

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 Matthew 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 Matthew 16:6, 11-12, to watch & BEWARE OF THEIR TEACHINGS. In Matthew 15, Jesus said that these ‘traditions’:

— transgressed the commandment of God (v. 3).

— were contrary to the Law of Moses (vv. 4-5).

— made void the word of God. (v. 6),

— caused worship to be in vain (v. 9).

The scribes and Pharisees sought to bind this tradition of the elders upon the multitudes. When Jesus’ disciples were observed not keeping these traditions, the Pharisees and scribes objected (v. 2). Mark 7:3-4 lists some of these ‘traditions’ referred to herein. These oral traditions were not from Moses but regarded as equal in authority with the written word. Moses had commanded, “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it...” (Deuteronomy 4:2).

WHAT IF SUCH WERE DONE TODAY? Would the results not be the same? There are several SUPPOSED, inspired doctrines that are 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 denomination’s ‘statements of faith’. You will not be accepted into their ‘fellowship’ without submitting to their 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 is seen from the fact that THEY CONTRADICT 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 TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE? 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 and Pharisees of Matthew 23 by their teaching of the traditions of the elders.

Creeds promote a ‘unity in diversity’. The gospel alone provides a standard by which there can be unity and “one-ness” in the sense that Jesus meant in His prayer (cf. John 17:20-21). Are we to understand the unity between Jesus and His Father as “agreeing to disagree”?

How can all creeds be supported by the Bible, yet contradictory? We must remember; it is possible to:

- “corrupt the word of God” (2 Corinthians 2:17)
- “pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:6-9;)
- “wrest the scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16) and,
- “handle the word of God deceitfully” (2 Corinthians 4:2).

How so? By teaching doctrines and commandments of men. All doctrines taught today must conform to what was revealed by the Holy Spirit to those chosen "men of God" (cf. 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Since the Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, we ought to heed HOW THEY TAUGHT SALVATION. If we teach as they taught, we will not only be correct, but we will also be ‘one’ in the sense that Jesus meant in John 17:20-21.

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, work together, and agree on many things, yet they do not worship God together! I emphasize that they “DO NOT”, rather than they “CANNOT”. The reason for saying “DO NOT”, is because they COULD if their teachings were the same. 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 one's personal convictions to see if he was 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 Corinthians 13:5 to "examine yourselves, whether ye are in the faith", appeals to such a person. The apostle Peter gave a similar exhortation in 2 Peter 1:10-11.

What about you? Do you have such a desire? 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). rb