

## Jesus' Warnings...Beware

During the 400 years between the Old & New Testaments, the Jews became divided into various sects. Two of these sects that we often read of in the gospels are the Pharisees & the Sadducees.

Jesus warned against their teaching (leaven) because of a most crucial reason. It would cause all who believed in it to be lost. In Matt. 23:15, Jesus not only called the Pharisees 'children of hell', but he said that those who believed and practiced their teachings would become twice as much a 'child of hell' as themselves. Jesus also said in Matt. 16:6, 11-12, to watch & BEWARE OF THEIR TEACHINGS. In Matt. 15, Jesus said that these 'traditions': ~ transgressed the "commandment of God" (v. 3). ~ were contrary to the Law of Moses (vv. 4-5). ~ they "made void the word of God." (v. 6), ~ they caused worship to be "in vain" (v. 9). Their doctrines were the "commandments of men"; NOT the Law of Moses. They sought to bind this tradition of the elders, upon the multitudes rather than what the Law of Moses taught.

When Jesus' disciples were observed not keeping these 'traditions', the Pharisees and scribes came & asked Jesus "...why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat" (v. 2). NOTE: The 'traditions of the elders' here mentioned consisted of laws and regulations ORALLY TRANSMITTED from Moses and the prophets. On account of the SUPPOSITION that these traditions originated with inspired men, they were REGARDED AS EQUAL IN AUTHORITY with the written word. Mark 7: 3-4 lists some of these 'traditions' herein referred. We see then, what constitutes a doctrine that is only a 'commandment of men'. [It is any doctrine that is based upon a 'SUPPOSITION' that it is 'inspired', yet 'regarded as equal in authority with the written word'.] The oral traditions of the elders were NOT a part of written law (of Moses), yet they had come to be regarded as equal in authority with it by the scribes and Pharisees. Such 'commandments of men' are not founded on the written word. They made "void the word of God" (Matt. 15:6), because they were contrary to that which was written and inspired. Moses had commanded, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of

the Lord your God which I command you.” (Deut 4:2) This oral ‘tradition’ of the elders “added to” the written word.

WHAT IF SUCH WERE DONE TODAY? Would not the results be the same? The commandment of God be broken, the written word made ‘void’ and worship be ‘in vain’. There are a number of SUPPOSED, inspired doctrines that are in reality only “commandments of men” yet are regarded as equal in authority with the Bible by those who teach and practice them. Today, one cannot become a member of any existing denominational church without submitting to that particular denomination’s ‘statements of faith’. You will not be accepted into their ‘fellowship’ without submitting to their particular commandments, whether by ‘vote’, ‘letter’, or by ‘baptism’ as their statement of faith declares. Protestant denominations were founded on just such writings. These ‘statements of faith’ or ‘creeds’ are NOT the inspired word of God, YET THEY ARE THE CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTANCE INTO THEIR FELLOWSHIP. They are held up as authoritative as the Bible.

The problem with creeds (as with ALL uninspired writings of men), is seen from the fact that THEY DON’T AGREE WITH ONE ANOTHER.

For example, the Methodist Discipline, p. 410, reads: “let every adult person, and the parents of every child to be baptized, HAVE THE CHOICE OF SPRINKLING, POURING, OR IMMERSION.”

On the other hand, the Hiscox manual for the Baptist denomination says on p. 20, Note 8: “BAPTISM IS AN IMMERSION...”

These statements are clearly contradictory. ARE BOTH DOCTRINES REVEALED IN THE BIBLE? Why does the Methodist ‘creed’ stated there is a CHOICE in how one is baptized, yet the Baptist ‘creed’ stated that baptism is ‘by immersion’ ONLY? These ‘creeds’ clearly define the differences of belief between each denomination.

They are also undisputable evidence of division. At best, they can only serve to ‘proselyte’ an individual much as did the scribes & Pharisees of Matt. 23 by their teaching of the traditions of the elders.

Obedience to the gospel, not “commandments of men”, will result in salvation. The gospel alone provides a standard by which there can be unity and “one-ness” in the sense that Jesus meant in His prayer in John 17:20-21. Creeds promote a ‘unity in diversity’. Are we to understand the unity between Jesus & His Father as an “agreeing to disagree”? The Bible states that God wants all men to be saved and to “come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

### CANNOT TRUTH BE KNOWN WITHOUT A DENOMINATIONAL CREED?

Furthermore, which creed is right? Can they all be right and accurate and yet contradictory? It is possible to: “corrupt the word of God” (2 Cor. 2:17); to “pervert the gospel of Christ” Gal. 1:6-9; “wrest the scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16); and to “handle the word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor. 4:2). How so? By teaching doctrines and commandments of men! Any doctrine taught today must conform to what was taught through the Holy Spirit by revelation. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth. HOW DID THEY TEACH SALVATION? That is how it must be taught today.

If we teach it the way it was taught by them, we will not only be correct, we will be ‘one’ in the sense that Jesus meant in John 17:20-21. Paul said in 1 Cor. 4:6, “...that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written...” The apostle John wrote in 2 John 1:9-10, “Everyone who...does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”

Many people who are friends, sadly are divided in their religious beliefs. They can be with one another in many walks of life; they can be involved in many functions, working together, and agree on many things, yet they do not worship God together! I emphasize that they “DO NOT”, rather that they “CANNOT”. The reason for saying “DO NOT”, is because they COULD assemble together, IF their teachings were the same. They have been taught different things, and so they cannot worship alike.

The Methodist and Baptist creed wordings on baptism bear this out. The Bible does not teach both, nor does it contradict itself. It takes courage to question and

investigate our personal convictions to see if we have been taught inspired doctrine, or a tradition of man. But, if one is sincere in his desire for truth, he will do so. The exhortation of Paul in 2 Cor. 13:5 to “examine yourselves, whether ye are in the faith”, appeals to such a person. The apostle Peter gave a similar exhortation in saying “give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:10-11),

What about you? Do you have just such a desire to examine, and even re-examine what you were taught on salvation? Are you willing to see if your church has/supports a ‘creed’? Is that creed the same as the Bible? If so, why does it need to exist? Were you taught the same doctrine as people in the book of Acts? Your soul’s salvation is God’s desire. However, your soul’s damnation is Satan’s desire.

Choose wisely, that you may be "approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15). rdb