

Matthew 15:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

Analysis

Jesus' counter-question employs rabbinic debate technique, answering a question with a question. More significantly, He reverses the accusation: they transgress God's commandment through their tradition. The Reformed principle of 'sola Scriptura' finds strong support here—Scripture alone judges tradition, not tradition Scripture. Jesus establishes the supremacy of divine revelation over human interpretation, a cornerstone of biblical Christianity. This verse powerfully refutes any claim that church tradition equals biblical authority.

Historical Context

Jesus challenges the Pharisaic oral law (later codified as the Mishnah around AD 200). While claiming to 'build a fence around the Torah,' these traditions often contradicted Scripture's intent. Jesus' response shows His authority as divine interpreter, not merely another rabbi offering opinions.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do you ensure Scripture remains your final authority?
2. What church traditions might actually contradict biblical teaching?
3. How does Jesus' example guide your response to religious criticism?

Interlinear Text

ο	δὲ	ἀποκριθεὶς	εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς	Διατί	καὶ	ὑμεῖς
G3588	But	he answered	and said	unto them	Why	also	do ye
G1161		G611	G2036	G846	G1302	G2532	G5210
παραβαίνετε	τὴν	ἐντολὴν	τοῦ	θεοῦ	Διὰ	τὴν	
transgress	G3588	the commandment	G3588	of God	by	G3588	
G3845		G1785		G2316	G1223		
παράδοσιν	ὑμῶν						
tradition	your						
G3862	G5216						

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 2:23 (Parallel theme): Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Colossians 2:8 (Parallel theme): Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Mark 7:13 (Word): Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Titus 1:14 (Word): Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.