
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is being continued from last week: **Why should men focus on differences between churches rather than similarities? (pt 2)**

In other words, why not focus rather on what different churches have in common with one another rather than focusing on the differences?

As we noticed last week, the differences between churches may seem minor, but they are important differences which simply cannot be ignored.

To illustrate: Do you realize the difference between carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide is only one atom of oxygen? Think about this incredible difference. The atom is the smallest element known to man. The atom is so small that no one has ever seen it – not even with the most powerful microscope. Carbon dioxide is a common gas which is breathed out by every human. Carbon dioxide is composed of one atom of carbon and two atoms of oxygen. On the other hand, carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas which kills humans. It is composed of one atom of carbon and one atom of oxygen. The only difference between this poison and the common non-poisonous gas which we breath out is one atom of oxygen! This illustrates the fact that differences matter. Very small differences can be very significant.

Let's apply this fact to churches.

1) God has revealed in His word the steps of salvation.

For men to be forgiven of their sins the NT scriptures plainly teach men must believe, repent, confess and be baptized in water to be forgiven.

Mark 16:16

16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; ...

Acts 2:38

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; ...

Yet most churches teach that sinners can be saved by simply praying what has been titled, “*the sinner’s prayer*.” There is no scripture – none – wherein an apostle ever told a sinner to pray for forgiveness. The church of Christ teaches exactly what the NT teaches regarding salvation. This is a significance difference between the church of Christ and all other churches. It is a difference involving eternal salvation – eternal destiny.

2) **God has revealed in His word the way to worship.**

The NT contains a pattern to go by (2 Tim 1:13). A pattern is a blueprint which contains the details of how to worship. Men and women have not been given the liberty by God to invent their own forms of worship. God has revealed exactly how we are to worship Him today in the NT scriptures.

Worship is to contain:

- ***A cappella singing***. That means singing without instrumental music (Eph 5:19).
- ***Men only are to do the speaking*** in worship services. Women are not to speak – not even to ask a question (1 Cor 14:34-35).
- The assembly is to be undivided with one man speaking at a time to one audience (1 Cor 14:23-40). In other words, Bible classes are not to be used.
- ***Communion*** is to be observed on the first day of every week using only one loaf and one cup containing fruit of the vine (1 Cor 11:23-25; Acts 20:7).
- A single, voluntary ***contribution*** is to be taken up on the first day of every week with no other method of raising funds (1 Cor 16:1-2). In other words, the church has no business being in the business of making money.
- ***Prayer*** is offered to God asking for His forgiveness to be granted to the saints (1 Jn 1:9). In other words, praying for forgiveness is something the saints are allowed to do, but sinners may not pray to God (Jn 9:30).

When churches today have instrumental music or allow women to speak or have communion differently or raise money differently than outlined in the scriptures, those churches are acting without authority.

Q: What happens when men make up their own forms of worship?

Observe carefully what happens:

Genesis 4:3-5

3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,

5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

Here we see what happens when someone follows God's instructions and worship the way God outlined – He accepts the worship.

We also see what happens when men substitute something else in place of what God said – He rejects the worship offered.

Observe again:

Leviticus 10:1-2

1 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, **which He had not commanded them.**

2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Here are two sons of Aaron offering worship which God did not authorize. Their worship was rejected and they were destroyed.

But what did Jesus Himself say about worship which was not authorized?

Matthew 15:7-9

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

8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor 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."

Differences matter. While there may be some similarities between all churches in how they worship, there are differences and those differences are important and carry eternal consequences. The church of Christ worships exactly as the NT scriptures outline.

3) God has revealed in His word what should be believed and taught as doctrine.

Churches are not free to teach whatever they wish to teach. Only the words of Christ and His apostles are to be taught as dogma and doctrine in the church.

- When churches, for example, begin to teach that God does not care how worship is conducted, they are teaching a doctrine which neither Jesus nor the apostles ever taught.
- When churches teach that God is not concerned whether men obey His commands exactly as they are written, those churches are teaching a doctrine which neither Jesus nor the apostles ever taught.
- When churches teach homosexuality is acceptable, that divorce for every cause is acceptable, that men and women may live together out-of-wedlock, they are teaching doctrines which neither Jesus nor the apostles ever taught.

Galatians 1:8

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Romans 16:17

17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, **contrary to the doctrine which you learned**, and avoid them.

The point we want you to focus on is that differences do make a difference! Rather than ignoring differences and focusing only on similarities, you should ask yourself the question: *Does this or that church teach and practice only what has been revealed in the NT scriptures – without adding anything or taking anything away from the written scriptures (Rev 22:18-19)?*

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