

Back to Bible Basics

Issue 10

TRADITIONS ABSENT IN THE TRUE CHURCH

Ian McPherson

Many realize that there is one true church (Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:19-23; 4:4-6; Col 1:18 etc.). They spend years looking through various denominations and sects seeking for it. Since there are thousands of these in existence, this could take more than a lifetime. An easier way would be to simply **eliminate churches which make human traditions part of their commandments**. Jesus said of the Pharisees, *“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”* (Matthew 15:9). If a church has any of the following teachings of men, it cannot be the true church.

RELIGIOUS TITLES: The only time **Reverend** is used in the Bible is for **God Himself** *“... holy and reverend is his name.”* (Psalms 111:9). There is no “clergy, laity” system in the true New Testament church, and religious titles were forbidden (Matthew 23:8-10). Christ is the only Master, and **all** Christians are brothers. The local churches have people such as teachers, pastors, deacons and evangelists (1 Timothy 3:1-14, 2 Timothy 4:5, Ephesians 4:11). However, these simply refer to their function, none of them are titles. If any church addresses their leaders with titles such as “Reverend” or “Pastor” it cannot be the true church.

MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS: Musical praise in the New Testament is exclusively **vocal** (Ephesians 5:19). The sacrifice of praise to God is to come from the **lips**, not a mechanical instrument (Hebrews 13:15). History clearly shows that musical

instruments were introduced into worship many hundreds of years after the church was established. Since worship **must** be in spirit and truth (John 4:24), those who use mechanical instruments cannot be the true church.

WOMEN LEADERS: In the New Testament women were praised (2 John 1). They were not discriminated against, and were equally important in the body of Christ (Galatians 3:28). However only the men could lead the church in prayer (1 Timothy 2:8), and the woman was not to “teach or usurp authority over the man” (1 Timothy 2:12). Any church therefore that has woman leaders cannot be the true church

SABBATH DAY: The Sabbath was on the seventh day (Saturday). It was given exclusively to the Israelite nation (Deut 5:1-5, 15). It was to be kept as a reminder that they were freed from Egyptian slavery by God (Deuteronomy 5:15). The Sabbath Day was nailed to the cross along with the rest of the Old Testament ordinances. (Colossians 2:14-16; Ephesians 2:12-16). The New Testament church however, gathers together every first day of the week (Sunday) for worship (Acts 20:7). Any church that does not gather together every Sunday for worship cannot be the true church.

EARTHLY HEADQUARTERS: Jesus Christ is the **only** head of the New Testament church. He rules the church from heaven at the right hand of God (Ephesians 1:20-23). Therefore any church with earthly headquarters cannot be the true church

MIRACULOUS GIFTS: The New Testament message was delivered to us by inspired apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:1-5). Miraculous signs were given temporarily to “confirm the word”, (Mark 16:20, Ephesians 4:7-15). When the New Testament was complete, the miraculous gifts ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-10,). Any church that claims to have miraculous gifts therefore cannot be the true church.

SINNER’S PRAYER: Salvation has never been gained by “asking the Lord into your heart” or by saying “The sinners prayer”. Jesus said “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Saul of Tarsus was asked to “Arise and be

Back to Bible Basics

is a publication of the
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baptised and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16). The sinner’s prayer is therefore not a part of the true church.

The true church does exist today. It however does not embrace the teaching of men, but confines itself to what is written (1 Corinthians 3:6, 2 John 9; Revelation 22:18-19). May God help each one of us to find true church of Christ, because all the saved people are added to it (Acts 2:47). The true church was built by Christ (Matthew 16:18) and purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). 

ONE CUP?

Brett Rutherford

Those who advocate the use of one cup in the Lord’s Supper fail to take into account the inconsistencies in their own practice of implementing this action. In the first place, they violate this directive by having a separate cup in every congregation. This makes them multi cuppers. Furthermore, if we are to take Jesus’ statement in Matthew 22:16 to mean that we are to literally take the ONE CUP then we must logically find the very cup that Jesus used when He instituted the Lord’s supper. Surely, we are not going to be advocates of a new crusade to find the “holy grail”? Clearly the emphasis is on the content of the cup, not on the vessel.

Another argument employed by One Cuppers comes from Luke’s version of the institution of the Lord’s Supper. Luke incorporates the phrase “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20). One container advocates have used this statement in Luke to promote their argument that the actual vessel that held the fruit of the vine represents the new covenant. Clearly, those who hold this view have failed to interpret Luke’s account in light of Matthew and Mark’s version of this event. In Matthew’s account, Jesus commanded His disciples “to drink from it, all of you.” For this is the BLOOD OF MY COVENANT.” It is the contents of the cup (not the actual vessel) that represents the blood of Christ.

It is the blood of Christ that was shed for the New Covenant. The shedding of Christ’s cup was not the thing that ushered in a new covenant (Hebrews 9:12-18; 17-20). When we apply common sense, and the laws of context, to Jesus’ statement, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood” we come to the conclusion that Christ placed the emphasis on the contents of the cup (not the actual vessel that held the fruit of the vine).

Furthermore, ancient Jewish tradition regarding the distribution of beverages during Jewish feasts sheds some light on this dispute. During the Feast of the Passover the Jews would pass around a large container from which four smaller cups would be filled. It would be said that the cup was being divided as each of the four cups were filled from the larger vessel. It is evident from Luke’s account of the institution of the Lord’s Supper that Jesus followed this custom. Luke 22:17 states, “And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and DIVIDE it among yourselves.” The word “divide” in Luke 22:17 is the Greek verb “diameizo.” According to Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words the verb “diameizo” denotes an action that “divides through completely, parts, cleaves asunder, or parts asunder” (p. 39). It is evident from Christ’s statement that the disciples were to divide the contents of the larger cup into smaller vessels before consuming it. In other words, they were multi cuppers.

The two implements that are memorialised in the Lord’s Supper are the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:27). The bread clearly represents the body of Christ and the fruit of the vine represents His blood. The actual vessel that Christ used represents nothing. The material cup that Christ used played no part in securing our salvation and had nothing to do with the implementation of the new covenant. Certainly, the number of cups that we use today when we partake of the Lord’s Supper is not significant. It is the contents of that vessel that represents the redeeming blood of Christ and stands for the element that sealed the new covenant. 