

## Should We Offer An Invitation?

Have you attended a service where an invitation to obey the gospel of Christ was not offered? Was it odd? Sadly, this is becoming more popular. Some are saying it's "just a tradition." However, should we stop or change a practice just because it is a "tradition?"

First, an invitation extended to the audience at the end of a service is thoroughly scriptural. The Lord offered such an invitation at the end of His message, "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). He offered an invitation in Matthew 11:28-30.

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

To invite men to submit to the gospel is inherent in the great commission as well (Matt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16). Thus, we have scriptural authority to offer one today.

Second, an invitation may be traditional, but that does not make it wrong. We traditionally meet at a certain time on Sunday and Wednesday. Should we change the times so as to not be traditional? If we change the times each week or each month, would that become a tradition? Two prayers are traditional in many services. Is there anything wrong with this? No. Should we change the number of prayers for each service? Would that become a tradition? The difference between "tradition" and the "traditions of men" is that the former is authorized, the latter is not (cf. 2 Thes. 2:15; Matt. 15:7-9).

Third, what is the purpose of a sermon? Generally, a sermon may be designed to inform, motivate, encourage, rebuke, persuade, etc. However, what is the ultimate goal? It is to get people to conform their life to God's will (Jas. 4:7-10). What better time exist to invite someone to do this--in baptism or repentance--than right after informing, motivating, encouraging, rebuking, or persuading them?

Brethren, we do not need to constantly look for some new way to do things (cf. Acts 17:21). Many of our practices, including offering an

invitation, are done because they work. This does not mean we are wedded to them or that some things never need to change. However, let us not throw them out simply because they are "traditional."

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