BIBLE TALK

Welcome to "Bible Talk." This week we are discussing this question: **Is the "holy kiss" required of Christians?**

Several times in the NT we read about the "holy kiss." Is this something that must be done by all Christians throughout all time?

Romans 16:16

16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.

How should we view this passage?

# REGULATING PRE-EXISTING CUSTOMS

We must recognize there are regulations in the Bible concerning customs which the people already had in place.

Ephesians 6

5 **Bondservants**, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, …

9 And you, **masters**, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, …

Here the Bible is regulating the practice of slavery.

* It is not telling us that we must go out and acquire slaves or become masters.
* It recognizes that slavery was practiced in some countries and the NT regulates that practice which already existed.

Likewise, the Bible seems, in the present case, to be regulating a practice which was already in place – the practice of greeting people with a kiss.

# BIBLE PATTERNS

Some people want to treat the "holy kiss" as though it were a Bible pattern that must be followed and if it is not followed, then we cannot claim to be the "church of Christ."

However, for something to qualify as a pattern, it must be shown that:

* A command was given
* That **one** and **only one** way of obeying that command may be fulfill its requirements

**EXAMPLE**: Mt 26:28 requires **fruit of the vine**. There is no other passage authorizing any other drink element. Hence, in the absence of any other drink element, only fruit of the vine may be used.

If "holy kissing" is the only way to greet people found in the pages of the NT, then it would be an exclusive pattern. The only way we could greet people would be in the form of the kiss.

However, this is not the only way to greet people. There are other ways found.

# VARIOUS FORMS OF GREETING

## Greetings were given in written form:

Romans 16:22

22 I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, **greet** you in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 16:20

20 All the brethren **greet** you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

This passage actually mentions two kinds of greetings. One is a greeting in writing when the passage says, "All the brethren greet you." The other greeting is the "holy kiss."

## Greetings were made by handshake:

Galatians 2:9

9 … James, Cephas, and John, … gave me and Barnabas **the right hand of fellowship**, …

## Greetings were done by embracing:

Acts 20:1

1 … Paul called the disciples to himself, **embraced them**, and departed to go to Macedonia.

## Greetings were done by calling someone's name:

3 John 1:14

14 … Greet the friends by name.

**In summary**: Since there are various forms of greeting and not a single, uniform way, it would be wrong to argue that kissing is the only form that is acceptable.

# EMPHASIS ON "HOLY"

When the Bible speaks of greeting with a kiss, the emphasis is always on "holy." Some give "unholy kisses." There are Bible examples of "unholy kisses":

Luke 22:47-48

47 … [Judas] drew near to Jesus to kiss [Jesus].

48 But Jesus said to him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Here is an "unholy" kiss.

The NT is regulating a practice already in existence. Rather than giving an exclusive pattern requiring that Christians kiss one another, the scriptures are telling us that when the kiss is used to greet, it must be a holy kiss:

Romans 16:16

16 Greet one another with a **holy** kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.

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