

The Modern Pharisees

There is a vitally important scripture which all Christians should bear constantly in mind, and which should guide our every action and understanding of doctrine, 1 Peter 2:21 - *'For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.'* Jesus Christ came as our pattern and example, and if and when the time comes that we are called into Judgment about any decision regarding doctrine we made, it would be good to know that we chose to follow in His footsteps and His teaching, for he made no mistakes.

However, Jesus did make a point of warning us time and again about one elite sect of people who continually led the people astray: the Pharisees. Take a look at Matthew 23 and read verses, 14,15,16,23,25,27 and 29. Each verse begins, *'Woe to you scribes and Pharisees,'* except verse 16, which says, *'Woe to you, you blind guides.'* We get the message! At all costs do not follow Pharisees! Don't be misled by their distortions of the Law of Moses, or their teachings which contradict the word of God. Christ charged them with hypocrisy because they claimed to teach what Moses taught, but actually departed from it in their teaching by introducing their reforms and traditions.

One translation of verse 3 of this chapter, which I have written in my Bible, reads, *'Saying, the Pharisees and sages sit upon the seat of Moses. Therefore, all that he [Moses] says to you, diligently do, but according to their reforms and their precedents do not do, because they talk but they do not do.'*

The more common versions of this verse, are plainly contradicted by the rest of the chapter, so I believe there may well be something in that translation, which was from the Aramaic.

Nevertheless, the main point here is that Christ clearly believed that the Pharisees broke God's commandments by substituting their own traditions. Matthew 15: 1-3, *'Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?'* Jesus Christ's teaching and example is clear. John 15:10, *'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.'*

The apostle Mark adds, Mark 7:7-8, and verse 13, *'Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.....Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.'*

It is then, according to Jesus Christ, quite vain to worship God according to the traditions of men, which we nowhere find in the Bible. Why is it then, that almost all Christians are found keeping the traditions of men rather than the words of God? Though most of them may do this in ignorance, they do have the word of God, and God expects them to diligently study and apply it in their lives.

The answer is that even today many churches labour under the dominion of their leaders, who are determined to have authority over God's people, just as did the Pharisees. Jesus, with His teaching of the plain words of God, posed a threat to their man-made traditions and consequently their authority. He could not be tolerated.

God knew that this would occur again, in the church, and it did. *“The Church is above the Bible; and this transference of Sabbath observance from Saturday to Sunday is proof positive of that fact. Deny the authority of the Church and you have no adequate or reasonable explanation or justification for the substitution of Sunday for Saturday in the Third—Protestant Fourth—Commandment of God”* (**The Catholic Record**, Sept. 1, 1923).

He knew that it would occur eventually in His spiritual temple, the Church of God - that its leaders would depart from Christ's teaching and, claiming to establish the Government of God, like the Catholics, emulate the hierarchical structure that stems from ancient Rome, with whole ranks of people ruling over each other and the laity and with a 'President' or 'Pastor General' at the top, something the Bible calls 'the image of the Beast'.

Its fruits would be bitter – the very opposite of the love that God's Church should display. John 13:35, *'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'*

God could not tolerate such an image in His Church and would withdraw and remove His Spirit, Ezekiel 8:1-6, *'And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me. Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, [to the Temple, picturing His Church] to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of **the image of jealousy**, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel **was there**, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold **northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy** in the entry. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of [spiritual] Israel committeth here, that I should **go far off from my sanctuary.**'*

This idolatry and apostasy, still today lies behind the structure of the large splinters of the Church of God, who maintain dominion either by the use of excommunication from what

they claim is the one true church, the threat of it, or simply by ignoring those who question traditions which contradict the Bible, until they leave.

Let's take an example of tradition triumphing over God's plain word and Jesus Christ's example. Most of the Church of God believes in observing the Holy Days of Leviticus 23. It is well known that Jesus Christ kept those days, as did the early New Testament Church, even the Gentiles. Christ's observance with the Jews of His day, and His death on the 14th of Abib, the Passover, proves that they were keeping those Holy days at the right time, then.

How did the Jews figure out, then, which day of the month was the fourteenth? At that time, we know that the Priests could predict when the new moon (the first visible crescent) was likely to be seen (1Chronicles 23:31) but they required credible witnesses of its observation to report to the High Priest, who would hold a Sanhedrin court in the Temple. Once he officially declared the new moon had been seen, fires were lit on the Mount of Olives to pass the information on. The new month had started.

This year, for example, 2013, the new crescent moon was sighted over Jerusalem on September 7th at 6.59pm, making the first day of the 7th month, according to the example set by Jesus Christ, Sunday September 8th, but, as usual, the Jews' Hebrew calendar used by most of the Church of God, calculated it to be earlier, on Thursday, September 5th, when the new moon and month was still days away!

As a consequence, all the Holy Days of the 7th month in 2013, were totally wrong according to the Jews' Hebrew calendar, and almost all of the Church of God went along with their error. Whether most realise it or not, they have been found to be following the traditions of men, rather than the words of God, and as a result, completely failed to keep God's Holy Days, even as does most of 'Christianity'.

Their error was compounded by the promotion of a misunderstanding of Romans 3:1-2. Some would say that the Jews have been entrusted with hidden knowledge of the calendar we should keep, based upon Romans 3:1-2, *'What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.'* However, the correct translation of verse 2 is, *'Much according to every manner – first indeed for because they were entrusted with the little words of the God.'* (Literal Greek - Logion, a diminutive of *logos*) That is why most modern translations such as NIV. state: *'Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God,'* and Moffatt, *'Much in everyway. This to begin with - Jews were entrusted with the scriptures of God.'* This misunderstanding has led some to apply to the Jews authority which God never gave them, to depart from His word!

For most of God's people, this ignorance about God's true Holy Days is no immutable sin, for have not we all gradually *grown* in grace and knowledge ever since our calling? 2 Peter 3:1, *'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.'* It only becomes serious, when we recognise our error and then *knowingly* continue to break God's commandment by following the tradition of men rather than the word of God and the example of Jesus Christ.

When this occurs, as it has, when the leaders of God's Church have been given all the evidence of their error - God no longer reveals to them deeper understanding, for they have proved their faithlessness and refusal to act on His Word. **They have become the 'Pharisees' of our day!**

So, it is hardly surprising that we find further doctrinal error in their teaching about the resurrection and the final return of Christ with His Saints, also pictured by the Holy Days, which any thinking person who studies the scriptures can easily recognise just doesn't add up! Once again, the error is caused by tradition, and the resultant failure to grow in grace and knowledge about God's Holy Days, though God *has promised* to provide that deeper understanding to the faithful, Daniel 12:9, '*And he said, Go your way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*'

Many of us have been led to believe by *Church tradition* that the resurrection occurs at the 7th and last trumpet of Revelation 11:15, '*And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.*' Now, Christ's arrival with His Saints we read of in Zechariah 14:1-5, '*Behold, the day of the LORD comes, and your spoil shall be divided in the midst of you. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses plundered, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall split in two, toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And you shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, you shall flee, like as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with him.*' The following battle of Armageddon, we read of in Revelation 16:16-17, '*And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.*'

But, as for the resurrection, it is nowhere here mentioned, and let us notice that the seventh and last trumpet is sounded by an angel - '*and the seventh angel sounded*', whereas the great trumpet blown at the resurrection is sounded by God Himself, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, '*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first,*' and Zechariah 9:14, '*And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.*'

The whole book of Zechariah finds its fulfilment in the End Time events leading up to Christ's final return and the establishment of His Kingdom. Verses 10-16 here, speak of Christ's return for His Saints, and His rescue of them from the army of the Beast. '*And the*

*LORD their God shall save them **in that day** as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the jewels of a crown, **lifted up** as a banner over his land.'*

'*In that day*', in a verse, always signifies the End time events of Israel's salvation, and here Christ's Saints, as 'the jewels of a crown **they shall shine**' (RSV. Bold added) and are 'lifted up' by the angels as the trumpet is blown, Matthew 24:31, '*And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*'

Here it is important to understand the usage of the Greek word 'salpinx', in 1 Corinthians 15:52, with reference to Revelation 11:15. Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words explains of this word for 'trumpet' :

'(e) of the act of the Lord in raising from the dead the saints who have fallen asleep and changing the bodies of those who are living, at the Rapture of all to meet Him in the air, 1 Cor. 15:52, where "**the last trump**" is a **military allusion**, familiar to Greek readers, and **has no connection with the series in Rev. 8:6 to 11:15**'. (*'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trump**, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'* 1Corinthians 15:52)

This mistake has been perpetuated by Church tradition, which failed to put all the scriptures about the resurrection together, and thereby placed the resurrection at the time of the 7th and last trump, when Christ arrives **with** His bride from the Sea of Glass, Revelation 14:1,4, '*And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.....These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the **first fruits** unto God and to the Lamb.'* See also 15:2, '*And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, **stand on the sea of glass**, having the harps of God.'* Revelation 19:7,9,14, '*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: **for the marriage of the Lamb has come**, and his wife has made herself ready.....And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of God. ...And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.'*

Common sense alone should tell us that if Christ arrives with His armies and His bride from the Sea of Glass, to face the armies of the world at the Battle of Armageddon, the resurrection and the marriage in Heaven could not possibly take place on the same day. Which bride did not need time to prepare for her wedding? This bride would need much more time than that, [It actually takes 3 ½ years] for she must also be prepared there for her new role as Kings and Priests, who will rule with Christ on the earth. Revelation 5:10, '*And have made us unto our God a kingdom and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.'*

But you have also seen evidence in the scriptures that the final return of Christ with His Bride, at the 7th and last trump was not co-incidental with the resurrection. That is simply a

mistaken tradition of men, who also totally neglect the scriptures relating to the marriage on the Sea of Glass before the throne of God the Father, in Heaven, Revelation 14:3, *'And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand, who were redeemed from the earth.'* This is a wilful disregard of the scriptures relating to this subject, because it does not fit into long held Church tradition, and disproves the concept that all this takes place on one day, the Feast of Trumpets. To admit otherwise though, would destroy the 'Pharisees' tradition, along with their unscriptural authority, based upon the dominion which Jesus Christ condemned.

So, we have seen that following the traditions of men was condemned by Jesus Christ, because it leads to hypocrisy, deception and disobedience. The Pharisees were the church teachers of Christ's time, who were leading God's people astray. The result, as occurred previously under Jeroboam, was tribulation for the deceived.

This is what happens when any people come to rely upon and be guided by Pharisaic 'religious authorities', rather than the plain Word of God. The mistakes of those 'Popes', 'Presidents', 'Pastor Generals', and leaders who have their own selfish reasons not to change from unbiblical, false man made traditions, become *their* mistakes, growth in grace and knowledge stalls, and God's people end up in tribulation, this time, the Great Tribulation! None of us want that, and the solution is in our hands alone, with the help of God's Holy Spirit.

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