
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Why should men focus on differences between churches rather than similarities?**

In other words, what we're asking is: Why does the church of Christ always focus on the differences between churches? Why not focus rather on the things we have in common with one another? Wouldn't that be a more peaceful and kind approach?

Before I give a Bible answer to this question, allow me to read to you what Edward J. Young, former head of the Old Testament department at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, wrote:

There is a grave danger in constantly seeking for similarities, and from these drawing conclusions as to relationship and identity. We may list similarities between two different religions, and then draw an utterly erroneous conclusion. An example will suffice to illustrate this point. Christians assemble for worship in buildings; Moslems assemble for worship in buildings. Does it follow, however, that Christianity and Mohammedanism are essentially the same? Christians listen to sermons in their worship; Moslems listen to sermons in their worship. Does it follow that the officials of the Christian Faith and those of the Mohammedan are essentially the same? There is a great danger that when the investigator has listed the similarities which undeniably exist among various religions, he will therefore conclude that his task is complete.

If we are really to arrive at the truth we must consider not only the similarities but also the differences which are to be found among the different religions. It is only when we do this that we come to a proper understanding of them. In the writings of the Scandinavian scholars of the present day, there is too much emphasis upon similarity. These similarities, however, are superficial and of a surface nature. They may well be characterized as accidental. The differences between the Divinely revealed religion of ancient Israel and the religions of the nations round about is as profound as is the difference between Christianity and other competing religions. To ignore these differences is to close one's eyes to all the truth. The study of similarities is interesting and profitable; the study of differences, however, will bring us to the truth. (My Servants The

Prophets, 109-110)

Mr. Young is speaking the truth in these words. He is saying it is a very dangerous thing to think that all religions are the same because they are similar. Just because two churches may be very similar, it must be remembered that they are also different. It's the difference which matters.

Matthew 15:9

9 And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

This is Jesus speaking. He is saying that when people begin to teach doctrines which originated with men, and when people begin to practice things in worship which originated with men, the worship becomes vain.

God accepts only worship which has been outlined and explained in the NT scriptures. No one has been given the liberty to invent their own new ways of worship.

Galatians 1:8-9

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.
9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Think very carefully about that what passage is saying.

The common idea is that it doesn't matter what a church teaches or does, because we are all basically saying and doing the same thing. People are focused on similarities. They see only how everyone seems to be doing the same basic things in the different churches.

What we need to do is focus on the differences. Is a church doing anything ***different*** than what is revealed in the NT scriptures. If so, that difference is fatal. Anyone attending such a church lost. It doesn't matter how many services they attend, it doesn't matter how involved a person is, it doesn't matter how much "good" they seem to be accomplishing, the point is: ***any church doing anything differently than what is revealed in the NT scriptures is sinful and anyone who is part of such a church is lost.***

Psalms 127:1

1 Unless the LORD builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city,
The watchman stays awake in vain.

This passage explains the truth about churches. If a church was not built by the Lord, a person is laboring in vain to belong to such an organization.

1 John 2:3-5

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.
4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

The only way anyone can be the church of Christ is to keep the commandments, doctrines, and worship which Jesus Himself revealed thru His apostles.

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