

Some time ago, I spoke with a “Pastor” from China who said he was a missionary to his nation [the Chinese] in this country. He wanted to use our building to have services for “his people.”

He told me that every culture had to have a different way of worshiping God. He explained that each society had its own small ways of worshiping and that they felt these cultural things like a piano and a cafeteria were necessary for their culture.

As you think about the culture of the Jews in the Old Testament, you recognize they were all much alike.

Same language, same cultural heritage, but even so they came to different conclusions about the word of God. Why? Because they didn't bother to read and reflect on "every word that comes from the mouth of God".

Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees had discarded the word of God for the traditions of men.

Mat 15:7 "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: (8) 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. (9) 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'"

For the Sadducees, Jesus said,
Mark 12:26 "But regarding the fact
that the dead rise again, have you not
read in the book of Moses, in the
passage about the burning bush, how
God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the
God of Abraham, and the God of
Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 "He
is not the God of the dead, but of the
living; you are greatly mistaken."

For the Pharisees, Jesus said,
Matt 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes
and Pharisees, hypocrites! For
you tithe mint and dill and
cummin, and have neglected the
weightier provisions of the law:
justice and mercy and
faithfulness; but these are the
things you should have done
without neglecting the others.

When you come to the New Testament church however, the one Jesus said He would build, you find that there was an amazing unity in their worship even though they were culturally diverse.

You will find the same thing to be true of churches of Christ, if they adhere to God's word.

You will find each of them doing the same things in an orderly way – the communion, giving, preaching, praying and singing.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor
Greek, there is neither slave nor
free man, there is neither male nor
female; for you are all one in
Christ Jesus.

Letters in the NT are addressed to the Jews (Hebrews), the Greeks (Corinthians, Thessalonians, Philippians), the Turks (Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians) and the Italians (Romans).

The church of the New Testament had a great diversity in nationalities, so there is no way that we can excuse following the pattern in the New Testament on cultural grounds.

1 Cor 7:17 Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And thus I direct in all the churches.

One of the most common ways for those who are not interested in following what God says is to simply say that a particular passage was written for a specific church or for an earlier time.

This is used especially by homosexuals and those who want women bishops.

Paul's message to Timothy was not written to a specific local church but for an evangelist who was to travel widely and preach the gospel.

1 Tim 2:12 But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

1Ti 3:14 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; (15) but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth about those who were homosexuals, or effeminate who would not enter the kingdom of God, he did not write that those in Corinth were the only ones that needed to be sanctified, but he said “some of you” had been sanctified!

1Co 6:9-11 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, (10) nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Some have even suggested that this was Paul speaking and not the Lord, but notice what Paul writes the Corinthians.

1 Cor 14:37 If anyone thinks he is
a prophet or spiritual, let him
recognize that the things which I
write to you are the Lord's
commandment.

And also notice what Peter said about Paul's
writings

2Pe 3:15 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 are some things hard to
understand, which the untaught and unstable
distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures,
to their own destruction.

When I asked the Pastor what he thought of the idea of women bishops and pastors, he said that he was personally opposed but he didn't want to impose his views on the people in his church and thus be considered a "jerk".

He had not considered that his duty was to God rather than to fit in with those whom he was teaching.

2Ti 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

1 Cor 10:33 just as I also please
all men in all things, not seeking
my own profit, but the profit of
the many, that they may be saved.
11:1 Be imitators of me, just as I
also am of Christ.

We must obey God and if it does
not conflict with his will, we
please men.

Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men.

Pastors are to be men who will
lead you in the path of
righteousness, not in the way you
want to go.

Heb 13:7 Remember those who
led you, who spoke the word of
God to you; and considering the
result of their conduct, imitate
their faith.

2 Tim 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

Let us never be guilty of setting ourselves in opposition to the will of God, but rather let us humbly submit to his direction.

Ps 119:105 Thy word is a lamp to
my feet, and a light to my path.

106 I have sworn, and I will
confirm it, that I will keep Thy
righteous ordinances.

As you think about these words,
the question comes to each of us.

Have I done what the Lord
commands?

Acts 8:35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. 36 And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him.

If you have already been baptized
and yet have failed to live as God
commands,

I Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, He
is faithful and righteous to forgive
us our sins and to cleanse us from
all unrighteousness.