

IT IS SETTLED!

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13b)

By Howell Lasseter

Departures: Different Churches

Two examples from God's Word have been examined in our search for the answer to this question: Does God care if man departs from God's Word? These examples clearly show He does care, and will not accept man's innovations. Perhaps in future columns, more departures will be discussed, but before leaving the topic of departures, here are two scriptures to keep in mind when questioning a denominational precept: Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13.

Peoples from all nations have desired to be a part of our nation. Although some were brought against their will as captives destined to serve others, many came freely both for the physical blessings of food, clothing and shelter and for religious freedom. We see, even in today's world, nations which imprison citizens and foreigners for worshipping God in a way not recognized by a particular nation. Persecution against Christians is once again on the rise. In the section of the New Testament commonly called "the beatitudes," Jesus pronounces as "blessed" those who suffer for righteousness' sake (Matthew 5:10-12; Luke 6:22,23). The New Testament provides examples of those who were put to death because they stood firmly for God and against religious leaders who taught man's commandments. Stephen is the first one recorded. Hear the charge he made: *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: As your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted: And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it"* (Acts 6:8-7:60). How true this charge is still today! And, the apostle Peter's words ring loud and clear today, not only in other nations but in ours also: *"Know this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of"* (2 Peter 1:20-2:2). A glance through the telephone directory of any city or village will reveal many listings for religious bodies. Did God through His Son send many different laws for these groups? Did Jesus actually build His church, as He said He would do (Matthew 16:16-19)? Do Jesus and God actually require all believers to be one, as expressed in Jesus' prayer (John 17:20,21)? Note that Jesus said the unity of Christians would convince the world of His deity and His coming. Man is actually hindering the world's belief in Jesus by the departures which cause the divisions! May each of us determine to know, believe, teach, follow only God's Word!