



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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We Must Distinguish Between Human Custom and Divine Law

Part II

By

Jackie M. Stearsman

[The material on pages 1, 2 and 4 is a continuation of the article that appeared in last month's publication. For a complete review of this material consult the September 2001 issue of the Harvesters. You may also find this material on the internet. See the location of the WEB page in this publication, editor.]

Customary Greetings

The custom greeting with a "holy" kiss must be understood (Rom. 16:16). Greeting with a "kiss" was a custom in the Old Testament era.

"And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother?"



And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri" (2 Sam. 20:9-10). Greeting with a kiss was also taken for granted in passion. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine" (Song 1:2). "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised" (Song 8:1).

Greeting with a kiss is practiced by those not influenced by the Bible. This greeting is contemporary (A.D. 2001) in some cultures today. Observe the

greetings of those in the Far East as well as the Middle East—it is their customary way of greeting. Those in the former Soviet Union (atheistic leaders) could be seen greeting with a kiss. Did they do it because of Paul's authorization in Romans 16:16? Do those in the Middle Eastern cultures greet with a kiss because of Romans 16:16? No.

Keep in mind that the kiss could be good or evil. Judas sought to betray his Lord with a kiss (Luke 22:47-48). Was not Joab's ulterior motive to murder Amasa hidden with a kiss? Is not the Bible, in the New Testament, regulating the greeting by qualifying it as a "holy kiss"? (1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14).

While God did not put into law the kiss as a greeting, it is a custom that may be honorable. However, it may be motivated by evil or by passion. Therefore, God says if the custom is practiced, it should be a greeting with a "holy kiss."

Covering for Women

If we are to avoid confusion, the custom of women wearing a veil must be understood. Let us consider what the veiling of

women in the Old Testament era signified. In the days of Solomon the veiling of oneself in public seems to have been the custom. "The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me" (Song 5:7).

Rebekah was unveiled in public, but veiled herself when she met Isaac her husband to be. "And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant



told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Gen. 24:61-67).

In the days of Judah and Tamar, it was the custom of a harlot to be veiled. "And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face" (Gen. 38:14-15).

Note: The covering (veil) did not always signify the same thing. The veil could signify either good or evil depending on the contemporary customs. If a person did not understand the contemporary cultural position, that person would miss the lesson completely. What did Judah think when he saw Tamar veiled? Had I seen her, what would I have thought given my (USA, A.D. 2001) customs and culture? What did Rebekkah do when she saw Isaac, and what did he think when he saw her?

The veiling of women in the New Testament era. "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought

not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:3-16).

What Will

Constitute the Covering?

Let us make some observations. Those demanding that this ancient custom be continued must define what constitutes a covering. If a Christian lady is to be covered like those in the first century today, it would certainly result in a misunderstanding by most observers—in fact it would likely lead to the conclusion that she is a part of a false religious system. If a Christian lady wearing a contemporary (A.D. 2001) hat were placed in the First Century setting, what would the contemporary people (A.D. 56) conclude? Are the modern "hats" that ladies wear today the same covering observed by first century ladies?

When the covering advocates provide the prescribed covering to be used for our ladies,

we will then be able to see more clearly that they are dictating to us a man-made custom they have devised. If their man-made custom is pushed to the division of the church, it becomes sinful. If he/she wishes to hold and practice a custom in private, there is no problem.

Who Would Recognize It As A Sign of Subordination?

Those demanding this ancient custom be continued must demonstrate that the covering they are authorizing will be a sign of subordination. Do all women wearing a covering of any description in the USA today (2001) convey subordination?

While in college, I was assigned a chapel seat at the school I attended. A young lady seated directly in front of me would take out a bow (a knot tied with two loops and two loose ends) and she would place it in one corner of her hair. A student seated next to me asked if I knew what she was doing, I stated, no. He informed me that she wore a covering during worship, and that the bow she placed in the corner of her hair was the covering. Had I not been informed, I would never have imagined that a knot tied with two loops and two loose ends



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 9:40 Giving: The History of Stewardship V. P. Black
 10:20 BREAK
 10:50 The Difficulties of Worship Tom Holland
 11:30 LUNCH

Areas of Potential Misunderstanding - Part I

1:30 Do We Understand Singing? Bob McAnally
 2:00 Do We Understand Prayer? Arthur Pigman
 2:30 Do We Understand Preaching as Worship? Samuel T. Jones
 3:00 BREAK

3:30 Forum: Areas of Potential Misunderstanding I

4:30 DINNER

6:30 Singing

7:00 Defining Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs Mickey Walker

7:45 It is a Sin to Worship with Mechanical Instruments of Music? James Meadows

Tuesday, January 22

9:00 What Does it Mean to Worship in Spirit and in Truth? Glenn Burgess
 9:40 Giving: God's Formula for His Blessings V. P. Black
 10:20 BREAK

10:50 Significant Greek Terms Relating to Worship Jimmy Clark
 11:30 LUNCH

Areas of Potential Misunderstanding - Part II

1:30 How Important is Intent in Worship? William Howard
 2:00 Do We Understand the Lord's Supper? John Tracy
 2:30 Is All Service Worship? Barry Gilreath, Jr
 3:00 BREAK

3:30 Forum: Areas of Potential Misunderstanding II

4:30 DINNER

6:30 Singing

7:00 Jeroboam: A Lesson in Israel's Origin

of Sinful Worship Robert Lindsey

7:45 Implications of Divided Evening Worship Jimmy Clark

Wednesday, January 23

9:00 Bible Classes and Public Worship Steve Ellis
 9:40 Singing Religious Songs for Entertainment Brooks Boyd
 10:20 BREAK

10:50 What is the Purpose of the Lord's Day Assemblies? Jackie M. Stearsman
 11:30 LUNCH

Areas of Potential Misunderstanding - Part III

1:30 Cheering Sessions and Special Groups Freddie Clayton
 2:00 Easter and Christmas Services Michael Hatcher
 2:30 Worshiping with Those in Error Terry Frizzell
 3:00 BREAK

3:30 Forum: Areas of Potential Misunderstanding III

4:30 DINNER

6:30 Singing

7:00 Sounding Brass and Clanging Cymbals: A Review Ryan Roark

7:45 Who is to Lead Public Worship? Roy Dicks

Thursday, January 24

9:00 Why is Worship a Custom in Most Cultures? Brian Kenyon
 9:40 Why Will Compromise in Worship Not Convert People? Timothy Kidwell
 10:20 BREAK

10:50 Teaching Worship in Mission Work Billy Nicks
 11:30 LUNCH

Areas of Potential Misunderstanding - Part IV

1:30 Does God Care How We Dress in Public Worship? Renard McFarland
 2:00 Dramatic Presentations at Worship Services Bob Bauer
 2:30 Are Wedding and Funeral Services Worship? Paul Ditoro
 3:00 BREAK

3:30 Forum: Areas of Potential Misunderstanding IV

4:30 DINNER

6:30 Singing

7:00 Does God Care How We Worship? Daniel Stearsman

7:45 How May We Improve Our Worship? Tom Holland



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constituted a covering, and certainly I would have never dreamed that this was a sign of her subordination to a man.

What Discipline Is to Be Administered?

Those demanding that this ancient custom be continued must provide the manner of discipline to be administered by those not following them. I once knew a person who held to the position that the covering was taught as clearly as baptism, yet the same person would not make the covering a test of fellowship. He was right in not making it a test of fellowship, however, a greater mistake is being made by classifying a binding obligation (baptism) with a man-made custom (the covering).

Conclusion

Do you know the difference between human custom and Divine law? Can you now explain the difference to someone needing help?

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). Let us be sure that we are providing a Biblical basis for making proper distinctions between human custom and God’s will.

Everything said and done in the New Testament is not to be considered as human custom. Everything said and done in the New Testament is not to be a part of divine law binding upon all Christians at all time. We may tell what human customs are and what the will of God is when we evaluate them in the light of the total teaching of the Bible with a clear understanding of the role that custom plays in any given situation.

God given tradition must be kept. Man-made customs can be either good or evil. Evil must be avoided and good followed. Man-

made customs (actions) at one time may not signify the same thing at all times. This means that we must consider the historical setting of ancient man-made customs as well as the contemporary customs. There are no reasons to abandon contemporary customs that do not conflict with God given principles. Likewise, there is no reason to abandon long-standing customs, assuming that what they signify will be understood and that what is signified is not in violation of God given principles of right and wrong.

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