

Customs & Traditions Pt 2 Follow the customs of Paul and be not spoiled by traditions of men

This is our second & final second teaching on the topic: customs and traditions. In our previous study we covered three points: (i) There were customs according to the law in Israel, (ii) Israel were commanded to keep the ordinances (customs) that God gave them, and (iii) there were customs outside of the law that were not evil. In this study we will cover three points: (i) Paul believed he had not committed anything against the people or customs of their fathers in believing in Christ, (ii) Paul encouraged the church at Thessalonica to stand fast and hold the tradition which they have been taught, and (iii) Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men.

A little more detail on our three points-

1. Paul believed he had not committed anything against the people or customs of their fathers in believing in the Lord Christ Jesus

[17] And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

[20] For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. (Acts 28:17, 20)

2. Paul encouraged the church at Thessalonica to stand fast and hold the tradition which they have been taught

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thes.2: 15).

3. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy & vain deceit, after the traditions of men

“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” (Col.2: 8).

Illustration

I spent sixteen years in a Presbyterian church where the minister wore a black gown and a dog collar, and we sat in pews, the choir sung and each month we had the Lord’s supper. These were not customs handed down to the church from scripture, but were traditions of the Presbyterian church.

Next Karen and I went to an Anglican Church and the woman vicar wore a white robe and dog collar, we sat in pews, and followed the traditions of the Anglican Church. I have since learnt that the Anglican Church understand the scriptures through the lens of tradition.

I remember when Karen and I attended a Presbyterian church where the minister wore standard clothing, he appeared to resist the traditions of his church that were not substantiated by the scriptures.

Question

How do we know what is a good tradition and which will spoil us?

Answer from the scriptures

You will know which is good tradition, and which is evil, by whether or not it is contrary to the word of God- specifically the teachings and traditions handed down from the risen Lord Jesus to Paul and written in his epistles.

When a church reject the teachings of Paul and adopt almost exclusively the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, or solely from the book of Acts, then: note them, and depart from them.

When teaching institutions require you to adhere to the customs and culture of a particular people group, and those traditions are contrary to scripture- depart. If you buy-into those traditions- they will snare you, and you will be deceived by them. You will be like a perfectly good meal that is spoiled by excessive salt (the meal is no longer fit for purpose- to be eaten).

Beware lest any man spoil you through vain deceit, after the traditions of men!