

DOES TRUTH REALLY MATTER?

People are very particular when it comes to taking their medicine. We want to make sure we take it in the right dosages and follow the instructions because it could be a matter of life and death. We are sincere and exact about things like this. What about when it comes to the things of God? Why are we not as careful? It seems many want to believe what they want to believe and think it will be alright with God in the end. Is this really true? Does truth really matter to us?

I. CAN ONE BE RELIGIOUS AND NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD?

A. Jesus had great controversy with religious people.

(1) "The Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, (2) and had seen that some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. (3) For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; (4) and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.) (5) The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?' (6) And He said to them, 'Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. (7) But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' (8) Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.' (9) He was also saying to them, 'You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.'" [Mark 7:1-9]

1. What was the Pharisee's main concern (v.5)?
2. What does Jesus call them (v.6)?
3. How does Jesus define a hypocrite (v.6)?
4. What makes their worship to God unacceptable (v.7)?
5. Did the commandments of God matter to Jesus?
6. Should they matter to us?
7. If we follow the commandment and teachings of men, would that jeopardize our soul?

B. Jesus' controversy continues.

(43) "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. (44) How can you believe, when you receive glory

from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? (45) Do not think I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. (46) For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. (47) But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" [John 5:43-47]

1. Is it possible for us to reject Jesus' word and accept someone else's word in its place (v.43)?
2. What prevented them from believing (v.44)?
3. What were they seeking (v.44)?
4. Who were they seeking it from (v.44)?
5. What is their basic problem (v.45-47)?

C. Paul's controversy with the churches of Galatia.

(6) "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; (7) which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (8) But even if we, or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! (9) As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" [Galatians 1:6-9]

1. What was Paul's problem with the Galatian congregations (v.6-7)?
2. What was the outcome of following those who were distorting the gospel of Christ (v.6)?
3. What does God have to say about those who lead people astray through a different teaching (v.8-9)?
4. To be "accursed" means "devoted to being destroyed!"
5. Can man distort what God has spoken?

D. John's controversy over false teaching in the first century church.

(8) "Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. (9) Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. (10) If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; (11) for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds." [II John 8-11]

1. Can we lose our reward through lax attitudes (v.8)?
2. Should we be on guard for teachings that lead us astray?

ILLUSTRATION: When the devil tempted Jesus (Matthew 4), he used Scriptures on Jesus and twisted them to try and lead Jesus into something that God didn't want!

3. What is the basis for fellowship with God and His Son (v.9)?
4. What should our attitude be toward those who misuse the teachings of Christ (v.10-11)?

POINT: The reason people are lost is because they have no real love for the truth. Many people just blindly accept any religious teachings without any desire or thought as to whether it is of the truth or the teachings of men. Man has always tried to twist the teachings of God to fit their own belief instead of man accepting God's teachings as they stand. When one twists God's word to their personal thinking or desires, it puts one in a very serious position.

(10) "And with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. (11) For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, (12) in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness." [II Thessalonians 2:10-12]

5. For people who do not have a sincere love for the truth, what will God do (v.11)?
6. To those who do not love and believe the truth, what are they compared to (v.12)?

POINT: God is a loving God and He gives everyone what they desire. If it's the truth they desire and love, He will make sure they find it. If it's not the truth, but manipulation of His Word to their own desires, He will give them what they want. In the end, God can say you got what you desired!

II. HOW DO 21ST CENTURY TEACHINGS RELATE TO THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES OF THE FIRST CENTURY?

A. The apostle Paul to the church at Corinth.

"For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church." [I Corinthians 4:17]

"Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches." [I Corinthians 7:17]

1. When the apostle Paul gave teachings, how many churches did it apply to? All, Some or None?

ILLUSTRATION: Today man says, "Attend the faith of your choice." Does this statement agree with the teaching of the apostle Paul and Timothy?

2. Did the right teaching matter to the apostle Paul?

3. Did the right teaching matter to John?

4. Does it matter to Jesus?

5. Does it matter to God?

ILLUSTRATION: Today man says, "It doesn't matter what one believes as long as you believe. We are all trying to get to the same place and we serve the same God."

(37) "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things I write to you are the Lord's commandment. (38) But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized." [I Corinthians 14:37-38]

6. If you are spiritual, what must you recognize about the apostle Paul's writings?

7. Where does it leave one if they do not recognize his teachings as the Lord's commandments?

(15) "And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, (16) as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." [II Peter 3:15-16]

8. What did Peter recognize about Paul's writings?

9. Were his writings Scripture (v.16)?

10. What two words does Peter use to describe those who would distort the Scriptures?

and "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe."
[I Thessalonians 2:13]

11. When the Thessalonians were taught the word from Paul, was it the word of God?

12. Does it work in those who don't believe and accept it?

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." [I John 4:1]

13. What was already happening in the first century according to John?

14. Do you think it's gotten better or worse from then to now?

(5) "They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. (6) We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." [I John 4:5-6]

15. How does one know if they are of the world or of God?

POINT: The "us" is John and the apostles. Today, if we are going to know the difference between the truth and error, we must listen to what the apostles wrote and taught. The apostles were sent directly from Jesus and they wrote many of the New Testament writings, which we can read today. We can know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

CONCLUSION:

This study was to help us see the need of seeking the truth. We live in a time where religion is commonplace and so few seem to question if their religion is from God or man twisting, distorting and abusing the Scriptures.

"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." [Jude 3]

It is our goal to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." We pray that you will strive with an honest, sincere heart, loving and looking at the truth.