



**Did the Apostles of
Christ Teach and
Practice Legalism?**

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Preface

The Apostles' Doctrine

The apostles' doctrine is what is taught in the New Testament epistles. It's message is taken from fulfilled prophecy in the Old Testament, the Gospels, Acts and what the Holy Spirit revealed to the apostles and confirmed in the Revelation. The grace of God is the foundation of the apostles' doctrine (Ephesians 2:8-9; 3:2). The authority of the apostles for their doctrine is directly from God (Matthew 16:18-19; 28:18-20; John 20:21-22; Acts 9:1-16; Romans 2:16; Galatians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Today in many churches the 'apostles' doctrine' is not thought to be important. Christians who repeat what the apostles taught are in some cases thought to be legalistic and church leadership urges members to not listen. In fact, many of the clergy and laity in evangelical churches promote the idea that the apostles' doctrine is legalism. Because, if the apostles' doctrine were taught and received, it would upset and bring trouble into the churches. Many churches of today are like the Jews in Thessalonica, who in the days of the apostles, resisted what the apostles' taught. This is how the Thessalonians responded to the apostles' doctrine, "But when they did not find them (Paul and Silas), they dragged Jason and some of the brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, these who have turned the world upside down have come here too" (Acts 17:6).

"The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). The Word of God reveals truth; receiving it with faith or refusing to respond, exposes what is in a person's heart (Matthew 6:21; Romans 10:9).

God calls the Christian to faith in the truth of Christ, even if it is considered of little importance by man's religion.

Introduction

The Law of Moses as given by God to Israel has 613 commandments. These 613 commandments were studied and classified by Rabbi Maimonides in the 12th century. These commandments given to Israel were a complete law; they could not be taken apart or broken up as far as keeping some of them and not keeping others. Failure in not keeping one of the 613 laws meant that the whole law was violated (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10; James 2:10). For Israel, the penalty for not keeping the whole law (613 commandments) was to be under a curse of God (Deuteronomy 26:17; 27:1, 26; 28:15-67).

God had chosen Israel out of all nations to be His people (Deuteronomy 7:6; 27:9). The apostles of Jesus were aware of their heritage as given in the Law of Moses and knew they were exclusively the people of God. Jesus chose the apostles to reveal the grace of God and the revelation of Himself as the King of the kingdom of God (Psalms 24:7-10; Isaiah 9:6-7; Zechariah 9:9). He revealed to the apostles that He came to complete and fulfill the Law of Moses while here on the earth (Matthew 3:15-17; 5:17-18; Luke 24:25-27, 44-45; Romans 10:4).

Israel rejected the King and the kingdom of God. Because of Israel's rejection, the earthly blessing promised by God to them through the prophets was put off for a future day. Therefore, in the foreknowledge of God, the dispensation of the grace of God started with the Holy Spirit being given at Pentecost. From that time until the rapture, a bride is being called out (the Church) to be a heavenly people for the Bridegroom, the Son of God.

1. What did the Apostles Learn by Walking with Jesus for 3 Years?

Each one of the apostles who walked, ate, slept, and lived with Jesus was chosen by God to be with Him (John 13:18; 15:16). The apostles, like all Jews in Israel, had the Law of Moses as their standard and through it learned how to relate to God. In contrast to the knowledge of God received through the Law of Moses, their life with Jesus was a constant new revelation of God. This revelation was of Jesus as the promised Messiah and of His purpose and ways in grace (Matthew 16:16). No one in Israel had personally seen the power of

God up until that time, but now they saw it in Jesus. What the apostles saw and experienced through Jesus, was the King showing forth the works of the Kingdom Age (Isaiah 11:1-5; 35:5-6; 61:1, 3; Matthew 11:2-6, 28; Luke 4:16-22).

The power of God, working in Jesus, was an amazement to the apostles. The Law of Moses, did not prepare them to receive the grace and works of God (Luke 24: 25-27; John 14:9-10). The apostles observed as Jesus spoke of the Roman centurion, who was a Gentile and had no part in the Law of Moses or the promises to Israel. Jesus said that his faith was greater than He had found anywhere in Israel (Matthew 8:10). This centurion believed God apart from the Law of Moses (Matthew 8:5-13). The Syro-Phoenician woman was another person who believed God apart from the Law. She saw the reward of her faith (Mark 7:24-30). The learning process by the apostles was in seeing the power and grace of God in Jesus apart from the Law of Moses. This revelation continued in the lives of the apostles until Jesus was taken up in the clouds to the Father (Acts 1:10-11).

2. What Revelations of God were Given to the Apostles at Pentecost?

When Jesus told His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer, to be killed and to rise again the third day, Peter rebuked Him for these statements (Matthew 16:21-22). Jesus' words were not received by them, because they had not yet comprehended all He was teaching them. They were still under the influence of the religion of the Jews, men and Satan. (Matthew 16:23).

Jesus told His apostles that the Holy Spirit was *with* them, but later He would be *in* them (John 14:17). He told them He and the Father would send the Holy Spirit to them (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 1:8) on the day of Pentecost, (Feast of Weeks, Leviticus 23).

The apostles and disciples waited together in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit as a mighty wind came from heaven, and they were all baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2-4).

This event changed their lives forever. The apostles no longer hid from the Jews, or acted as men without faith (John 20:19, 24-25). On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood with the 11 apostles, and declared the mighty works of God to the Jews who had killed their own Messiah (Acts 2:14). They, being

empowered by the Holy Spirit to declare the truth in Christ, spoke the Word of God with boldness. The Jews marveled at the boldness of Peter and John, knowing they were unlearned men. The Jews saw the power of God working through them and they took notice that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). The Holy Spirit had come to anoint, to fill and indwell the apostles, and through them to reveal the mind of God to all people. The apostles would be the foundation upon whom Christ would build His Church, Christ being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20-22). The apostles would give forth the truths of Christ upon which the Church would be built. These truths are spiritual truths, and are for all believers to follow in faith until Jesus comes again for His bride.

The revelations which the apostles received from walking with Jesus at Pentecost and afterward were the truths that we read in the epistles. These revelations were from the Spirit of God, as Jesus told them, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13; Galatians 1:12).

3. What did the Apostles Teach all men to Receive?

The 12 apostles received a transformation of their minds and hearts after being with Jesus for 3 years. This transformation from Judaism (the Law of Moses) to following Christ (grace and truth), became complete upon the day of Pentecost with the giving of the Holy Spirit to the apostles and other disciples.

Shortly thereafter, Jesus revealed Himself to Saul the Pharisee (later Paul), and used him mightily in the building of His Church (Acts 9:17-25). The apostles taught that all men could receive this grace, and come into fellowship with God. Not through keeping the law or doing good works, but through Christ’s finished work of redemption on the cross at Calvary (John 19:30; Romans 10:4, 9-10). Every man who receives this free gift of God (2 Corinthians 9:15; Ephesians 2:8-9), enters into the fellowship of the Son of God (1 Corinthians 1:9).

The gospel believed and received into the heart, is the foundation of what the apostles taught to those who had no knowledge in faith of the true God. The gospel, which the apostles taught all men to believe and follow, is found in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. “Moreover brethren, I declared to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you unless you

believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

The apostle Paul brings out the apostles’ teaching with clarity in Romans 10:9, “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

This message was carried to the unbelieving world, as it is today. Water baptism, then as now, is the outward testimony of a person having confessed Jesus as Lord; the Christ of God (Acts 8:26-38; 16:30-34).

4. What did the Apostles Teach?

a. to individual believers?

b. to the Church?

“I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God” (1. Timothy 3:15).

a. To the individual believer

Since all of the epistles are the apostles’ doctrine, only the more unknown, unpracticed and life changing teachings will be addressed here.

The believer’s walk, in order to be of true faith, must be based on the truth in Christ, as taught by the Holy Spirit through the apostles. Without following Jesus in this way, every wind of doctrine will come to destabilize the believer’s life. In the professing churches today, using the name of Jesus but following a different doctrine than the apostles’ doctrine, or a different spirit than the Holy Spirit, is not uncommon (2 Corinthians 11:3-4). The Apostle Paul in his labors, dealt with much opposition to the truth in Christ; he instructs Timothy for men not to teach strange doctrines (I Timothy 1:3). In 2 Timothy 1:13, he instructs Timothy to retain the standard of sound words that he gave to him, as a minister proclaiming the truth in Christ and as a laborer in God’s vineyard. Sound words and sound doctrine are the foundation of the apostles’ doctrine as seen in the following:

1. The Christian man’s primary responsibility is to respond to Christ spiritually as made known in the apostles’ doctrine. If he is married, his response to Christ is to be as though he has no wife (*Genesis 3:17; 1 Corinthians 7:29).

*Adam, rejected God’s command to him, he followed his wife’s counsel and leadership instead.

2. The Christian husband is the head of the wife and he is to love her as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5:23-25).
3. Christian fathers (not the church) are instructed to be the primary teachers of their children in the truths of Christ (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).
4. Fathers are not to provoke their children, but show forth the example of the love and the grace of God (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).
5. A Christian husband is to honor his wife as the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7).
6. Christian men are commanded to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8).
7. The Christian husband's responsibility is to teach his wife the truths of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:35; 1 Timothy 2:12).
8. The Christian man and woman are priests unto God and co-heirs together (1 Peter 2:5, 9; 3:7; Revelation 1:5-6).
9. The Christian man and woman are to avoid "the love of the world and the things in the world" (1 John 2:15). Separating unto Christ and away from the world begins in the heart by believing in God's righteousness (Romans 10:10).
10. Believers are admonished to love one another in the love of Christ (John 15:12).
11. A Christian wife is told to submit to her husband in everything as her authority, just as the Church is to submit to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1, 5-6).
12. Young wives (and old) are admonished to love their husband and children, and be homemakers (1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:5).
13. Older women are to be an example and to teach younger women (Titus 2:5).
14. Christian women are commanded to dress in modesty (*1 Timothy 2:9).

*The Hebrew word *breeches* in English is translated britches, trousers or pants in the NKJV, JND, Linen drawers is used in the Septuagint and NAB. Only men were commanded of God to wear *Breeches*, a man's clothing. God's command to Israel was for men to wear men's clothing and a woman to wear only women's clothing (Deuteronomy 22:5). The apostles' doctrine as recorded in 1 Timothy 2:9 is that Christian women are to adorn themselves in modest apparel. It can hardly be said that Christian women wearing men's clothing (britches, trousers or pants) is modest.

In Isaiah 3:22 the Hebrew word *Machalatzoth* is used for women's clothing. Unger's Bible Dictionary translates the word as, changeable suit or gala dresses. For further study in the differences in the apparel of men and women see "the New Manners and Customs of Bible Times" by Ralph Gower.

15. Christian women are admonished to put away jewelry, elaborate hairdo's, and expensive apparel. Instead they are to pursue the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit and good works (1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3-4).

16. Christian women praying or prophesying are commanded to be veiled or covered (1 Corinthians 11:1-16).

17. In all these truths as taught in the apostles' doctrine, the Christian is admonished to present his or her body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. (Romans 12:1). Believing these truths *in faith* is the Christians only reasonable way of life.

b. In the Church

Starting at the inception of the Church on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit brought into Christian gatherings four separate types of meetings. These four separate meetings were to be the foundation of all Christian assembly meetings everywhere that call on the name of the Lord. They are found in Acts 2:42. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and to prayers.” These four meetings are the spiritual foundation of Christian assemblies and are seen as follows:

- a. The apostles' doctrine is the teaching of the Holy Spirit to the Church.
- b. Fellowship is fellowshiping in the life, death, resurrection of Jesus and in His present position at the right hand of the Father.
- c. Breaking of the bread is spiritual worship, remembering Jesus in His death.
- d. Prayers, of the assembly offering up petitions and thanksgiving unto God.

The epistles (letters) of the apostles were written to different assemblies and individuals and passed on to other assemblies (Colossians 4:16). In the epistles, these four foundations of assembly meetings are seen, taught, and practiced in all of the churches. Church truth taught by the apostles was given by the Holy Spirit (Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

Many truths of the apostles' doctrine have been lost to the understanding of the present day churches; they are seen in this way.

Church Structure

a. The promise of Jesus to those that belong to Him is, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I AM there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Jesus did not promise to be in the midst of those who gather to denominations, sects, or gatherings in independence. Jesus did promise to be in the midst of His people who gather to Him alone.

In the Corinthian assembly, divisions had taken root and they had lost sight of the truth of Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:20. To correct these divisions, the Apostle Paul by epistle, instructed the Corinthians in the apostles’ doctrine, by commanding them to put away those divisions (1 Corinthians chapters 1-4). Those divisions were based on carnality (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) and have resulted today as denominationalism, sectarianism, and independent gatherings.

b. The Church has only one head; it is Christ Jesus, the believer’s High Priest (Hebrews 8:1). Today’s churches have heads and headquarters for church people to follow and to be directed by. God has given the Holy Spirit as the Church’s leader and director, rather than men. The Church is to be built on Jesus Christ alone, the Church’s only true head and foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11).

c. The clergy/laity church structure is built on the Law of Moses and is after man’s religion, not after the Spirit of God (Matthew 23:8; 3 John 9-10; Revelation 2:6, 15). In contrast to this system of man, God is building His Church with gifts given unto men (Ephesians 4:11). These are not clerical or hierarchical positions, but simply the working of the Holy Spirit through gifts as seen in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.

d. The apostles instructed all believers that the Church is made up of an equal brotherhood of priests (Matthew 23:8; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:5-6). Their subjection is to one another in humility, with all being subject to their High Priest (Ephesians 5:24; 1 Peter 5:5-6). Positions of oversight are servant positions, normally of elders (Matthew 23:11; 1 Timothy 3:1).

Worship in the Church

e. The only form of corporate worship Jesus instructed His own to practice is the remembrance of Him in His death, through the bread and the cup (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-18).

From the time of Pentecost, remembering Jesus in His death has been taught and practiced by the apostles and disciples (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians

11:20, 23-26). This time of the assembly coming together to break the bread and drink the cup is a time of joy, praise, and worship, with each brother exercising his priesthood in freedom as led by the Holy Spirit, to give and lead in the worship of Jesus (1 Corinthians 14:26-32). This spirit and truth worship is worship of the Father and the Son (John 4:23-24; 5:23). Unbelievers were never to have part or partake in this worship.

Spiritual order in the Church

f. As the Lord gave them the commandment, the apostles taught that in the assembly women are to be silent, as vocal expression over men in the assembly has not been given to them (1 Corinthians 14:34, 37). Nor are women to teach men (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:11-15).

g. The apostles taught that the woman is to be covered when praying or prophesying (1 Corinthians 11:5). Praying may include, praying silently in the assembly or when praying vocally with other women or children. Prophesying may include teaching children, young women, or older women. The Holy Spirit did not give these instructions because of culture as some suppose, for the Holy Spirit is not a teacher of culture, but is teaching the order of subjection in creation. This order is God, Christ, man, and woman (1 Corinthians 11:3). This order of creation is the Word of God; it does not change with the passing of time (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 13:8). Neither clergy nor any person living in this present age of the dispensation of the grace of God, has authority to nullify the instructions of the Holy Spirit as given through the apostles. The authority for the apostles' doctrine is found in this verse; "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37).

The Church Separate from the World

h. The culture of the world invading the churches has caused many to put away the apostles' doctrine. The warning of the Holy Spirit is; "Do not love the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

For the Christian and the churches, the warning to the Colossians is clear, "Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations"

(Colossians 2:20). These regulations are the world's way of relating to God through human ideas, ways and practices. The apostles' doctrine is God's truth in leading Christians into subjection to Christ, and putting away carnal teachings, practices and doctrines.

Paul, committing the apostles' doctrine to Timothy, gives these instructions; "These things command and teach" (1 Timothy 4:11). "O Timothy guard what was committed to your trust..." (1 Timothy 6:20). So also are the churches and all Christians to guard the truth in Christ committed to them by the Holy Spirit in the apostles' doctrine.

5. Are the Truths Jesus and the Holy Spirit Revealed to the Apostles to be Taught and Practiced Today?

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

"Forever, O Lord your word is settled in heaven" (Psalms 119:89).

"For I AM the Lord I do not change" (Malachi 3:6).

The kingdoms of men in this world change according to circumstances. Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world, it is an unchangeable kingdom (John 18:36). Just as this world came into being by His Word alone (Hebrews 1:1-3; 11:3), so His Church is built on Him and His Word alone (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20-22). The Church of Jesus Christ is spiritual and eternal, and is only built with spiritual and eternal materials, His Word (John 1:1-3). The physical manifestation of His Word is seen in saints who respond to it. They are observed by unbelievers, by angels, and other saints as well (1 Corinthians 4:9; 11:10; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12; 2:13). Believers responding to His Word, follow Him who has spoken (John 17:8).

Professed believers or churches, who change or refuse to respond to the Word of God, make that which is eternal into the changeable carnal kingdoms of men. Some may excuse this by saying some truths in the Word of God are not that important. However, in the parable of the unjust steward Jesus taught something different. Jesus said, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10). The difference between what Jesus taught and the doctrines of men can best be observed in whether: a person responds to the Spirit of God, or follows the philosophies of men. As the Apostle Paul warns, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the

tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

A great many churches have incorporated the world’s culture and philosophy into their teachings, practices and spiritual direction. This has undermined the work of the Holy Spirit within the churches to the point that many professed believers have been led to believe the Word of God is culture, or out of date. The result of this reasoning brings a person to think that to follow Jesus according to His word, is not for a believer to practice today. Jesus addressed this downward direction in the heart of man as He spoke to His disciples, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned. It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matthew 5:13).

The consequence of this action (putting away the apostles’ doctrine) is found in the last church of the Church Age, Laodicea. Jesus said of it, “I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:16). Jesus gives the way out for the one who has an ear to hear, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19). For anyone who has an ear to hear, to follow Jesus in true faith, repentance will be seen as the fruit of their faith.

6. Did the Apostles Teach and Practice Legalism?

A clear understanding of legalism and its foundation is necessary for the honest seeker to make a judgment.

1. The Law of Moses is written in the first 5 books of the Bible. It was given only to Israel, not to Gentiles or the Church (Acts 15:1-11, 19). However, the apostles used examples in the Law of Moses (1 Corinthians 9:7-21; 10:1-10) to give believers a more complete understanding of God’s ways. These examples the apostles employed cannot be used to bring believers under the Law of Moses (Romans 10:4; Galatians 5:1-4). The Law of Moses was compulsory and without liberty, with death for noncompliance (2 Corinthians 3:7).

2. The apostles’ doctrine is what is taught in the epistles. The Gospels, Acts, and the Revelation confirm the Holy Spirit’s work and revelation of the apostles’ doctrine. The foundation of the apostles’ doctrine is the grace of God and is the practical life of faith for the Christian who walks in the Spirit. A professed believer, not following the apostles’ doctrine, leads that person into spiritual deception and a life based on man’s religion, not on God’s Word.

Many church people today, receiving church training and teaching, are being taught that the apostles taught legalism. This is especially the case with the truths in Christ, taught in the apostles' doctrine. These truths conflict with the culture and spiritual direction that is so prevalent in the world today. One Scripture that is often quoted to give credence to the spiritualized Adamic nature in professed believers, and to allow the world's culture into the church is, "Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). This Scripture is quoted to enforce a person's freedom to walk according to the world's religious views and in independence from the apostles' doctrine. Whereas, the apostles taught believers a different spiritual path as seen in this verse, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3:17 refers to the Christian's freedom from the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses was given for the man living in and after the flesh, after the course (culture) of the world (Galatians 4:3; Colossians 2:8). The Christian by contrast is to walk after the Spirit. "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13).

In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 the apostles taught that a believer belongs to the Lord and is under the authority of Christ. The liberty and freedom a Christian has been given is entirely in the kingdom of Christ. This is not liberty to pursue the world's things, worldly culture, the Law of Moses, the philosophy of man's religion (man's Adamic nature) or anything else not after Christ (1 John 2:16).

The Apostles taught that the Christian, everyone in the kingdom of Christ has liberty and lawfulness in all things (1 Corinthians 6:12). However, 1 Corinthians 6:13-20 shows that the liberty the Christian has is not to be used contrary to the Truths and Spirit of Christ. The Apostle Paul has further shown the difference in Galatians 5:13, "For you, brethren have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." The love of God is seen in the saints where the Word of God is fully received. Spirituality or carnality is the choice for either a person or a whole church's direction. Following legalism or the world's religious culture will make one carnal, but responding to the truth in Christ will make one into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

Christians who quote the apostles' doctrine are many times called legal and not in line with present day church teachings or practices. If a person uses the teachings in the churches of this day for the foundation of truth, then the apostles' doctrine will be seen as legal and out of step. If the apostles' doctrine is used as the foundation of truth, professed believers and the churches will be seen as needing to repent. This repentance is necessary because of the non-response to the message as made known in the apostles' doctrine. Let the reader judge whether the apostles taught legalism or God's Word. Let the reader also judge whether professed believers and present day churches are following worldly culture and teachings for their spiritual pathway?

7. Should all Scripture be Followed in Faith, or is some Scripture just Culture?

“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest he rebuke you, and you be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:5-6).

“...that you may learn in us (apostles) not to think beyond what is written...”(1 Corinthians 4:6).

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

Today the Word of God has been and is being subverted, changed, reinterpreted and made of little or no importance by many in the professing church. This has been done by introducing new Bible versions that are based on the world's culture. Commentaries are passed off as a more understandable Bible version, changing the original Biblical text to conform to the world's culture of today. The footnotes that appear in many new versions of the Bible change the Holy Spirit's message given to each writer. Spiritual powers, bringing New Age philosophies into the churches by these changes, are common today.

These spiritual powers at work have made the Word of God ineffectual. Church people, deceived by these powers, have been diverted from the truth in Christ, resulting in their Christian walk being without power and without the knowledge of the Mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). This working of Satan has gone on since the beginning of the Church (Acts 20:29-31). The light of Christ is increasingly being rejected through these subtle attacks.

The Apostle Paul, in speaking to Satan's work and ways, writes to the assembly at Corinth; "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Paul then shows Satan's methods, "And no wonder for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Satan's deceptions are always aimed at making the Word of God of no effect or power, both in a believer's life and in the Church (Mark 7:13). The unadulterated Word of God is the power of God to transform into the image of Christ, those who profess Christ. Only in following, "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) will the image of Jesus appear in His saints.

Examples of some of these deceptions and the culture of the world can be readily seen today in many of the sects of Christendom.

Quakers do not teach or practice water baptism (Hebrews 10:22), or the remembering of Jesus in His death as He requested (1 Corinthians 11:25). They teach the only baptism that has value is Spirit baptism, therefore water baptism is not practiced. Worship of Jesus in remembrance of His death, as He requested, they state is communion. Quakers, say only spirit communion has any value, so they do not remember Jesus in His death. The apostles' doctrine and the words of Jesus are put away by this worldly reasoning.

Some independent churches teach that remembering Jesus in His death, through partaking of the bread and the cup as well as the practice of head coverings for women were Jewish culture of Biblical days, not for Gentiles. However, these truths are taught in the apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians, (who were Gentile saints) and to all saints everywhere, "...who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2). New Age philosophy through the world's present day culture, has replaced the truth revealed in Scripture.

Some evangelical churches teach that the biblical division of sexes is not for today. They teach that it was a cultural thing for the days when the Bible was written, and the culture of that day does not fit into our culture today. To reinforce this present day culture, some have stated the apostles did not think women to be equal to men. This reasoning has made a place for unisex teaching, resulting in women ruling in both clergy and teaching positions. It has also made a place for the introduction of homosexual and lesbian clergy.

Spiritualism attacks the apostles' doctrine with modern philosophy, as one of its widely known teachers has stated, "we know Scripture forbids Necromancy (calling up the dead, Deuteronomy 18:11), but can anyone believe that the culture of that day in which Scripture was written still applies today?" (Ruth Montgomery, author of many spiritualist books).

Pentecostal churches say, "we have to understand the culture in the day in which Scripture was written to know if we should follow it today." This has been said to mean that headship of man over women and children was for the day in which the Bible was written; it is not for the culture of today. The same is true of the head covering for women (1 Corinthians 11:5), women dressing in modesty (1 Timothy 2:9), and women taking a place of quietness in public assembly meetings (1 Corinthians 14:34). For example; the teaching that a wife should submit to or obey her husband in everything (Ephesians 5:22, 24), was for the culture of the day in which it was written. It is commonly taught in these churches that, "today we have a new understanding of Scripture; our spiritual enlightenment today has risen above the apostles' doctrine."

Roman Catholic's teach that church fathers and tradition supersede the apostles' doctrine, so truth must come only through this denomination. Roman Church dogma says, only the Roman Catholic denomination can be trusted. This denomination teaches that as the Pope sits in Peter's chair, he is infallible.

This denomination's teachings are found in their public statements and practices; "we believe that not all the Bible is true" (Joint Roman Catholic leader's public statement in England, 2005). The late Pope and the Vatican spokesman have stated their defense of Charles Darwin and their belief that evolution is true. Ordaining of homosexual clergy is a common practice of this denomination. According to Rev. Donald Cozzens, a former seminary rector and author of "The Changing Face of the Priesthood," 25 to 50 percent in the priesthood, are homosexuals.

Following the traditions and the culture of early church fathers are the grounds of truth for this denomination, not the apostles' doctrine.

Christian Science teaches, as do some Pentecostal churches and New Age religionists, that God is father/mother god. (M. B. Eddy, Rudimentary Divine Science).

Four Square Church teaches in its by-laws that the teachings of Amie McPherson are the grounds for Biblical truth; (By-laws of International Church of the Four Square Gospel, page 32, section c). Not following Amie

McPherson is grounds for dismissal of membership; (membership section, page 34, section a).

The New Age religious culture of the world is seen in this denomination as their parishioners follow this woman's teachings in faith and practice.

Saddleback Church senior clergyman, Rich Warren, states in his pamphlet "What the Bible teaches about Tithing," that a Christian is still under the Law of Moses in tithing. Whereas, Scripture teaches that the Christian lives in the dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:2). "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness" (Roman 10:4). The world's religious culture of today, brings a material desire, causing a need of money, which makes the apostles' doctrine of little importance.

Episcopal, North American Church, as well as other main line and independent churches ordain homosexuals into the clergy. It is said to be on the basis of love. Their words for these actions are, "The God that I believe in could never condemn people for loving." The reasoning of this church and others is; to use the Bible to prohibit ordination to full acceptance of homosexuality would be to invoke another time and another culture into this day.

Scripture shows the apostles' doctrine forbids the practice of homosexuality (Romans 1:24-29; 1 Corinthians 6:9).

The foregoing examples are only a few of the modern teachings that are leading church people away from God's word as taught in the apostles' doctrine.

Israel's example of following the culture of their day rather than the Word of God gives us some understanding. Before God had judged Israel and put them out of the land for rejecting His Word, He pleaded with them through faithful men and His prophets. The prophet Ezekiel was filled with the Spirit of God and prophesied to Israel of her violations (Ezekiel 11:4-5). "For you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgment, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which are all around you" (Ezekiel 11:12). God held Israel accountable to follow His Word, and to be separate from the Gentile world and its customs (culture). Jeremiah prophesied to Israel to return to the Word of God, "Thus says the Lord: Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it: Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk in it (Jeremiah 6:16).

The Christian as well is admonished to turn, to Christ and the apostles'

doctrine alone, and away from the world, its lures and customs. “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). The Apostle John shows the results of faith in putting away the world, “And everyone who has this hope in Him (Christ) purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:3).

8. The Results of Following the Churches or Following the Apostles’ Doctrine.

Some examples of how professed believers are induced to follow the teachings of churches will be looked at. Many churches use the expression “the church teaches.” This means that Scripture is to be interpreted in light of the teachings and beliefs of that denomination or sect. Leaders, by zealotry for their denomination or sect (not based on the apostles’ doctrine), are teaching others by what they are practicing. Others teach traditions of the church fathers (first to the fourth century), as equal with the revelation of God as recorded in Scripture. Some take titles to themselves such as, pope, apostle, prophet, leader, reverend, etc, so people will follow these people and their teachings. Yet others follow spirit manifestations and the charisma of leaders. Some follow teachers of present or past days. In most cases the hierarchy or clergy will decide what is true or not true, according to the denomination or sect they assemble with.

The question before the Christian is: which should he follow, the ‘apostles doctrine’ or the many diverse doctrines in Christendom as seen in the churches?

For the person who desires the truth in Christ, the revelation the apostles received and taught becomes the only safe ground to lead a believer, “to know Christ and the power of His resurrection” (Philippians 3:10). Exercising the apostles’ doctrine in faith brings the Christian into the experience of walking in the Spirit.

Faith to the truth in Christ takes a Christian out of the religious confusion of the day and brings him into the fellowship of the Son of God (1 Corinthians 1:9). A Christian has not been called into any other fellowship; this fellowship in Christ has nothing to do with following religious organizations of men. To respond in faith to the apostles’ doctrine is to respond to the Spirit of God. As the apostle Paul states, “For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you

welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The meaning of this Scripture is clear; responding to the apostles’ doctrine is the Christian’s calling.

The Christian who responds to the Word of God even in the smallest truths will be led like a great ship which is turned and directed by a small rudder. The power of the Holy Spirit is released in any Christian’s life who will believe the apostles’ doctrine, which is thought to be foolishness or small as men think. “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise” (1 Corinthians 1:27). God asks in Zechariah 4:10, “For who has despised the day of small things?”

The mustard seed is the smallest of seeds but grows into the largest of plants. So also is the smallest seed of truth in Christ, able to grow in the heart of faith, into a large manifestation of the glory of Christ. Only one thing is necessary for this to happen, faith in every Word of God; “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

God has not left the Christian with a small portion of His grace or truth, but has given him the whole counsel of God through the apostles doctrine’ (Acts 20:27). To receive and follow the complete counsel of God is to be “commended to the word of His grace” (Acts 20:32). In occupying this place, a Christian is built up in the truth of Christ and the inheritance of all who are sanctified in Him (Acts 20:32).

God has made available, not a small portion of His grace, but that which is larger than the human heart can hold. All of this is found in the apostles’ doctrine.

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:17-18).

“In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

Conclusion

When Jesus walked on the earth with His apostles, religion was in practice everywhere He went. Yet Jesus only had an ear for His Father's voice; He taught His apostles and disciples to do the same.

There was a rich young man recorded in Mark 10:17 who came running to Jesus and knelt before Him. He was a person of integrity, reverence, and sincerity in religion, verses 19-20. He may have been guileless in following what he assumed to be of God. It is not likely anyone could find fault with this young man in his life or his religion. This young man may have been able to say the same thing as Saul of Tarsus (the Apostle Paul) said in following his religion, which was; he was blameless (Philippians 3:6).

Many in the churches today may be like this young man; pursuing with sincerity of purpose their religion and with entirely good human intentions; even using Scripture as a guide as this young man did. For a person today, this may include good works, evangelism, having good conduct, being in the ministry, giving of money, serving their church, etc. There was one thing this young man lacked, responding to truth when it was put before him. In spite of all the good virtues he possessed, he had not entered into the life of God (John 10:27-28). The evidence for this is that he went away sad without receiving truth (Mark 10:22), he did not enter into life. The reader should ask himself or herself at this point; does the truth in Christ as shown in the apostles' doctrine offend him or her with sadness, anger, or determination to hear no more (Acts 24:25)? Or does he or she see receiving truth in Christ as the place of great joy and gladness (Acts 2:41), and as the opportunity to enter into life, the life of Jesus.

As with this young man, so are all men today. No matter how faithful to a person's religious direction, unless there is receiving of truth, the life of God will not possess that person or be real in him or her. This young man rejected the cross (Mark 10:21-22) for his religion, a religion which looked like it was of God but gave liberty to the flesh to follow worldly culture and pursuits.

Today the cross of Christ is still the issue of life. Receiving into the heart, the truth in Christ is life, eternal life. This life is only found in receiving and following the apostles' doctrine.

D. Neely
3-26-06

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