

TITUS Part 4: Character of the Cretans; Paul Quotes Greek Religions. Chapter 1:10-12 (2/25/2017)

The following text is based on a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph.

***Portions of this sermon message have been edited to better transcribe the message. All the Scripture verses are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted and are in red. Therefore, it is recommended that this document be printed in color.**

I want to open up today with a little bit of history that directly correlates to a particular passage that we are going to be looking at today. The information is quite profound. In fact, we are going to spend most of today looking at only one verse. I know you are shocked by that and surprised, but we are going to spend most of today looking at one verse in Titus. This tidbit of history that I want to share with you comes to you from a man named Polybius who is a Greek poet and historian. Polybius is from the second century B.C. And what's interesting about him is that he navigates the waters in that he describes the character and the nature of the Cretan's.

Now why does that matter? It matters because where the book of Titus takes place is in Crete. So this is the backdrop of Paul writing to Titus. The people that Titus is going to be witnessing to along with the churches that he is going to be establishing are in Crete. So this backdrop that we are given into and the nature of who these Cretans really are is very beneficial.

Given that, we are going to start here. This is what Polybius says—**Money is so highly valued among them, that its possession is not only thought to be necessary but in the highest degree creditable.** What this means is that the only thing that is honorable to the Cretans is wealth. Period! Wealth and money. Continuing—**And in fact greed and avarice are so native to the soil in Crete, that they are the only people in the world among whom no stigma, attaches to any sort of gain what[so]ever.** In other words, no shame attaches to any sort of being whatsoever and do whatever it takes; it does not matter how many people are hurt or manipulate along the way, they are all just casualties of achieving that monetary gain. Think about this concept—they are willing to do anything to gain monetarily.

Now living in corporate America, you might be able to relate to this concept a little bit. We are training people to run over people and to manipulate them just to achieve the almighty dollars. They are being taught to hit those projections whatever it costs. They do not care how much pain it causes somebody along the way or how much suffering it inflicts. It does not matter. It is the goal; it is the wealth. So this is the Cretans.

Put this into context for a second— Polybius is not a believer, so he is not looking at this through the lens of Scripture. He is looking at this as a secularist. So you know things are bad when you have a person of the world describing Cretans like this. That is very incredible to me.

Now listen to this as he continues—**Cretans by their ingrained avarice.** In other words they have covetousness ingrained in their D.N.A. and—**are engaged in countless public and private seditions.** So it is not just done behind closed doors. He is specific here—it is public and private murders and civil wars.

You have to stop here because when I first read this I immediately thought about the book of James. This is what he said in James 4:1-3—¹ Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? ²You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

This is mind blowing! Polybius is basically saying the same thing that James does in that these things happen because of the covetousness that is ingrained in you; the fruit of that covetousness is murders, civil wars and seditions. All of these things are the fruits of greed.

Polybius goes on—Now, with a few exceptions, you could find no habits prevailing in private life more steeped in treachery than those in Crete, and no public policy more inequitable.¹ Oh my! I think I discovered why Paul left Titus in Crete. OK, I am kidding. That is not why Paul left Titus there. The point here is this—look at what Titus has to deal with; look at this environment that he is working in. When you've got secular humanists articulating the situation this way—you could find no habits prevailing in private life more steeped in treachery than those in Crete—that is bad.

With that backdrop, let's go back to Titus 1:10-12. We are going to circle back to verse ten which we covered last week, but we'll set the stage—¹⁰ For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹² One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

This sounds very similar to Polybius's assessment. Apparently the character of the Cretans didn't change so much over time because Polybius's writings are from the second century B.C. When we get to the first century A.D. with Paul and Titus, and it does not appear that anything has changed. It seems like the Cretans are the same old people.

We could look at this statement in Titus 1:10-12, especially knowing the history and what we read with Polybius, and we could say that it is pretty cut and dry, let's move on, let's get into verse thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen. However, we are not going to do that. And the reason we are not going to do that is because there is a lot more here than meets the eye. In fact, when we look at this passage closely, we actually realize that Paul is utilizing this statement in a particular context. And the first thing I want you to recognize is that Paul is drawing from the words of a prophet. And just to be clear, this is not a biblical prophet, this is a pagan prophet—a prophet of their own—as Paul says in verse 12. What does that tell you? This particular prophet is from Crete. And the quote of this prophet is this—Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.

I have got to tell you that for me this prompts two questions. Number one—who is the prophet that he is referring to, and the second question—why is this prophet bringing this charge or indictment against his own people? He himself is a Cretan. Is it the fact that they are just rotten people in general, and so he makes the generalized statement just like Polybius did? Or is there a little more to it? Is Paul using this particular quote in a specific context that really would have resonated with Titus? Fortunately for us as we begin to peer back into history even further we are actually given the answer to both of these questions. As we begin to look at this, I think this is going to help us really bring clarity to the table in regard to what Paul is doing in regard to the message that he is really conveying here.

So with that said, I want to take you back in time to the second century. There is a man by the name of Clement of Alexandria. Some people call him an early Church father, and he was a Christian theologian. It is important to state before we continue that he was born in Athens, so he really has an ingrained Greek background. He ended up dying in Jerusalem. Well, Clement gives a commentary on our very passage in question which is Titus 1:12. Keep in mind this is early on in history. It is good to have these sources; it is good to know what the early church father said because there is a lot of valuable information and a lot of historical context we gain through their writings. In fact, the scholars will tell you that even if we had zero manuscripts, which we have around fifty seven hundred, we would still have the Bible because it is essentially, almost in its entirety, quoted just in the early Church fathers' writings.

With that said, let me show you his statement in his commentary—[Epimenides the Cretan, whom Paul knew as a Greek prophet, whom he mentions in the Epistle to Titus, where he speaks thus: "One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, the Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. And this witness is true."](#)² Here we see how Clement quoted Titus 1:12. So here is the deal, when we read that one of them is "a prophet of their own", we now know we have historical evidence here to show that this is Epimenides. Now I am just going to lay this out there as we continue through today, the reality of what Clement of Alexandria said is going to be confirmed. There is no question of who Paul is quoting in regard to the prophet; the prophet is Epimenides.

So we have dealt with our first question in regard to whom the prophet is that Paul I referring to. Now for our second question which is getting into why one of the prophets is calling his own people liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. This is where things begin to get really interesting because when you discover the why, that's when you uncover the deeper context by which Paul is making the statement. And it really brings this passage to life. It did for me. Especially when you consider that Paul is using a particular teaching methodology. He is equipping Titus by giving him a tool in his belt to provide further success in his environment. This is very powerful! Now having said that, I want to deal with the indictment; I want to deal with the charge that Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons.

There is a backdrop here that you need to appreciate in that the Cretans had a very specific belief. They were different than their fellow Greeks brothers. They kind of carved out a niche for themselves in that they had a specific belief that they held dear in regard to the pagan god Zeus. I want you to understand something about this pagan god Zeus—the Greeks looked at him as the God above all gods; he was the god of the immortals. So in a sense, literally, they looked at him as the god of all gods to the point where they call him father at times. I will tell you that Satan knew very well what he was doing when he was creating the idea of Zeus because you'll be hard pressed to find any pagan deity that mirrors the reality of who the One True God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is to the point where you start to see that Zeus was rare in that they called him father. There are many other things we could talk about in that they are mirroring this replica where Satan came into parallel or to give, if you will, an anti-Christ type of character in Zeus. The parallel is really amazing!

Getting back to my point, Cretans were different than the Greeks in general. They carved out this niche in that they had a different belief in regard to Zeus. They believed he was not immortal where the Greeks did. Let me tell you something—you want to stir up a hornet's nest among your Greek brothers; go around and tell people that Zeus is not immortal. And that wasn't enough. They took it a step further and said that not only is Zeus immoral, but we have the tomb of Zeus.

With that backdrop, I want to take you to the third century B.C. There is a Greek poet, a scholar, known as Callimachus. He wrote a poem because this is what Greeks did. If you got into that realm, they wrote poems; they wrote hymns. Callimachus wrote a hymn literally describing his dissatisfaction with Cretan ideology specifically regarding this pagan god Zeus. I want to share this with you because this is where things are going to start to unravel for you. He says—**O Zeus, some say that thou wert born on the hills of Ida; Others, O Zeus, say in Arcadia; did these or those, O Father lie? -- “Cretans are ever liars.”** Notice how the statement sounds familiar with what Paul said to Titus—**Cretans are always liars.** So here Callimachus says that—**Cretans are ever liars.** Look at the context of the next statement. It is a religious context dealing with his death—**Yea, a tomb, O Lord, for thee the Cretans builded; but thou didst not die, for thou art for ever.**³ So Callimachus writes against the Cretans for this blasphemous proclamation that Zeus did in fact die, and he is arguing that despite you guys building the tomb, it is not true; it never happened.

Let me take this a step further and show you another hymn. This one goes back even further than that of Callimachus. In fact, I believe that Callimachus’ hymn is a simple reflection of this hymn. And guess who it is by? Epimenides. He is the very prophet that we know Paul is quoting. Listen to this—**They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one, and what does it say? The Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies!** This is verbatim! I want you to put this in a context. This is Epimenides in the context of religion singing a hymn to Zeus. Paul is quoting this in his letter to Titus.

Now continuing on—**But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever. For in you we live and move and have our being.** Isn't that interesting? Where have you heard that before? The Apostle Paul literally quotes this verbatim in the book of Acts (17:28). So I want you to make no mistake; the Apostle Paul is well acquainted with Epimenides, with Greek culture, with what they believe in regard to the pagan gods Zeus, and how their defenders have gone out and defended them. This because Epimenides and Callimachus believe they are defending the faith. We are almost so detached when we look at these religions because there is faith involved here; it is a religion. And Paul quotes both of these in his letter to Titus and is recorded quoting this in the book of Acts as well.

I want to take you to the book of Acts because when we really see what Paul is doing there it plays a pretty significant role in understanding why Paul would quote a pagan Greek prophet to Titus. This is a quote specifically dedicated to praising a false God. So with that said, let us go to Acts 17:22—**Then Paul stood in the midst of their Areopagus.** Now I just want to say something about this—this Areopagus right here, the transliterated root word is *Árēs*. It is pretty significant because *Árēs* was a false god. But interesting enough, *Árēs* was the God of War, and *Árēs* was Zeus’s son. Hang on because this is all going to play together.

Now the Areopagus was literally a formal meeting place where they held legal proceedings. In fact, centuries earlier Socrates was brought to the very place Paul was standing and put on trial for the way he viewed the Greek gods; they were digging into his methodology and what he thought of them. So the legal proceedings were done here at the Areopagus, sometimes referred to as Mars’ hill, but other things were done there. It was a very formal place to discuss religion, politics, and academics. This is where you went to do these types of things, and this is where Paul is. This is a powerful setting.

Continuing in Acts 17:22-23—**and [Paul] said, “Men of Athens, [so we know he is in Athens] I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³ for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.** Isn't that interesting? He is looking at a

pagan idol and acknowledges the title that it is given, and it really draws his curiosity—the Unknown God. It is a pretty unorthodox way to spread the gospel wouldn't you say? It is not normally what you traditionally do. So here he is utilizing this, and he says this is what I want to proclaim to you. Now obviously Paul does not say to them—this idol that you made, yes, that's the god I am here to tell you about. He is taking the concept of what they believe about this god, that he is unknown, and the context of him being unknown is that he is so great that he can't be discovered. OK? And he says that context makes a lot of sense; that's the God that I serve, but He is real. He is the one true God.

Now continuing on in Acts 17:24—²⁴ **God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth.** Now how many times have you heard me say that the best definition of understanding God is this—He is God because He made everything? That is what makes Him God. What makes God God? He made everything. This is so powerful! The fact that Paul reveals this concept holds so much weight. This is the way we should be defining God—we serve Him because He created all things; therefore, all things are subservient to Him.

Continuing in Acts 17:24-27—**He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶ And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.** Where is Paul drawing that very last statement? He is drawing it from Deuteronomy 30:12-14 where it talks about the word and that you do not need to send someone across the sea to go get it because it is not too far from you; the word is near you; and it is in your heart. That is the very thing Paul quotes in Romans 10:9-10, but then he incorporates the revelation of Yeshua—⁹ **But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ¹⁰ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** This is where Paul is going with all of this. And then he says this in Acts 17:28—**for in Him we live and move and have our being.**

When you read this, you realize the context and how powerful this is in regard to being able to draw this out. Paul is speaking to the men of Athens; he is speaking to Greeks. He draws out the poets in these verses. It is so powerful. Paul states—**in Him we live and move and have our being**—and he is not talking about Zeus; he is talking about the God of Israel. And then he goes on in Acts 17:28—**for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘for we are also his offspring.’** Now you have a little deeper understanding of what Paul is talking about when he says—**we are also his offspring.** It is another direct quote; that is what this is—**that we are also his offspring.**

Let me show you where this comes from. There is a hymn from Cleanthes, and he was a Greek philosopher as well. It is interesting that he also resided in Athens. You really need to appreciate what Paul is doing here. He is in the heart of Athens, if you will, at the Areopagus, and he is quoting Cleanthes who was from Athens and died in Athens. And what did Cleanthes say? He said this—**Most glorious of the immortals, thou of many names, almighty forever, O Zeus, author of nature, directing all things with law, all hail!** Well, when Hades freezes over; we will bow to no man. That isn't going to happen. You read this stuff, and it is difficult to get through, but this is where the Greeks were at.

So he continues—**It is right for all mortals to address thee. For we are thy offspring.** So we understand that when Paul is saying, **we are his offspring,** it was literally a quote of something he was drawing from

Cleanthes. He is drawing from the poets, from the philosophers, who spoke in regard to their belief that this pagan god was truly God. I mean this is profound stuff that you need to really grab on to.

Continuing—*having been allotted the likeness of thy divinity – we alone, of all mortal things that live and move on earth. Therefore I will hymn thee and always sing of thy might.*⁴ So when we look at what Paul is saying here in Acts 17, and he makes this quote—*for in Him we live and move and have our being*—it comes directly from Epimenides, and then he goes on to say—*for we are also his offspring* which is from Cleanthes in regard to Zeus. Paul is making use of the Greek poets, the philosophers, when he is speaking to the Greek people themselves. He is basically borrowing.

Now, going through this you are going to appreciate, probably to a level you haven't before, 1 Corinthians 9:22. What Paul said is—*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* Think about the context of what that really means. Paul could go into a synagogue, and he could start talking about the traditions of the elders, he could start talking about Talmudic references and passages, and he could start breaking into the Torah. He becomes a Jew that he might save more Jews. And then he says in 9:21— *to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ).* This is the context of what you are seeing; what Paul is talking about is— *I go become as one who is without the law to those who are of the law.* But then he adds—*not without law towards Mashiach.* He never compromises his faith for second; he never bows down and pays allegiance to anyone but to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It never happens. Let us be clear on that. But he becomes—*all things to all people that he might save the some.*

So you can see the brilliance of Paul. Not that it is him, but the wisdom of the Ruach moving through him, speaking to them, and dealing with stuff that is tangible for them that they can grab on to. So here is the deal—the words in Acts 17:28 are beautiful and are in the right context. And no, this does not come from Scripture. Can somebody find this exact quote in the Torah—*for in Him we live and move and have our being*? You won't find it in the Tanakh because it does not exist. Paul is quoting Epimenides, yet he is quoting in the context of Scripture. Just ask yourself—has Yeshua given us life? What did Yeshua say?—*I am the Way the Truth and the life (John 14:6).* I would call that—*in him I live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).* If I am to believe that all things were created through Yeshua including us, I quite literally believe in Him alone. Therefore—*I live and move and have my being.*

When we look at these statements, we find that Paul is very simple. He is not overly pious or religious to the point that he can't even look at or grab something that a Greek philosopher said that makes perfect sense in the right context and use it to speak the truth of God. He does it because he is out there winning souls. Now is this unorthodox? Yes. But the last time I checked, Paul was the most prolific person, outside of Yeshua of course, that ever brought the gospel to the nations. He is on to something here.

Now, with all this information provided, I want to go back to Titus 1:12—*One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."* We now know that Paul is quoting Epimenides here verbatim, but this is kind of one of the points that you need to understand— Epimenides is bringing this indictment against his own countrymen. Why? Because they failed to accept the truth; they fell into this heretical doctrine, and so the statement is made in the context of reprimanding them for failing to recognize the truth of what they perceived to be Almighty God. This has a very deep religious context to it.

Isn't it interesting what Epimenides is doing? When you look at what Paul is commissioning, or the Holy Spirit is commissioning Titus to do in Crete, it is the very same thing as Epimenides. Titus is going to go out, and he needs to reprimand them because they have it wrong. They have their religion screwed up. It is backwards. And he needs to shed light on it. You know when you are going behind enemy lines, and you are going into a place that is filled with Greek history, culture, and these false pagan gods, it is a powerful tool to be able to go in and to know what the philosophers themselves had said. At that point, you can literally grab what is accurate and in the correct context and deliver a profound spiritual reality. Again I tell you that it makes it tangible to them.

Now we continue in Titus 1:13 as Paul says this—¹³**This testimony is true.** So he quotes the prophet Epimenides, and then Paul says that Epimenides' testimony is true. In other words, Epimenides had it right. Not everything; not the context of the god, but in regard to the charge against them in a religious context, he was right in the sense that the Cretans are wrong. If you boil it all down, Paul is telling Titus is to follow Epimenides' example in the context of rebuking them, deal with the fallacies, and—**rebuke them so that they can be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).** It is that simple.

With that out of the way, let's move on to Titus 1:14—¹⁴**not giving heed.** The transliterate of the Greek word for heed is *Prosechō*, and it literally means to take hold. So the verse states—¹⁴**not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.** This statement is made in a specific context of—who turned from the truth? I am going to tell you that when you look at this, and you look at the rest of Paul's writings, Paul is referring to something very specific here. He is referring to rabbinical law. There is absolutely no question about that, but we'll get into that in a moment. But this is the context of what some would call the Torah that is spoken—the takkanot (plural tense). These takkanot represent rabbinical enactments or commandments that are outside of the Torah itself. So what I want to do is I want to take you through some examples just to put this statement into context in order for you to draw away what Paul is intending to be drawn away.

Now you have got to keep in mind that Titus was in the know. This was a man that traveled with the Apostle Paul for years. Think about the amount of information, the reality, and spiritual truths that he acquired in doing ministry with Paul. There are times that the Apostle Paul does not need to get into the details by describing and defining every little thing because Titus already knows it. If I start singing Amazing Grace, I do not need to finish it because you all know what comes next. Right? We need to remember this is exactly the reality of Paul writing to Titus. Paul is just making a small statement, and it brings a world of understanding to Titus in that he immediately grabs on to that information. I can tell you that there are some of you that I can talk to and just say a short statement, and I know you know the deeper meaning or context of what I am saying. You know the different levels; you know the backdrop. That is why we have to go deeper so you can get a perspective of what Titus really understood.

Moving into Colossians 2:20 Paul says—**Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations....** I want to be clear here. Is Paul talking about the regulations of the state and the federal government? No. Although some would try to tell you that is what Paul is talking about. He is not. He is presenting this in a religious context. If you read the whole chapter in Colossians, there is no question that Paul is dealing with a religious context.

Let us go on to Colossians 2:21—²¹**"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"** ²²**which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men?** I want you

to understand something—Paul was a Jew and a Pharisee who came from an Orthodox background. He was raised at the feet of Gamaliel. Paul knew what he meant when he said—²¹ **Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle.** This goes right in rabbinical law to the concept that you can't eat your food without washing your hands. In fact, they take it as far as—if you dare despise the washing of hands and do not wash your hands when you eat your food, you do not just render the food unclean, but you should be excommunicated. This is what they say—²¹ **"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle."** You have got to understand that according to rabbinical law, if you do this same thing by not rinsing out a dish before you use it, you are guilty of the same thing. Even today there is a kosher kitchen. You have your meat and dairy platters, and you have your meat over here and your dairy over there. You do not interchange the two. You can't take a piece of cheese and put it on a meat plate. You do not do these things—²¹ **"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle."** There are specific rules that you have to follow;

Let's move on to Colossians 2:23—²³ **These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.** In other words, what Paul is saying is that you can subject yourselves to all of these rabbinical traditions till the cows come home, but that war you are going through where the enemy is attacking you, and your flesh is trying to get you to succumb to addictions, to idolatry, to covertness, you can do all these things because they won't even matter. They have no power over those things. But one thing I can tell you is when you go to the Torah, you start applying the commandments of God, you start to press in, and you start to call on the name of Yeshua, that's when there is power. That is when I go up against these things that I am dealing with that are real, and I have power to say no. It is what gives me the power—the word of the Living God.

Let me take this step a further and show you Yeshua. And I always call this verse Yeshua's ram because He actually comes against the Pharisees and Sadducees vehemently, and you have got to understand and appreciate the backdrop. Let me say this about the Talmud and Orthodox laws in general—those things are precious to the Jewish people. You need to be sensitive to this. It is not just simply about commands that they decided to incorporate just to look more pious. It is even more than that. It is about identity and realizing they are Jewish. This is Jewish. Their father's, forefather's, forefathers have done these things, and it is about identity. And that is what these things become. We see this in the opening verse in Titus. Paul introduces himself and identifies himself one way—as a servant of Yeshua. I mean you have got to appreciate these things. I am always sensitive when I talk to a Jew. I am not going to show them the passage about Yeshua first thing. If Yeshua wants to do that He can do that, but I am sensitive to the culture and the reality that this is where they see their identities. You do not go beating them down and attack. But there is a reality that we have been warned about by Paul over and over again.

Well, let's see what Yeshua does here. Yeshua says in Matthew 23:16—¹⁶ **Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.'** ¹⁷ **Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?** There is one thing about takkanot that you will discover. The emphasis is primarily upon the weight of the Rabbi's, and almost consistently you will find that they turn their focus. You see that this is the difference between the command of God and the commandments of men. When you get involved in the commands of God, the commandments of men steer your focus away from the commandments of God so that more of an emphasis gets put on these commandments. This is exactly what Yeshua is getting at here. They are looking at it wrong. They start to lose discernment because they are not relying solely upon the Word of God. They have elevated to the highest of heights the commandments of men. So you become theologically discombobulated.

Moving on to Matthew 23:18-20; this is what Yeshua assessed—¹⁸ And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.'¹⁹ Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?²⁰ Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. This provides an example of moving the emphasis away from where it should be. You are getting caught up in things you should not be; you are putting the emphasis where it does not belong. This is what happens when you start subscribing to the commandments of men. Paul knew this; Yeshua knew this.

Let me take you to Matthew 15:1-2—¹ Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ² "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? This is the disciples doing that; you need to remember that these are their Jewish brothers and how sensitive this is. This is who we are; we are Jewish. What establishes me as Jewish is that I do these things. How many times have you heard Messianic Jews being told by rabbis—you are not Jewish; why did you walk away from your Jewish faith? They are asked this because they are not listening to the rabbis. I mean this is a reality; this is happening today.

So here the Pharisees ask Yeshua—² "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." Again, feel the weight of knowing that doing this is worthy of excommunication. The Pharisees were basically saying—you are destroying our people; you are destroying our ways. We find Yeshua's response in Matthew 15:3-4—³ He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" ⁴ For God commanded, [again moving the emphasis and commandment of man versus the commandments of God] saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' Yeshua just quoted from Exodus 21:17. Continuing—but you say. I love how Yeshua starts—God says, and then now you say. Continuing—'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"-- ⁶ then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. I want you to understand His example. He is saying that the rabbis were taking their gifts and were bringing them to mom and dad saying—Mom and Dad, here are these gifts, but they are not for you. They are for God. You see how they are shifting the emphasis when the commandment is point blank—no, I am suppose to honor my mother and father; mom and dad, these gifts are for you according to the commandment of the Lord. However, that is not what they did.

Satan is very crafty. All he has to do is shift the emphasis. He does not have to tell you to stop believing in Yeshua; he just has to shift the emphasis. Think about this life practical application—have you shifted the emphasis of your life somewhere else rather than Yeshua?

Moving on in Matthew 15:7-9—⁷ hypocrites. The last thing you want to hear come out of the mouth of Yeshua is the word hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ⁸ 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' " This is pure vanity. You spent your life in vanity because you put your emphasis on the commandments of men and not the commandments of God. You drew near to me with your mouth.

Let me be clear about something—this happens on both sides of the aisle. Yeshua is attacking these ordinances, these rabbinical takk anot, but I promise you today there are just as many on the other side of the aisle in Christianity. The key statement is—**These people draw near to Me with their mouth.** The Christian Church has taken Saturday and acknowledged that it is a commandment of God. But then they

move that commandment aside in order to the emphasis a commandment of men which observes Sunday as the day of worship. Sunday is not the commanded Sabbath. Do you see how this works? It is deceptive. But they will still honor Him with their lips, so it is believable and makes sense. This happens on both sides of the aisle. So when we read this verse in Titus 1:14—**not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth**, this is the context that Paul is expressing to Titus. A context he was well informed with.

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3. Callimachus, Hymn I to Zeus
4. Hymn of Cleanthes, quoted from F.F. Bruce, New Testament History