

# Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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## We must Distinguish Between Human Custom and Divine Law

### Part I

By

Jackie M. Stearsman

Do you know the difference between human custom and Divine law? Could you explain the difference to someone if they need help (1 Pet. 3:15). Let us think through the process and see if we can provide Biblical basis for making proper distinctions here.

Questions: Is everything said and done in the New Testament to be considered as human custom? Is anything said and done in the New Testament to be a part of divine law binding upon all Christians at all time? How may we tell, what is the demonstrative evidence to justify a conclusion or position?

#### Tradition Defined

A tradition may be defined as something that is handed down. Note, it is very important that we know from whom we received our traditions. The development of a custom is somewhat like the following: (1) a custom begins with an idea, (2) an idea becomes an action, (3) an action becomes a habit, (4) a longstanding habit becomes a tradition, and finally (5) a long standing tradition becomes a

custom when accepted and practiced by the group. A tradition or custom may be good or bad, of divine origin or man-made.

#### God Given Traditions

Paul and Peter called upon faithful brethren to accept God given traditions. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2Thess. 2:15). "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" (2 Thess. 3:6). "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers" (1 Peter 1:18).

#### Man-made Traditions

Man-made traditions may result in a conflict with the will of God. "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?" (Matt. 15:2-3). Paul wrote: "And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:14). "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).



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If man-made customs do not conflict with God's will, the Bible calls upon us to obey the customs and traditions of men. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put

to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Pet. 2:13-17). "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (1 Cor. 9:20-23).

Some man-made customs are local and nationalistic in nature. Eating meats was a traditional item that could be either good or bad depending on the circumstances (Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8). If eating food was all that was involved, the meat could be eaten. On the other hand, if the eating of meat was a part of worshiping idols it had to be avoided. Circumcision was of similar significance. Paul had Timothy circumcised in order to comply with custom (Acts 16:1-5). But, when certain Jewish Christians wanted to have all Gentiles circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved, Paul refused (Acts 15; Gal. 2:1-5).

When God's will and man-made customs or laws

conflict, Peter and the apostles state our obligation to be as follows: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).

### General Applications

If we are to avoid confusion in religious matters, these distinction must be understood and accepted. Let us make some applications. In order to avoid religious confusion, let us understand some customs that are not universally binding as a mandate from God.

### Washing of Feet

It was a custom in the Old Testament era: "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree" (Gen. 18:4). "And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night" (Gen. 19:2). "And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord" (1 Sam. 25:41).

Washing feet was a

custom in the New Testament era. For example the enrollment of a widow cited her actions as follows: "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work" (1 Tim. 5:10).

It was practiced in the home as a matter of hospitality. "And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing



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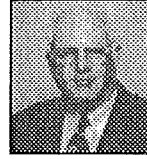
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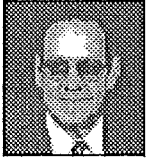
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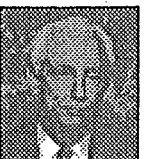
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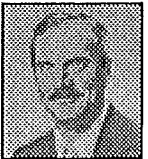
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## “Do You Understand Worship?”

27th Annual Bible Lectureship — January 21-24, 2002

### Monday, January 21

9:00 Defining Worship Samuel T. Jones  
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? Remard 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



Steve Ellis



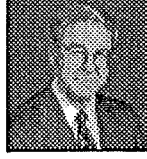
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to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head" (Luke 7:38-44).

When we understand this custom, the actions of Jesus are meaningful. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took

a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he

knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do AS [emphasis added, JMS] I have done to you" (John 13:3-15).

As stated above there are customs that are local and national—customs of men that do not violate the will of God—and we may take part in them.

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