



In this study, we're gonna explore the difference between Truth and tradition and the dangers of placing tradition above Truth. As usual, I'd like to start with a little bit of history.

In the year, 63 BC, a famous Roman general named Pompey the Great showed up to Jerusalem and took it by force. A little background is that up until this point, Jerusalem had enjoyed a position of freedom within the Roman Empire. The reason was that the High Priest and King of Judaea, a man named Hyrcanus, was a puppet for Rome. But his brother wanted the position and power, so he had gained a bunch of followers and began a civil war in Judaea and Jerusalem. This affected the taxes and interests of Rome, so they sent General Pompey to make peace and crack some heads if need be.



But, when Pompey got there, the brother of Hyrcanus had taken power and refused to allow Pompey and his army entrance into Jerusalem. This only made Pompey mad. He was called Pompey the Great because he was a military genius, so he surveyed the situation and came up with a plan. The walls around Jerusalem were about 40ft tall and 8ft thick and made of huge stones. When Pompey first started the siege, he knew he had to overcome those walls, but Jerusalem was built on a hill, so the machines of war needed to conquer the walls, had to be constructed as close to the wall as possible.

However, every time he sent his soldiers to build the catapults and battering rams, the Jewish soldiers and archers would attack from the towers on the wall. This slowed the progress significantly. The soldiers were so busy trying to protect the mechanisms, that they couldn't put them together.



Pompey knew this was gonna take a very long time at this rate, and he didn't have the time to devote to a long campaign and he definitely didn't want his reputation tarnished by being upstaged by this puny kingdom. Then inspiration hit him.

He noticed that on the 7th day of every week, the Jewish soldiers would stop shooting arrows and throwing stones. They would just sit up there in the towers and watch. Pompey found out that the Jews refused to fight on the Sabbath and wouldn't do any manual labor, which included lighting the arrows and loading the catapults to shoot at the Romans. So on every Sabbath, Pompey would have his soldiers focus all their attention on building the catapults, battering rams, and war towers, then the rest of the week was spent protecting the work they had completed.

Using this tactic, it took him 3 months to overcome those huge walls, and when he finally breached it, Jerusalem didn't stand a chance. He busted some heads and reinstalled Hyrcanus as High Priest but stripped him of his royal title. From then on, Jerusalem was under the thumb of the Roman Empire. And the rest is history.

I shared this little episode of history because it's a great illustration of how tradition, while it can have its place, can also become a force for our own destruction. Pompey used these people's traditions as a weapon against them. Here's the Truth, you can search through all the scriptures, and you'll never find a command from God or anyone saying that someone can't protect their family, or defend their home, or fight for freedom on the Sabbath. There is no restriction on the Sabbath regarding warfare.

These same people that maneuvered for power and lied and stole and backstabbed for prestige, refused to break their TRADITION, and suffered the consequences. Unfortunately, by the time Christ came, not much had changed in the mindset of the leaders of God's people. Let's see an example from Scripture...

Matthew 23:23-24 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. ²⁴ Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"*

This is the same sort of mindset those Jewish leaders in Pompey's time had. They showed an outward appearance of being spiritual by keeping manmade Sabbath traditions, but where it really counted, being kind and just and righteous, they were severely lacking, and that lacking is ultimately what led to Pompey kicking down the door.

In the same way, the Jewish leaders in Christ's time were really good at paying tithes and looking righteous and following man-made traditions, but when it really counted, they missed the mark, in fact, they didn't even get close to the target. When you get time, read the entire chapter of Matt 23 and you'll see a side of Christ many of us aren't familiar with, but we should definitely take note, because He was very serious.

As we move forward in this study, we need to get a better understanding of tradition so we can know where it belongs, and we can recognize when it doesn't belong.

To begin, we first need to separate traditions into 2 categories, secular and sacred. Secular traditions could be "family traditions" or "cultural traditions", where our family might all meet together for Sunday supper or our friends may all get together to watch fireworks on July 4th. For the most part, (with a few exceptions), there's nothing spiritually good or bad about secular traditions. Often these traditions serve to keep a family or group or culture unified and sharing common experiences. So there's a place for them.

These traditions aren't what the Bible is referring to when it mentions traditions, and not what this study is about. What the Bible, and this study is focusing on is Sacred Traditions.

These are traditions that have a spiritual significance and are linked in some way to our relationship with God and His Word. Examples would be Baptism, Communion, corporate Prayer, even Doctrine. This is where we need to divide Sacred Tradition into 3 categories.



1 Corinthians 11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

2 Kings 18:4 He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.

Mark 7:11-13 But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban" (that is, a gift to God), ¹² then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, ¹³ making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.'

Exodus 32:4-5 And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" ⁵ So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD."

THE GOOD- 1 Corinthians 11:2 *Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.*

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Good Sacred traditions are those that are based on God's Truth and can be backed up Biblically. The context of these 2 cases is that 1 Cor is referring to the traditional family dynamic God created between a man and a woman, and 2 Thes is referring to being vigilant in the traditional understanding of scripture Paul taught and recognizing the deception of the wicked one. To relate it to our time, it could be something like traditionally meeting together at a certain time for the express purpose of studying the Word. That's a good Sacred Tradition that is based on Truth and backed by the Bible. Good Sacred Traditions bring us closer to God's Truth.

THE BAD- 2 Kings 18:4 *He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.*

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Bad Sacred tradition is when something seems based on God's Truth and can be loosely backed by the Bible, but when it's scrutinized, we find that man has added to it or twisted it in a way that it was never intended.

Our two examples here are the bronze serpent God told Moses to fashion in the wilderness being twisted into an object to worship centuries after the fact, and then in Christ's time, the Pharisees adding to the 5th Comm. by stating if a man pays money to the temple, it counts as honoring his parents. Both of these were bad Sacred Traditions that only served to distort God's Truth and pushed people farther from it.

To relate it to today's time frame, it would be something like KJV only believers. I love the King James for its poetic language and powerful vocabulary, but I can assure you Christ wasn't walking the Earth speaking Old English. Paul was fluent in several languages, but "The King's English" didn't exist until a thousand years after he died. The KJV is a translation of the original Greek and Hebrew. The power of God's Truth isn't found in the translation **OF** the Word, it's found in the transformation **FROM** the Word. I understand being careful of which translation to lean on, but to be so dogmatic in believing that only one translation is correct is Bad Sacred Tradition and can push people farther from the Truth.

THE UGLY-Exodus 32:4-5 *And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"⁵ So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord."*

Ugly Sacred Tradition is exactly what it sounds like. It's Sacred tradition that has no basis in Truth, can't be backed by the Bible, and leads people on an ugly path away from the Truth. In fact, it stands in direct opposition of God's Truth, even though it often has the "God" stamp on it. Our example here in Ex is the famous account of the golden calf.



The gist is that the Israelites hadn't heard from Moses in a while when he went up on the mountain and they were ready to celebrate and have some fun and get

their worship on. But they weren't really familiar with God yet, because up to that point, Moses was the middle-man. So they got with Aaron, **THE HIGH PRIEST**, and they all had the great idea of making an idol of gold to worship. But this wasn't any random idol, this was a statue of an Egyptian god.

In Egyptian "Tradition", the bull god Apis was a symbol of kingship, associated with the creator god, and among other things, symbolized death and resurrection. In essence, the false god Apis was an imposter of the TRUE God YHVH. These folks went right back to the ugly Sacred Tradition that originated in the place of their captivity, because it was comfortable. We can't be free if we constantly put on the enemy's comfortable chains. To add insult to injury, they did something even more ugly. I had never noticed this before until about 2-3 years ago, but they insinuated that this false god actually was YHVH!

Now, there are many examples of this kind of Sacred tradition found in the Bible, but brothers and sisters, would you believe it can also be found in the Body of Christ? In this day and age? I say this with love and out of concern, but we can't be so arrogant to assume that we, in the 21 century and surrounded by a culture of corruption and centuries of deception, that we are immune from the same flaws ancient Israel dealt with. There just might

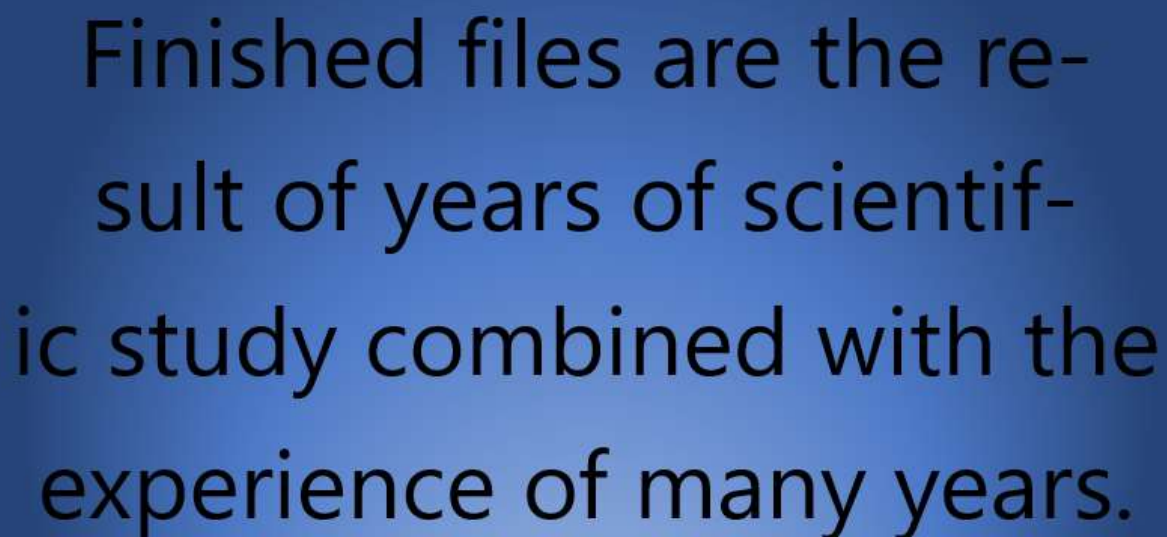
be Ugly traditions we, as the Church keep, that may seem to have spiritual significance or at least seem to be connected in some way to our worship of Christ. I'll let you search the scriptures for yourselves to find that TRUTH.

But, I will say this, if we really dig into where some "sacred" traditions come from, we'll find they stand in direct opposition of our God and His Truth.

What does an egg laying rabbit have to do with THE LAMB OF GOD? What does a decked out evergreen tree have to do with the LION OF JUDAH?

Where did that even come from, and more importantly, how did we not see it sneaking in? Well, I have an exercise to demonstrate how tradition can be used to blind us to the TRUTH.

As quickly as you can, read this sentence while counting the how many "F"s you see...



Finished files are the result of years of scientific study combined with the experience of many years.

Alright, most folks see 3 "F"s. Some people can see 4. What if I told you there are 6 "F"s in that sentence? A little quirk of how we were taught to read causes most of us to be blind to the other "F"s. But don't take my word for it, see for yourself...

Finished **f**iles are the re-
sult **of** years **of** scienti**f**-
ic study combined with the
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The reason most of us missed those Fs is because of how we've traditionally been taught to read. When we read the word **of**, even though we know it's spelled with an F, we pronounce it with a V, so when we intentionally try to count the Fs, our brain skips right over the **O-Fs**. In the context of this exercise with this sentence, tradition has made us blind to the Truth.

Now, this exercise isn't a big issue and I'm not trying to point out flaws in our language, but it's a good example to show how certain things we've been taught or beliefs we've inherited, or traditions we've kept, could be used to deceive us. Let's look at an example from the Bible, that for whatever reason, has been hidden in plain sight. Not because God hid it from us, but because like those hidden "F"s, tradition caused us to not even see it.

1 Timothy 4:7 *But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.*

This seems pretty self-explanatory. Paul is telling Timothy to not bother with silly old wives' tales. I remember when I was younger, my grandmother told me not to mess with a praying mantis because it would spit fire in my eyes. And I believed her. That seems like the kind of "old wives' tale" Paul is talking about.

So yeah, it's good to not spread tall tales, unless you're scaring your grandkids, ... but if we read the verses before and after this verse, and indeed the entire letter to Timothy, that doesn't really fit the context, and it seems like Paul is making a big deal out of something small.

To refresh our memory of the context here, Paul had just prophesied that in the latter times a false "church" would rise up, full of seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, then out of nowhere, he's like, "oh btw, silly tales are a no-no". The reason we usually pass right over this verse is because of how we've been taught to view this phrase: OLD WIVES' FABLES.

We view this scripture and this phrase through the lens of our traditional understanding and a bad English translation. So when we read it, it just means silly fairy tales. But to the Romans and Greeks, myths meant something completely different... Here's what this phrase looks like in the Greek and what it translates to:

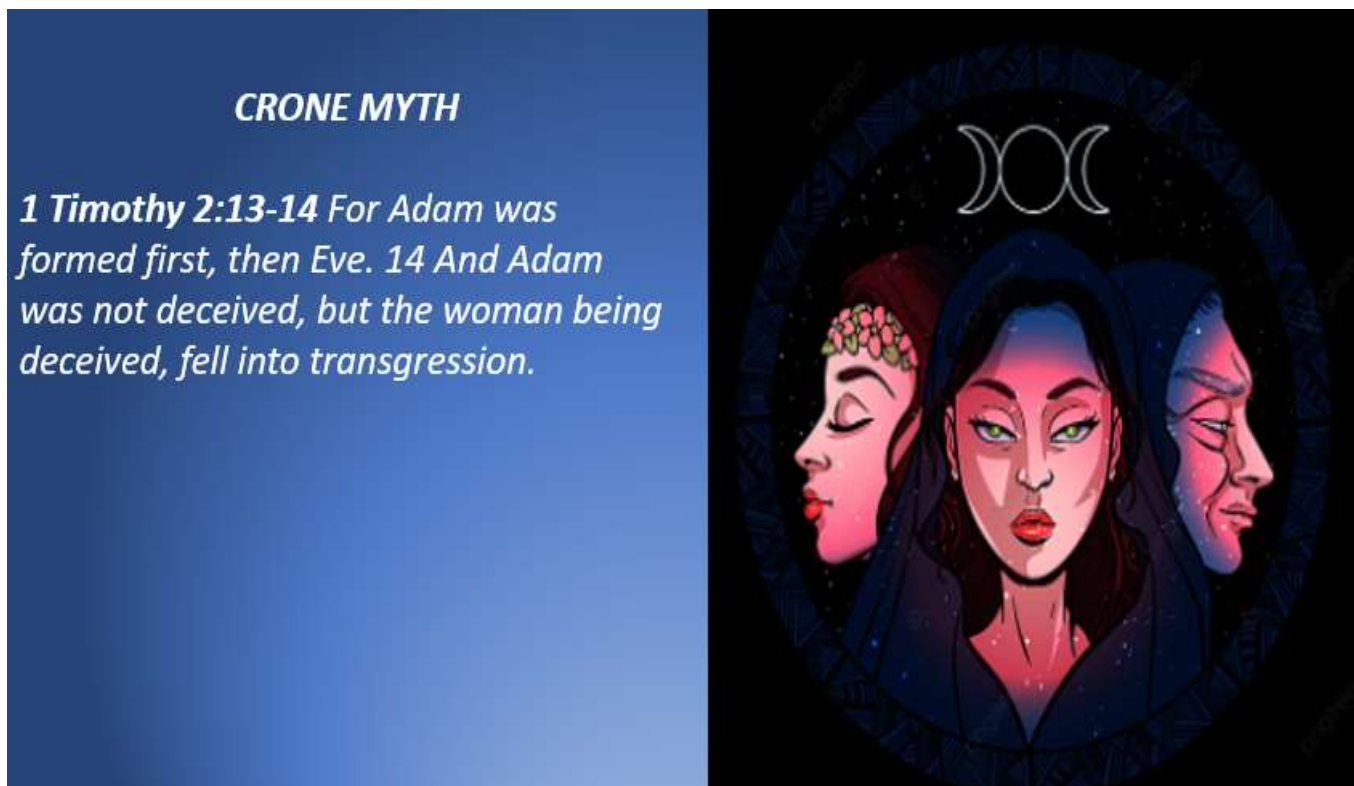
OLD WIVES' FABLES = GRAODES MYTHOS = CRONE MYTHS

And here's an entry about MYTHS from the Oxford Dictionary:

Myths are "stories about divine beings, generally arranged in a coherent system; they are revered as true and sacred; they are endorsed by rulers and priests; and closely linked to religion. Once this link is broken, and the actors in the story are not regarded as gods but as human heroes, giants or fairies, it is no longer a myth but a folktale. Where the central actor is divine but the story is trivial ... the result is religious legend, not myth." [J. Simpson & S. Roud, "Dictionary of English Folklore," Oxford, 2000, p.254]

- Myths were doctrines and beliefs to the pagans.
- An example in Christianity would be Christ walking on water.
- The famous philosopher Socrates was executed for speaking against the gods, that's how serious myths were to the pagans.

- Paul didn't believe in the myths, but he knew the Ephesians did, and the new converts had brought some of their pagan beliefs into the Church of Ephesus.
- Timothy was the Bishop of Ephesus and these were the issues he was dealing with, that's why Paul addresses them in his letters to Timothy.
- Ephesus was famous for having the Temple of Diana.
- Diana was known by many names in many cultures, Isis in Egypt, Kali in India, Asherah to the Canaanites, and famously as Ishtar to Babylon.
- Throughout history and culture, this demon took the form and was worshipped as a "Triple goddess".
- The 3 different forms- Maiden, Mother, and the wisest and most powerful of all, the Crone. These 3 forms are still honored by modern day Wiccans.



- This is where we get the concept of an old witch from.

One of the teachings that Diana's worshipers believed was that man came from woman and that woman was created first. This is the reason Paul speaks about "old wives' fables" because he is directly addressing the false religion and traditions of Diana that was creeping into the church. And our traditional way of seeing that phrase has hidden a very real issue that the early Body of Christ was struggling with.

Let's see how Christ dealt with these bad and ugly traditions:

Matthew 15:1-9 *Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ² "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." ³ He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ⁴ For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' ⁵ But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God" ⁶ then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. ⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ⁸ 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' "*

I love how Christ boldly spoke the Truth here. He didn't sugar coat it. He spoke it with conviction and courage. In an earlier slide, we saw the same instance in the Book of Mark. I included these verses because Matthew gives us a little more of Christ's interaction with the pharisees, especially that last part...

The lesson to be learned by Christ's example here is to be bold with the Truth, not insulting, not confrontational, but bold. Don't be afraid to call out what we know is wrong, and also, on a deeper level for all of us, don't be afraid to search the Word to see if what we practice lines up with scripture or just man's tradition.

Colossians 2:8 *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*

I'll end with these questions for us to ask ourselves...

- Has the enemy stopped trying to infiltrate the Body with ugly traditions?
- Has the enemy intentionally used tradition to blind us to the Truth?
- Do any of our traditions fall into the "ugly" category?
- Is it more important to keep tradition or Truth?
- How can we be "cheated" by tradition?