ritual observance, a theme that resonates throughout his ministry and the early church's teachings.

4. Study Guide: Jennings, Mark, Session 12, Walks on Water, Human Traditions (Mark 6:45-7:23)

Study Guide: Mark 6:45-7:23

Key Themes:

- **The Divine Identity of Jesus:** The walking on water miracle highlights Jesus' power and hints at his divine nature through allusions to Old Testament descriptions of God.
- **Disciples' Lack of Understanding:** Despite witnessing miracles, the disciples struggle to grasp the deeper meaning of Jesus' actions and teachings. Their amazement is contrasted with true understanding.
- **Human Traditions vs. God's Commands:** The conflict with the Pharisees in Chapter 7 centers on the priority of human oral traditions over the clear commands of God, particularly concerning honoring parents.
- **True Defilement:** Jesus challenges the Pharisaic emphasis on external ritual purity, asserting that true defilement comes from within the human heart and its evil intentions.
- **Continuity with Old Testament Themes:** The text draws heavily on Old Testament imagery, including the Exodus narrative, the figure of Moses, and prophecies from Isaiah and Job, to explain Jesus' identity and the significance of his actions.

Quiz:

1. What was the immediate context for Jesus walking on water, and what did he do before joining the disciples on the boat?
2. Describe two ways the account of Jesus walking on water echoes Old Testament descriptions of God.
3. What was the disciples' reaction to seeing Jesus walking on water, and what does the text suggest about the reason for their reaction?
4. According to the lecture, what did the disciples' amazement after the wind ceased reveal about their understanding of the feeding of the 5,000?
5. What specific practice of the Pharisees did Jesus criticize in Mark 7, and what was his primary objection to it?

6. Explain the concept of "Corban" and how Jesus used it to illustrate the Pharisees' prioritizing of tradition over God's commands.
7. According to Jesus, what is the true source of defilement, and how does this contrast with the Pharisees' concerns about ritual purity?
8. What did Mark's parenthetical statement about Jesus declaring all foods clean likely reflect, according to the lecture?
9. How does the lecture connect the disciples' hardened hearts to the Old Testament narrative of the Israelites?
10. What was the significance of Mark including the detail that the Pharisees who confronted Jesus had come from Jerusalem?

Answer Key:

1. The immediate context was after Jesus fed the 5,000. Before joining the disciples on the boat, Jesus made them get into the boat and go ahead to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd, then he went up on the mountainside to pray.
2. The walking on water echoes Old Testament descriptions of God in two ways: first, through allusions to passages like Job 9:8 which speak of God treading on the waves, and second, through the "passing by" language which evokes God's self-revelation in Exodus and 1 Kings.
3. The disciples thought Jesus was a ghost and cried out in terror. This reaction suggests they were trying to find a human explanation for the supernatural event and were overwhelmed by fear in the face of the unknown or something beyond their comprehension.
4. Their amazement, contrasted with their lack of understanding about the loaves, revealed that they were focused on the miraculous act itself rather than grasping the deeper symbolic meaning and the connection to Jesus' identity as the promised shepherd and provider.
5. Jesus criticized the Pharisees' practice of prioritizing their oral tradition, specifically the ceremonial washing of hands before eating. His primary objection was that they held onto human traditions while setting aside the actual commands of God.
6. "Corban" was the practice of declaring something as a gift devoted to God. Jesus used it to show how the Pharisees allowed people to neglect their duty to honor

and care for their parents by claiming their resources were dedicated to the temple, even while still benefiting from them.

7. According to Jesus, the true source of defilement is what comes out of a person – evil thoughts and actions originating from the heart. This contrasts with the Pharisees' concern for external ritual purity, such as unwashed hands, which Jesus argued does not defile a person.
8. Mark's parenthetical statement likely reflected the teaching of the early church, influenced by the understanding of Jesus' teachings by figures like Peter and Paul, that the principle of internal purity extended to the cleanliness of all foods, moving beyond the specific issue of handwashing.
9. The lecture connects the disciples' hardened hearts to the Old Testament narrative of the Israelites, particularly during the Exodus. Just as the Israelites struggled to understand God's actions and their hearts were often resistant, so too were the disciples slow to grasp the significance of Jesus' identity and teachings.
10. The detail that the Pharisees had come from Jerusalem emphasizes the official nature of their opposition and their connection to the center of religious authority, highlighting a deliberate and informed challenge to Jesus' practices.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the significance of the miracle of Jesus walking on water in Mark 6:45-52. How does this event contribute to the portrayal of Jesus' identity and the disciples' understanding (or lack thereof)?
2. Compare and contrast the reasons for fear displayed in Mark 4:35-41 (calming the storm) and Mark 6:45-52 (walking on water). What do these episodes reveal about the disciples' evolving perception of Jesus?
3. Discuss Jesus' critique of the Pharisees' traditions in Mark 7:1-23. What specific examples does he use, and what are the broader implications of his argument regarding the relationship between human tradition and divine law?
4. Explore the connections between the events in Mark 6:30-7:23 and the Old Testament, particularly the Exodus narrative and the teachings of the prophets. How do these allusions enhance our understanding of Jesus' identity and his conflict with the religious leaders?

5. Evaluate the portrayal of the disciples in Mark 6:30-7:23. How does Mark depict their understanding of Jesus and his mission, and what does this suggest about the challenges of faith and discipleship?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Bethsaida:** A town on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, mentioned as the initial destination for the disciples in the boat.
- **Gennesaret:** A fertile plain on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus and the disciples landed after walking on water.
- **Capernaum:** A town on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, often associated with Jesus' ministry.
- **Fourth Watch:** The last part of the night, typically from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m.
- **Ego Eimi (ἐγώ εἰμι):** Greek for "I am," a phrase used by Jesus that could allude to the divine name revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14.
- **Hardened Hearts:** A biblical metaphor for a lack of understanding, spiritual resistance, and unwillingness to believe or obey God.
- **Pharisees:** A Jewish religious and social movement during the Second Temple period, known for their strict adherence to the Law and their emphasis on oral tradition.
- **Tradition of the Elders:** Unwritten interpretations and elaborations of the Mosaic Law passed down through generations of rabbinic authorities.
- **Corban (κορβᾶν):** An Aramaic term meaning "a gift dedicated to God," which Jesus criticized for being misused to avoid familial responsibilities.
- **Hypocrite:** One who pretends to have virtues or beliefs that they do not actually possess; often used by Jesus to describe the insincerity of the religious leaders.
- **Unclean:** In a Jewish context, refers to a state of ritual impurity, often associated with specific actions, conditions, or objects, requiring purification according to the Law.
- **Defilement:** To make impure or unclean, either ritually or morally. Jesus emphasized that moral defilement originating from the heart is the true form of uncleanness.

5. FAQs on Jennings, Mark, Session 12, Walks on Water, Human Traditions (Mark 6:45-7:23), Biblicalearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about Mark 6:45-7:23

1. What is the significance of Jesus walking on water in Mark 6:45-52? The miracle of Jesus walking on water demonstrates his divine nature. The text alludes to Old Testament passages (Job 9:8, Isaiah 43:16, Psalm 77:19) that describe God as the one who treads on the waves. Additionally, the phrase "he was about to pass by them" echoes God's self-revelation to Moses in Exodus 33, further suggesting Jesus' divine identity. This event, following the feeding of the 5,000, is another revelation of who Jesus truly is, beyond just a miracle worker.

2. How did the disciples react to Jesus walking on water, and what does this reveal about their understanding? The disciples were terrified, thinking they saw a ghost. Their amazement after Jesus got into the boat and the wind ceased is contrasted with their lack of understanding about the loaves. This suggests that they were focused on the miraculous event itself rather than grasping the deeper significance of Jesus' power and identity demonstrated in the feeding. Mark explicitly states that "their hearts were hardened," indicating their inability to comprehend the implications of Jesus' actions in light of Old Testament prophecy and messianic expectations.

3. What was the tradition of the elders that the Pharisees questioned Jesus about in Mark 7:1-5? The tradition of the elders was the oral tradition and interpretations of the Jewish law that had developed over time. In this specific instance, the Pharisees questioned why Jesus' disciples were eating with "unclean" (unwashed) hands, referring to a ceremonial washing practiced by the Pharisees and many Jews before meals. This practice, rooted in the desire to extend the purity laws observed by priests in the temple to everyday life, was not explicitly commanded in the written Torah but was upheld as binding by the religious leaders.

4. How did Jesus respond to the Pharisees' concern about the disciples not following the tradition of the elders? Jesus did not defend his disciples' actions directly. Instead, he condemned the Pharisees for prioritizing their human traditions over the commands of God. He quoted Isaiah (29:13), accusing them of hypocrisy, honoring God with their lips while their hearts were far from him, and teaching man-made rules as doctrines. Jesus argued that their focus on ceremonial handwashing was superficial and that they were actually neglecting more important aspects of God's law.

5. What example did Jesus use to illustrate how the Pharisees were setting aside God's commands for their own traditions? Jesus used the example of "Corban" (Mark 7:9-13). According to their tradition, if a person declared their possessions as a gift "devoted to God," they were no longer obligated to use those resources to care for their needy parents, even though they might still retain the use of those possessions themselves until their death. Jesus argued that this tradition effectively nullified the fifth commandment to "honor your father and your mother," demonstrating how the Pharisees' interpretations of the law allowed them to bypass their moral obligations.

6. What does Jesus teach about what truly makes a person "unclean" in Mark 7:14-23? Jesus shifts the focus from external rituals to internal realities. He declares that nothing outside a person can make them unclean by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person – their thoughts, intentions, and actions originating from the heart – that defiles them. He lists various evils such as evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, and arrogance as the things that truly make a person unclean.

7. What is the significance of Mark's parenthetical statement in Mark 7:19: "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean"? This parenthetical comment by Mark reflects the early church's understanding of the implications of Jesus' teaching. While Jesus' immediate point was about internal versus external purity, his statement that what enters a person does not defile them led to the conclusion that dietary restrictions based on external purity laws were no longer binding for believers. This aligns with the teachings of Peter and Paul in the early church regarding the freedom from the Old Testament's food laws.

8. How does the encounter with the Pharisees in chapter 7 connect with the earlier narrative about the disciples in chapter 6? Both sections highlight a lack of true understanding. In chapter 6, the disciples were amazed by the miracles but failed to grasp their deeper significance regarding Jesus' identity and the foreshadowing of spiritual provision (the loaves). In chapter 7, the Pharisees demonstrate a similar superficiality, focusing on external rituals while missing the weightier matters of God's law and the true nature of purity. Both narratives serve to contrast external observance or amazement with genuine faith and understanding of Jesus' identity and teachings.