

The Traditional Church

We sometimes see in articles or hear in conversations reference to the “traditional church.” These are usually references to the church that rejects instrumental music, choirs, women in leadership roles over men, and the like. It worships by congregational singing, by praying, by teaching and studying God’s word, and by eating the Lord’s Supper and giving on the first day of every week.

Some congregations have even been known to have two worship periods on Sunday morning; one is to accommodate those who insist on the “traditional” type worship, and then another for those who want something more contemporary.

It needs to be remembered that God in His word has prescribed the worship of His church, as well as its terms of entrance, its organization, and its mission. One would do well also to note that the words *tradition* and *traditions* are sometimes used to refer to the commands of God. For example in II Thessalonians 2:15 the apostle wrote,

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or by epistle.”

Paul was here making it plain that the Thessalonica Church of Christ should be a traditional church. A few verses later the apostle wrote,

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (II Thessalonians 3:6).

If the church at Thessalonica did as they were exhorted to do, then one visiting their services on the Lord’s Day would find a church worshipping by singing congregationally, by praying, by engaging in a study of the word of God, by eating the Lord’s Supper, and by giving of their means. All of these activities would be led by the men of the congregation, and not by the women.

It is true that the Lord often criticized certain ones for holding on to *traditions*. But he always identified those *traditions* as something originating with men and not with God. In Matthew 15:3 he said, *“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”* Notice that: “your tradition.” In verse 6 he said, *“Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”* Again notice the words “your tradition.” In Mark 7:3 this same incident is referred to and Mark explains that is was the “tradition of the elders.” Now look at Mark 7:8: *“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.”*

I suppose one is justified in saying that when we have three songs, a prayer, another song, and then the sermon, we are following human tradition. One might even find reason to criticize that tradition, for it is dictated by human judgment. But singing, praying, and preaching as acts of worship are not dictated by human judgment; they are dictated by the Word of the Lord.

Some human traditions are perfectly harmless, and even good. No doubt there are those who exalt human traditions to the point of being sacred. This is a sin. But let us never make the mistake of ridiculing “traditional churches” or “traditional worship” if we mean by that those people who insist on holding on to the Word of God in all matters of faith and practice.

*Bobby Duncan
deceased*

BELVEDERE BEACON

“Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)

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RESPONSIBILITY

The Bible teaches that “every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12). This is a clear declaration that each individual bears a responsibility in regard to his salvation. Ezekiel proclaimed, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Eze. 18:20). No one will give an account to God for someone else. Since God demands accountability, it is only logical to understand that God has given us the Law to which we will be accountable. Jesus says, “he that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). All men, therefore, shall be responsible for obeying the Truth that is the New Testament of Christ. Paul states that the Gospel of Christ is the only power that can save man and that the plan to make man righteous is found in that Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). Thus, no man can be saved without the Bible. The Bible teaches how one can become righteous in God’s sight – hear (Rom. 10:17), believe (Heb. 11:6), repent of past sins (Luke 13:3), confess that Jesus is the Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and be immersed in water to have those past sins washed away (Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5).

The Bible also teaches that once an individual has obeyed God’s plan to save, he has the responsibility to remain faithful. “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Each individual with the capacity and ability to give account for his actions will do so on the Day of Judgment. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). Isn’t it wonderful to know that *if* we simply obey God’s plan of salvation and remain faithful to Him, when He opens the book of our deeds on the Last Great Day, our sins will be covered by the blood of Christ, “blotted out” (Acts 3:19), as if wiped clean from the pages of history. Have you had your sins washed away? “Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

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RICK WARREN AND SADDLEBACK CHURCH

Rick Warren and the Saddleback church in California where he serves as “pastor” have been in the news several times in recent months. During the Presidential elections last year he had the democratic and republican nominees, Barack Obama and John McCain there where he posed a series of questions to both of them. Later he and the church were in the news against as being in support of Proposition 8 in California to change the state constitution in order to limit marriage to couples of the opposite sex. Later he was asked, amidst much opposition, to participate in offering a prayer at the inauguration of the new President, which he accepted. Warren is defined as being an “evangelical” but regards himself as a somewhat different evangelical or “new evangelical.” According to an interview with Reader’s Digest, as reported in the March 2009 issue, Warren with his wife left Texas at the end of 1979 and arrived in Southern California on January 1, 1980. He said that the church started with his family and the family of a realtor who found him a place to live. Warren states: We were driving to the condo with him and I said ‘Hey Do, do you go to church anywhere?’ He said, “No, no, I hate church.’ I said, ‘Great. You’re my first member.’” What does it take to become a member at Saddleback church?

In order to find out something about the church and what is necessary to become a member, I went to the web site of the church and looked at the page entitled “What We Believe (<http://www.saddleback.com/aboutsaddleback/whatwebelieve/index.html>). In this short article, I want to note just a few of the things that are stated there. From these and the other things stated it is clear that Warren and his church are nothing more than the same old evangelicals with the same old teachings that are contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

First, let us note what is stated under the heading “About Salvation”: “Salvation is a gift from God to man. Man can never make up for his sin by self-improvement or good works – only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God’s offer of forgiveness can man be saved from sin’s penalty. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith.” It then lists the following Scriptures – Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6; 1:12; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1. Clearly the church teaches that one is saved by faith alone – no mention is made here or elsewhere on the page of the need of repentance or confession (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; Matthew 10:32-33 etc.) Baptism is mentioned elsewhere – but not, as we shall note as being for necessary for salvation. However, the doctrine of “faith alone” or “faith only” is contrary to Scripture. James states: “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*” (2:24). Further, James shows that faith alone is a dead faith (James 2:20, 26). Thus, the statement that Saddleback makes: “Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith” is false.

We will now note what is stated with respect to baptism: “Baptism by immersion symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and is your public declaration that you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Baptism does not save you, but shows the world that you have already been saved. And while baptism is not required for salvation, it is a biblical command and demonstrates your love and obedience to Christ.” This too is followed by some Scriptures – Colossians 2:12; Acts 2:41; Ephesians 2:8-9; Matthew 28:19-20. Note what is taught; “Baptism does not save you, but shows the world that you have already been saved.” Is it any wonder that they do not list the following scriptures “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:15:16; “*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (I Peter 3:21). Is it any wonder that they also fail to mention that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38); that it washes away sins (Acts 22:16) and that in baptism one puts on Christ (Galatians 6:27). Under about salvation they mention Galatians 3:26 but clearly don’t want to know about verse 27 since it shows the essentiality of baptism. However, they do mention Ephesians 2:8-9 which says absolutely nothing about baptism.

Let us also briefly look at what is said under the heading “About eternal security”: “Because God gives man eternal life through Jesus Christ, the believer is secure in salvation for eternity. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian.” This is followed by some Scriptures – John 10:29; II Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25, 10:10, 14; I Peter 1:3-5. Conspicuous by its absence is: “*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace*” (Galatians 5:4).

More could be said about error that is taught by Saddleback church but sufficient has been given to show that Saddleback church and Rick Warren are “new evangelicals” but that same old “evangelicals” and denominationalists that reject what the Scriptures teach with regards to the way of salvation.

Sadly, many are deceived by the likes of Rick Warren because of his charismatic nature and are unwilling to be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures for themselves (Acts 17:11).

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron’ sister who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter, Justine Hall’s husband, Joe and Tim Smith.

Aaron Arnold and Steven Wilson were both sick Sunday and unable to be out.

All the Wilsons were sick Wednesday evening and not able to be out as was Ethan Arnold.

Our next pot-luck fellowship will after services this morning. Plan to stay and eat with us.

“I WONDER WHY....”

I wonder why some people get so upset with a preacher who preaches the truth, while condemning the politician who is too fearful to speak the truth?

I wonder why insisting on attendance at work and school “makes good sense” to folks, but preaching against non-attendance at worship assemblies is “brow-beating?”

I wonder why a schoolteacher is commended for demanding that homework be done and books be brought to class, while the Bible teacher is criticized for asking that homework be done and Bibles be brought to class?

I wonder why elders who warn the sheep of false doctrine are called “unloving” and “narrow minded,” but those who criticize them and call them names consider themselves to be loving and caring?

I wonder why the denominations are so well-supported financially, but the Lord’s church is so woefully under funded?

I wonder why charitable organizations (like “Jerry’s Kids”) that basically beg for money are praised for their compassion, while the Lord’s church is accused of “always having its hand out” when requesting money for soul saving?

I wonder why we can find time for “volunteer work” in the community, while schedules are too crowded for church work?

I wonder why athletic contests take precedence over the study of the Word and praise of God?

I do wonder why....don't you?

Author Unknown