

Apples and Oranges

From the Preacher's Desk:

Carrying my two-year old through the yard one day this week, we walked past a tree. "Apple!" she said. "No, that's an orange," was my reply. "Apple!" "No, orange." Finally, her reply was, "Rrrnngg." I suppose that to a two-year old the difference is lost. At this point, it is green, it is round, whether it is an apple or an orange just doesn't matter. We try to teach the difference, however. There comes a time when the difference is huge, and that difference must be learned. Try to tell that to a two-year, though.

When it comes to the Word of God, some adults act like two-year olds. They look at its precepts, its history, and its implications, but they think it just doesn't matter. If an adult was not able to tell the difference between an apple and an orange, we would seriously question that person's mental facilities. But when an adult fails to distinguish between God's Book and man's ideas, it is commonly viewed not only with tolerance, but with great sympathy. Sadly, there are many who would actually encourage others in the idea that it just doesn't matter.

In the Garden of Eden, God instructed His creation to not eat of one particular fruit; the serpent told the woman that it didn't matter (Genesis 3:4). God had instructed the priests not to use strange fire to offer incense; Nadab and Abihu thought it didn't matter (Leviticus 10:1-2). God told the young prophet to return immediately after prophesying to Jeroboam; the prophet thought it did not matter (1 Kings 13:20). Time and again, God exhorted Israel and Judah to repent; they must have thought that it did not matter.

Look at the Christian dispensation. God has given instruction through the Bible as to how He is to be worshipped. The early church sang (Ephesians 5:19), observed the memorial of the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7), prayed (Acts 2:42), studied from the inspired Word (Acts 2:42; 20:7), and gave of their means (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Nevertheless when it comes to worshipping God, many people say, "It doesn't matter." While many still seek to add an instrument to worship, which the early church did without due to lack of authority, still others are saying that it doesn't matter if the singing is reciprocal (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:17) and are adding praise teams, a fancy name for a sing-along choir. It doesn't matter? Nadab and Abihu found out that it does.

The Christian dispensation is without the Ten Commandments, but that doesn't mean it is without commandment. When the apostle Paul listed the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21, he mentioned what we might call "obvious" sins, such as adultery, fornication, idolatry, witchcraft, murder, and drunkenness. But does it really matter? It should be just as obvious that it does. Why else would Paul have given commandment to "flee" such things (1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14)?

If a two-year old can learn the difference between an apple and an orange, why cannot adults learn what really matters to God?