



DOES IT MAKE ANY
DIFFERENCE?

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There are so many different denominations and churches and religions. It is often said that, "We are going to the same place anyway. Does it make any difference which group we belong to, or what set of beliefs we follow?"

Consider what Jesus said about what He preached to the people of His day. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man --- And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be liked unto a foolish man." (Matt. 7:24-26) "God is a Spirit and they that worship him MUST worship him in spirit and in TRUTH." (John 4:24)

Jesus did not try to please everyone who came to Him. He did not perform miracles for show or popularity, He did not teach easy beliefs, or a rosy picture of life as a Believer. As a matter of fact, He warned that to follow His teachings could cause your own family to turn against you and cause people in general to hate you. (Matt. 10:21,22) A righteous life by God's definition is one which will lift the heavy burdens of a sinful past, of failures in the past, one who has an easy spiritual burden, a load that is easy to carry, and a very restful life. (Matt. 11:28-30) This is speaking of our relationship with God. He is easy to get along with. All we have to do is obey Him. As my wife jokingly says, "All I want is MY way." That is all that God wants of us, to let Him have His way in our lives. That isn't just an option we have as Believers, yet it is a must.

Our Redeemer made it very plain in Matt. 7:21-23 when He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall

enter into the kingdom of heaven; --- Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Jesus often warned about false teachers. He made it very plain that He disagreed with many of the religious leaders of His day and called them hypocrites because they talked as though they worshipped God and served Him, but in fact were just following a set of traditions they themselves decided upon and which had nothing to do with God's will. In fact, these teachings were often direct conflict with what God plainly tells us in the Bible. What does this have to do with us today, and the different denominations and religions?

Jesus did tell us to not judge others, lest we be judged; but the scriptures also tell us to judge righteous judgment. Is this contradictory? NO. We can't see into the minds of people as the Saviour did, to know the motives they have. It's that which we are not to judge. We can look at the scriptures and compare them to what we hear taught by the different groups and decide just what is from the Bible and what is from traditions. Is it so bad to follow traditions? Well, not really; most families in America get together on Thanksgiving Day to enjoy a meal and to visit, this is a tradition. It did not come from the Bible, but it is not a contradiction to the Bible. Observing traditions is not wrong as long as they do not cause us to disobey the plain teachings and principles of the Bible. That is the rule we must always apply, for if we are willing to follow traditional ways and teachings which causes us to disobey the will of God, we will be excluded from God's Kingdom. (Matt. 7:21-23) We are not His children if we disobey Him.

It is not wrong for us to draw a line to separate truth from falsehood. It is our duty to do so, that we might help others to understand how serious it is to God. It is sad to say, but many today, just as in the Saviour's day, are worshipping Him in vain, because they are teaching the commandments of men. (Matt. 15:9) They may call themselves Believers, they may teach others about Jesus, they may worship Jesus, but if they are following traditions which are against the will of God, which cause people to practice religious rituals, celebrate religious holidays, and teach principles which are from pagan or atheistic sources, they are not going to end up in eternity with the Messiah unless they change their ways. I am sure there are things which God will not excuse, or tolerate. I am sure there are things about everyone of us that God wants to change, but that He will overlook because we are not aware of them. There is a point though at which God's patience wears out. He put up with the sins of ancient Israel as they traveled through the wilderness between Egypt and the promised land, but there was a point where He finally said that no one over the age of 20, except Joshua and Caleb, would be allowed to enter the promised land. After the young ones had lived in the land for many years and had taken up the religious teachings of the heathen there, we read in II Chr. 36:15-16. He had compassion on His people and sent messengers to them to turn them back to God's ways. But they mistreated God's messengers and mocked them, until God's wrath arose and there WAS NO REMEDY.

That seems to be just about the point America's spiritual and moral leadership has reached. They have substituted the false teachings of men in place of the TRUTH from the Bible. They teach lies about Jesus. They teach lies about what Jesus said and did. They teach lies about what the Bible says and teaches. Does it make any difference, if they are sincere?

Whether they are sincere or not, it is for God to judge, but it does make a difference.

The disciples came to Jesus and asked Him why He taught in parables. Jesus answered that, "it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. Their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matt. 13:11, 13, 15) These were people who did not want to hear the TRUTH. They were happy with what they believed and did not want to change. They would worship God, each in his own way, and that was that. So Jesus, in so many words, said, I am not going to tell them the things they need to know, let them die in their sins, in ignorance. But to us He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them - -- Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19, 20) He knew the minds of people and could judge them, and did say that many who worshipped Him in falsehood would never have eternal life. But we can't see the hearts of people and should not judge that part. We are, however, to teach people to "observe all things which Jesus commanded."

In I John 2:3-5 we read, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his WORD, in him is the love of God perfected ---." Are there Believers in these different denominations that teach false things which are sinful in God's eyes? In Rev. 18:4 we read, "Come out of her,

my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Judgment is going to come when God decides enough is enough. There are sincere people in these false religions, but God says come out of them. Don't stretch His patience past the point where there "is no remedy." Keep God's will in mind and not the traditions of men.

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THE CHURCH OF GOD

7th Day

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