

CUSTOM, TRADITION ... OR TRUTH?

JAMIE MCNAB

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I suppose we all recognise that there are some areas where it doesn't really matter if we know the truth or not. For most of us ...whether the moon is 100,000 miles away or 250,000 miles away or 1 million miles away. For most ... whether the sun is 1 million miles ... 90 million miles or a billion miles away.

Intellectually ... it may be satisfying to know our knowledge is accurate ... I like to know the truth but ... practically?

However ... when it comes to living God's way ... knowing the real truth becomes much more important! If ... for example ... one direction of life leads to eternal life ... and another leads to death we'd like to know the truth about those directions. Then it is important to know the truth. Not be either ignorant or deceived.

So ... all of us need to know where to find the truth ... and be better equipped to detect deception. Makes sense. Especially when it involves eternal life or death.

John 17:13-19 (NKJV) (part of Jesus final Passover ... the True lord's Prayer)

13 But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 **I have given them Your word**; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

17 **Sanctify** (*set apart ... protect them ... make sure they don't get swallowed up by the world*) **them by Your truth. Your word is truth.** (*Old Testament scriptures*)

18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, **that they also may be sanctified by the truth.** (*There's a few references in these verses to The Truth*)

John 8:30-32 (NKJV)

30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

31 **Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.**

32 **And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**

The Truth doesn't make you free if you don't know it. The better we know the Word ... the freer we will be.

Isaiah 8:19-20 (NKJV)

19 And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," (*inaccurate advice*) should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? (*It was common in Isaiah's day ... it's popular today*)

20 **To the law (Torah) and to the testimony. (revelation) If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.** (*Not to the wisdom of men ... or those who claim "insight"*)

All of us are surrounded by various views and opinions ... "experts". They tell us that same sex-marriage is good ... modern. They will tell you it is important to get into the schools early and teach 5 year olds about homosexuality. Gender fluidity is normal. If you go to most colleges there are plenty of experts that will tell you that God

is not necessary. Evolution is scientific fact and believing in creation is fundamentalist nonsense. Opinions are held by many people around us. Majority? Including many people in High Places. David Cameron received an award last Wednesday for his support of same-sex marriages and changing UK law to permit that. And he's very proud of that.

So ... should we just accept the ideas of the majority around us? If "everyone's doing it" ... should we too? Why not? Where do we go to get our standards from? Where do we obtain our values?

And ... what about views and opinions within the Church? What is truth? What are just custom and tradition? Where do we find the truth?

Acts 17:10-12 (NKJV)

10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to **Berea**. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that **they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.**

12 **Therefore (because they searched the scriptures) many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.**

The Bereans searched the scriptures ... the Old Testament ones ... to find out if these things were true. They checked it out. Does it stack up with the Law and the Testimony?

(AMP) ... "searching and examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so". (It gives you the impression that it certainly wasn't just a "cat-lick and a promise")

2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NKJV)

1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (*Paul was alluding to the message that he taught*)

2 Timothy 2:15-16 (NKJV)

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (*Be diligent: be earnest ... do your best ... exert yourself*).

16 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. (*But ... shun nonsense: empty opinions*).

(AMP) ... "correctly analysing and accurately dividing"

(NASB) ... "accurately handling the word of truth"

2 Timothy 3:13-17 (NKJV)

13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (*How do we combat this? See next verse*)

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, (Old Testament ... rightly divided) which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (*The antidote*)

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So the Scriptures are where we find the truth to live by. This is our source book.

Matthew 4:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

4 **But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'**" (Quoting from the Old Testament ... Deuteronomy 8:3)

1 Peter 1:22-25 (NKJV)

22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

23 **having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,**

24 because

"All flesh is as grass,

And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.

The grass withers,

And its flower falls away,

25 **But the word of the Lord endures forever.**" Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV)

1 **Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,**

2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, (because the Word is truth and will feed us)
3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Psalms 19:7-14 (NKJV)

7 The law (Torah... instruction/revelation) of the Lord is perfect,
converting the soul;

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold,

Yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned,

And in keeping them there is great reward.

12 Who can understand his errors?

Cleanse me from secret faults.

13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins;

Let them not have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,

And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

What we must do is ... watch out for man-made traditions ...
purporting to be God's additional instructions.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 (NKJV)

1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you.

2 ***You shall not add to the word*** which I command you, ***nor take from it,*** that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

Would anyone want to do that? Would anyone dare? Yes! People did ... and people still do. It is one of the BIGGEST PROBLEMS we all face. It was a major problem when Jesus walked the earth.

Teachers of the people were Rabbis ... Scribes ... Pharisees ... "ministers" of the day. They quoted the Bible a lot. They kept the Sabbath ... Holy Days ... they wouldn't touch unclean meats so ... in one way ... you would say they were closer to the truth than many alleged teachers today.

But. They had a big problem with the Bible. In their view ... the written scriptures were only an outline of God's truth. They claimed that in addition to the written scriptures ... that God also gave the Oral Instructions to Moses (at Sinai). They passed them down orally from generation to generation ... via the Rabbis and the sages. So the scriptures in their view weren't sufficient.

The Rabbis taught that their explanations ... interpretation ... their commentaries on written scriptures ... were more binding ... more important ... than those written.

Yet. We have just read in Deuteronomy 4 says do not add or subtract!

They came up with hundreds of very specific instructions within Judaism ... which they claimed to be God's explicit instructions. Jesus frequently came into conflict with their Jewish Laws ... expounded and taught by the Rabbis.

Mark 7:1-13 (NKJV)

1 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem.

2 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault.

3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. (*The so-called "oral law"*)

4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, (*Rabbis ... Oral Law*) but eat bread with unwashed hands?"

6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

'This people honours Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

7 *And in vain they worship Me, (worthless) Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'*

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."

9 He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. (*They rejected the actual Word of God*)

10 For Moses said, "Honour your father and your mother"; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

11 But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban'—' (that is, a gift to God),

12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,

13 **making the word of God of no effect (void) through your tradition which you have handed down.** And many such things you do.”

Yet ... these people that Jesus was reprimanding here were the recognised teachers and preachers of their day.

But ... they were adding ... or taking away. They had traditions ... customs ... that contradicted the Word of God ... opposed it! But most people just accepted their views ... these are the tv evangelists of the day.

The people should have looked to the Law and to the Testimony.

Even today ... there are some very peculiar things that the Jews teach.

- Sabbath Lifts: No need to “work” to press a button
- Sabbath Lights: You must not switch your lights on or off during the Sabbath ... put them on before the Sabbath.
- If you are going to use the fridge ... unscrew the bulb
- Toilet Paper: should be pre-torn before the Sabbath

Matthew 16:5-12 (NKJV)

5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

6 **Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”**

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.”

8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, “O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?”

9 Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?

10 Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?

11 How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Now frequently they would refer to a written scripture ... but they would take it out of context ... or twist its meaning.

Just because someone quotes a scripture doesn't mean you're going to get the truth!

Have you ever come across any additions or deletions?

- Christmas
- Easter
- Trinity
- Immortal Soul
- Ever-burning Hell fire
- Sunday as the Lord's Day
- Baptism of babies and/or sprinkling for baptism

There are plenty of additions and subtractions in the Church world at large.

We need to be familiar with the PURE WORD OF GOD ... analysing and evaluating it daily ... to be alert for so-called “helpful” additions ... subtraction ... inspired commentaries.

BIBLE IGNORANCE! A USA poll of "religious" people.

- Only half could name one of the gospels
- 2/3rds couldn't identify who gave the Sermon on the Mount (quite a few thought it was Billy Graham?!)
- Most couldn't identify the first book in the Bible
- Many couldn't name more than 2 or 3 Apostles (some thought they were clever and could name "all 4" of them!! ... not the 12)
- Six out of ten church-goers couldn't name even 5 of the 10 commandments
- 12% thought Joan of Arc was Noah's wife
- Of church-going high-school seniors ... over half thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife
- 40% of born-again Christians believe that Christians and Muslims worship the same God

Complete nonsense.

Psalms 1:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

**2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, (Torah ...
instruction/revelation)**

And in His law he meditates day and night. (Knows God's Word)

3 He shall be like a tree

Planted by the rivers of water,

That brings forth its fruit in its season,

Whose leaf also shall not wither;

And whatever he does shall prosper.

Psalms 119:9-11 (NKJV)

9 How can a young man cleanse his way?

By taking heed according to Your word.

10 With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!

11 ***Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.***

Psalms 119:105 (NKJV)

105 ***Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.***

Psalms 119:130 (NKJV)

130 ***The entrance of Your words gives light;***
It gives understanding to the simple.

How many additions/subtractions are there in the Church of God? Or ... have we been immune? Have only and always had pure truth?

- Only pray 3 times for Healing
- Paul's Thorn In The flesh = a sickness God put on him
- Services must have: 3 songs, opening prayer, sermonette, sermon, song and a closing prayer
- (At one point) ... no beards or moustaches were permitted
- Women can't wear trousers if they have a zip at the front ... they must have a zip at the side
- Must have a Church Wedding
- Must read "Mystery of The Ages" before baptism
- The Tithe of a tithe
- Make-up

Some are Customs? Some are Traditions? Biblical Truth?

They could be Well-meaning? Okay? Personal preference. Sincere? Okay. God's Truth???

We find that in the Law and The Testimony.

Our mind ... our values ... our standards should be based on God's truth.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

We see God's values and God's standards in His Word. What does God's Word say when it is rightly divided?

Matthew 15:1-9 (NKJV)

1 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,

2 "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

4 For God commanded, saying, "Honour your father and your mother"; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

5 But you say, "Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God'—

6 then he need not honour his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honour Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

9 And in vain they worship Me,

Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' “

It is possible to worship God in vain.

Traditions ... customs ... may be very familiar ... very comforting ... be passed down from highly-respected sages and accepted all around us by almost everybody. But ... that is of no consequence! Is it truth?

To the Law and To The Testimony! Is it in God's Word? Clearly?
Are there multiple references?

If not in the Word ... it may be an okay custom ... may be a matter of preference. But ... it is not necessarily ...Truth!! “Thy word is true”.

So ... all of us need to remain alert ... and whatever we hear ... and from whoever we hear it ... the TEST IS ALWAYS the same: TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY!!