

The Commandment of God Vs The Traditions of Men

(Written by Joe Keim)

Do the ordinances and traditions of men have the same authority that the Word of God has? We know what the various 'traditions' say about themselves, but what does God's Word say about the matter?



For many years I had always thought that the Pharisees were very evil and wicked people. The reason I thought this was so, is because of the names that Jesus gave them. For example in Mathew 23, Jesus went so far as to call them *hypocrites, fools, blind guides, evil and adulterous*. In the same chapter He went on to call them *unclean, full of dead mans bones, serpents and a generation of vipers*. He ends the chapter with *...HOW CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL?* Wow! How would you like for Jesus throw all of that at you? It almost sounds as if these men should have been behind prison doors. But as I read more and more about these people called the Pharisees I started to see another picture of them.

Before I describe that second picture for you, let me say this, obviously there are bad apples in every basket but wait a minute! What about Nicodemus in John 3? He was a Pharisee. He seemed innocent enough. What about the apostle Paul? Was he not a Pharisee? Yes! In *Galatians 1:4* Paul writes that he was *EXCEEDINGLY ZEALOUS OF THE TRADITIONS OF MY FATHERS*. Whoa! I don't know about you but it sounds to me as if being a Pharisee was something very important. By what Paul is telling us in *Philippians 3:5* it makes me want to believe that he was a very sincere Pharisee. He writes that he was...*CIRCUMCISED THE EIGHTH DAY, OF THE STOCK OF ISRAEL, OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN, AN HEBREW OF THE HEBREWS; AS TOUCHING THE LAW, A PHARISEE;* and then he continues on in the next verse, (v-6) if you were to ask anyone who knew me they would have told you that I, Paul, was blameless in the sight of the law. In Paul's mind he thought if any person on earth had it together, he did.

You see, this was the case with his people. They had become so rigid and caught up in their own religion that they started feeling just a little bit above every other man. They honestly and sincerely felt deep in their heart that if anyone would be accepted by God it would surely be them. They wore clothe that made them stand out. They looked and acted so religious that they had most everyone fooled.

One day as the Pharisee's were following Jesus they noticed that he sat down to eat with a bunch of tax collectors and sinners (Mat 9:11). They thought to themselves, boy we got him now. How dare He say that He is send from God and then sit down next to sinners and tax collectors? They thought, we would never do that. Why, we are much better then that. You know what Jesus told them? He said...*THEY THAT BE WHOLE NEED NOT A PHYSICIAN, BUT THEY THAT ARE SICK (MAT. 9:12)*. Jesus went on to say in the next verse...*I AM NOT COME TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS TO REPENTANCE*.



The Pharisees had become so prideful in being right in their own eyes that they didn't even realize that they were being contrary to the very One they were trying to serve (God). The main reason they had become so right in their own eyes was because over the past several hundred years since the Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity, they added *hundreds of religious traditions to God's laws*. And you know what was so sad about the added traditions? The Pharisees and teachers of the law *considered their own traditions every bit as important as God's Word*. In fact (*Matthew 23:4*), tells us that they bound such heavy burdens on the shoulders of men that man could hardly bear them. In one such example (*Matthew 15:2*) the Pharisees caught Jesus' disciples breaking one of their traditions when they ate bread and did not wash their hands. They asked Jesus, *WHY DO THY DISCIPLES TRANSGRESS THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS? FOR THEY WASH NOT THEIR HANDS WHEN THEY EAT BREAD*.

THOUGHT: Religious people are often disturbed when their traditions, rituals, ceremonies, worship, rules, schedules, and habits are broken. Some become very disturbed.

Jesus tells the Pharisees in (*Matthew 15:3*) that they were breaking God's law in order to keep their tradition. He asked them, *WHY DO YE ALSO TRANSGRESS [DISOBEY] THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD BY YOUR TRADITION?*

If we move down a couple verses (V-7) Jesus reminds them about something the Old Testament had described would happen of them. Jesus tells them, *YE HYPOCRITES, WELL DID ISAIAH PROPHECY OF YOU, SAYING, THIS PEOPLE DRAWETH NIGH UNTO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND HONOURETH ME WITH THEIR LIPS; BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN THEY DO WORSHIP ME, TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN.* Wow! You see what had happened? Their religion had become a matter of action and man-made rules. **Their hearts** were **far from** God and as a result their **worship** was **in vain** (fruitless).

We can read in Acts 26 where God called Paul (a Jew) to take the good news of salvation to the Gentile people because the Jews refused to hear it. As Paul was writing to the Gentile church at Rome he said, *I HAVE GREAT HEAVINESS AND CONTINUAL SORROW IN MY HEART. FOR I COULD WISH THAT MYSELF WERE ACCURSED FROM CHRIST FOR MY BRETHREN, MY KINSMEN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH: WHO ARE ISRAELITES...(ROMANS 9:2-4)* In the very next chapter Paul is still thinking about his people the Jews when he writes, *BRETHREN, MY HEART'S DESIRE AND PRAYER TO GOD FOR ISRAEL IS, THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED. FOR I BEAR THEM RECORD THAT THEY HAVE A ZEAL OF GOD, BUT NOT ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE. FOR THEY BEING IGNORANT OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND GOING ABOUT TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, HAVE NOT SUBMITTED THEMSELVES UNTO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD (ROMANS 10:1-4).*



At this time I would like for you the reader to consider something in all honesty. Where do you stand when it comes to the traditions of your fathers? Are your traditions and church ordinances more important then God's commands? Think about this...What do you belief holds up the Amish church? What is the foundation of the Amish church made of? What keeps it from falling? Is it God's Word? Is it the church ordinances?

Maybe this would help us to be more sure of the right answer...Let us just pretend for a moment that I was able to yank the **Ordinance Letter** right out from underneath the Amish church. Would the church continue to stand or would it come falling down? After you have honestly answered that question I would like for you to consider a second question. What do you think would happen if I left the **Ordinance Letter** their but yanked the **Word of God** out from underneath the church? Would it continue to stand?

TRADITIONS OF MEN CREATE PROBLEMS FOR US WITH GOD

Colossians 2:8-10

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. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him...

1 Peter 1:18-19

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Colossians 2:14 (Jesus got rid of the hand written ordinances)

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Colossians 2:20-22

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, [such as] (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?