

## What If God Had Said? By Wyatt Kirk

What If God Had Said: "Repent and be sprinkled. The churches of men salute you. Upon the first Sunday of the month. He that believes and is not baptized. Singing and making melody with a piano"?

The Word of God is POWERFUL! It created, sustains, saves and judges us. Our attitude towards it, therefore, is important and eternal in its consequences. Often, however, we are careless concerning it, even in a religious sense. To illustrate: WHAT IF GOD HAD SAID to Adam in the Garden "Of every tree you may freely eat, PERIOD"? Would not the man and woman be granted authority thereby to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? BUT, GOD SAID: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

What If God Had Said to Naaman the leper: "Go and wash seven times in the river of your choice"? Naaman would have had God's authority to wash in Abana or Pharpar and been blessed. BUT, GOD SAID: "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall come again to you, and you shall be clean" (2Kings 5:10). His cleansing depended upon his complete obedience to God's command.

What If God Had Said, "You shall know the truth of men's teachings and they shall make you free"? Men would be at liberty to study, learn, accept, practice and teach the creeds, disciplines, manuals, traditions and confessions of faith of men. BUT, GOD SAID: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). That truth is the Word of God (John 17:17). Therefore, freedom from sin's enslavement comes through the knowledge and obedience to God's word, not men.

What If God Had Said, "And the disciples were called Mormons"? Surely there would be authority for men to wear the religious name "Mormon." If God had said "Baptists" or "Lutherans" men would have God's Word for wearing those names religiously. BUT, GOD SAID: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). Our authority, then, is to wear the religious name "Christians."

What If God Said, "Therefore we are sprinkled with Him by baptism into death"? If God had said it, we would have authority for sprinkling as a kind of baptism. BUT, GOD SAID: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death" (Rom. 6:4). If we would keep God's command we are bound to baptize and be baptized by immersion.

What If God Said, "He that believes and is not baptized shall be saved"? One could safely believe and teach that men are saved before and without baptism. BUT, GOD SAID: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Therefore, I must teach and practice the need for both faith and baptism if one would be saved.

What If God Said, "Teaching and admonishing each other in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, making music to the Lord"? Our right would include worshipping God with vocal or instrumental music or the two combined. BUT, GOD SAID: "Teaching and admonishing each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). In so doing God has removed instrumental music as an option in His worship in the church today.

What If God Said, "Remember the first Sabbath day of the month"? Then, the Jews would have kept holy only the month's first Sabbath. BUT, GOD SAID:

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). Therefore, Israel was obligated to keep every Sabbath day.

What If God Said, "Upon the first day of the month when the disciples came together to break bread"? Christians could partake of the Lord's Supper once a month with God's approval. BUT, GOD SAID: "Upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). By this approved example of Christians keeping the supper weekly, we today observe the communion each Sunday.

What If God said, "And they ordained them a pastor in every church"? Then, there would be God's authority for single pastor churches. BUT, GOD SAID: "And they ordained them elders (plural) in every church" (Acts 14:23). From Acts 20 and 1Peter 5, we see that elders are pastors, bishops. Therefore, scripturally organized churches must have plural pastors.

What If God Said, "Being justified by faith only"? Then, we would be free to consider no commandment of God as essential to my forgiveness of sins or eternal life in heaven. BUT, GOD SAID: "Being justified by faith, not faith only" (Rom 5:1). In James 2:24, He continues: "You see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." God says we are not justified by faith only.

What If God Said, "Teach men to come to the meeting house to hear the gospel of Christ"? Our responsibility to others would be limited to inviting men to hear it preached publicly. BUT, GOD SAID: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them... teaching them to observe all things etc." (Matt. 28:20). Our responsibility is to GO, TEACH, not that others should COME, HEAR.

What If God said, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together on Sunday morning"? We could fulfill the will of God with one-time-a-week attendance. BUT, GOD SAID: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... but exhorting each other" (Heb. 10:25). Exhortation should be towards assembling together, not forsaking.

What If God Said, "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store \$25.00"? Most churches would greatly benefit financially. BUT, GOD SAID: "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him" (1Cor. 16:2). We excuse ourselves for robbing God on the grounds that we have not really prospered.

What If God Said, "The Methodist churches salute you"? Men would have God's blessing for perpetuating denominationalism. BUT, GOD SAID: "The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16). No church can be as good as Christ's church.

What If God Said, "There is no Hell"? Men could live with no penalty for their wickedness. BUT, GOD SAID: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). There is a Hell!

God did say some things; and Jesus, therefore, was prompted to say the following: "He that is of God hears God's words; you therefore don't hear them, because you are not of God" (John 8:47). "He that rejects me, and doesn't receive my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

"Wait Till Morning"

"For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2Cor. 6:2).

The steamship "Central America," on a voyage from New York to San Francisco, sprung a leak in mid-ocean. A vessel seeing her signal of distress bore down toward her. Perceiving the danger to be imminent, the captain of the rescue ship spoke to the "Central America," "What is amiss?" "We are in bad repair and are going down; lie by till morning;" was the answer. "Let me take your passengers on board now." But as it was night, the commander of the "Central America" did not like to send his passengers away lest some might be lost, and thinking that they could keep afloat awhile longer replied: "Lie by till morning." Once again the Captain of the rescue ship called, "you had better let me take them now." "Lie by till morning," was sounded back through the trumpet. About an hour and a half later her lights were missed and, though no sound was heard, the "Central America" had gone down and all on board perished because it was thought they could be saved better at another time. (From Pulpit Treasury)

Let us not put off or procrastinate, but render full service to God now while we have time and opportunity. "Now" is the accepted time!