

THE ORDINANCE OF THE HOLY KISS

In our local town of Tyrone, there is an ordinance that dictates the length of the grass that is considered acceptable on properties within the borough. If the grass gets too long, a resident can expect a notice from the code officer notifying them that they are not in compliance with the town's ordinance. An ordinance is a law that is to be kept and observed.

The Holy Kiss has been honored as an ordinance for centuries. It is an ordinance because it is taught very simply and plainly in five scriptures and Christians have accepted it as a commandment. The Bible also refers to statutes in the Old Testament which Strong's also interprets as an ordinance and given the numerous references to the Holy Kiss by different authors of the Scripture; I believe that we can conclude that it is important to our Heavenly Father.

The kingdom of Heaven has a mark. The people that are part of God's kingdom will carry this distinction. This mark is love. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35) The Holy Kiss is a sign of brotherly love. First Peter 5:14 gives the directive to "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity." It is an outward sign of what is binding our hearts together. Just like feet washing, something happens in our hearts when we practice this ordinance. Anyone can offer a handshake whether or not their heart is in harmony with the other person, but to exercise the Holy Kiss, our hearts need to be right. It is hypocritical to practice this ordinance without brotherly love reigning in our heart.

Some historians believe that the Holy Kiss had all but died out in practice from around the fourth or fifth century until the Anabaptist movement. Then the practice was again held up as an ordinance. Today the threat of losing this ordinance is real. Even people that class themselves as Christians following the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, are losing this practice.

Today there is pressure to call the Holy Kiss a cultural practice of the early Christian Church. The practice is then replaced with a warm handshake or an embrace which are said to be the equivalent cultural practice of our time. With but a small amount of study, we find that the words "Salute" and "Greet" as they are used in the teaching of this ordinance actually mean to "enfold in the arms." How can we cling to one of the early cultural practices in the verse and exclude the other? It is proper to greet our brother or sister with a warm handshake and the Holy Kiss. Furthermore, it is not wrong to enfold in the arms, but by all means, practice the Holy Kiss as it is commanded. This ordinance is to be practiced with the appropriate gender and by all members of the Body. It is not merely to be practiced by or with the "preachers." Greet one another with an holy kiss. (2Co 13:12) The book of 2 Corinthians, is written to all the saints and followers of Jesus Christ.

In spite of the clear frequent teaching of this ordinance in the Bible, the Holy Kiss is the first one to be discarded among Bible believers today. The only way for us to keep this clearly taught Bible ordinance is to, first of all, believe it ourselves then faithfully practice it and teach it as well.

~ Stephen Burkholder