

Luke 11:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

Analysis

And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner (ἐθαύμασεν ὅτι οὐ πρῶτον ἐβαπτίσθη πρὸ τοῦ ἀρίστου)—the verb thaumazō (marvelled) indicates shock or disapproval. The ritual washing (baptizō, ceremonial immersion of hands) wasn't biblical law but Pharisaic tradition (Mark 7:3-4). Jesus's deliberate omission challenges human tradition elevated to divine commandment.

The Pharisee's astonishment reveals his priorities: external ceremonial purity trumps internal spiritual condition. This sets up Jesus's devastating critique—the Pharisees obsess over ritual while ignoring justice, mercy, love (v.42). Their religion consists of visible performance, not heart transformation.

Historical Context

Pharisaic hand-washing rituals involved pouring water over hands in specific ways before meals, based on expansions of Levitical priesthood laws (Exodus 30:19-21). These traditions, codified in the Mishnah, weren't Scripture but 'tradition of the elders' (Mark 7:5). The Pharisees' shock reveals they equated human tradition with divine law—the essence of legalism.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What Christian 'traditions' have you elevated to the status of divine commands?
2. Why might Jesus deliberately violate human religious traditions—what does this teach about challenging legalism?
3. How does obsession with external religious performance distract from issues of the heart?

Interlinear Text

ο	δὲ	Φαρισαῖος	ἰδὼν	ἐθαύμασεν	ὅτι	οὐ	πρῶτον
G3588	And	when the Pharisee	saw	it he marvelled	that	not	first
G1161		G5330	G1492	G2296	G3754	G3756	G4412
 ἐβαπτίσθη πρὸ τοῦ ἀρίστου							
he had	before	G3588	dinner				
G907	G4253		G712				

Additional Cross-References

John 3:25 (Parallel theme): Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org