

Title: Don't Change The Book!

Author: Allen Dvorak

File name: change.doc

The tax code used to determine and calculate federal income tax for individuals is a mess. It is not bad enough that it is written in a language known as “tax-ese” (a foreign language not offered at the university where I graduated), but the code is also being changed all the time. Just as I figure out what is a legitimate deduction in the current tax year, someone decides that the tax code is much too simple and so it changes again! With this new change, I have to amortize my personal deductions and divide by the inverted root of my income which is gross and subtract the measure of my waistline or instep, whichever is greater. Aren't taxes fun?

Ostensibly the “fluid” nature of the code accommodates changes in the economy, personal savings levels, etc. In similar fashion, some folks seem to think that God's will must constantly change to reflect social changes or movements.

For example, the permanence of individual marriages was fine for our grandparents' time or for Eastern culture, but our society is more free and sophisticated now, so the reasoning goes. It might be argued that the simplicity of the Lord's Supper may have been adequate for people who lived in a simpler time, but modern worshippers are not challenged by such mundane rituals.

Perhaps the Lord anticipated this kind of thinking. He certainly has been clear about the sin of changing the book. The Israelites were warned about making changes to the divine revelation, either by adding or subtracting (Deuteronomy 4:2). Jesus criticized the Pharisees for adding their traditions to the Mosaic Law, even using their traditions to avoid the divine law (Matthew 15:9). The apostle Paul wrote that no one, not even an angel from heaven, has the right to change the gospel from that which was preached by the apostles (Galatians 1:6-9). The apostle John gave a stern warning to any who might try to add to or take away from the prophecy of Revelation (22:18-19).

There are other ways to subtract from God's Word besides clipping verses out of our Bibles with a pair of scissors! Those who do not like the specific commandments of the Lord have a tendency to “distill” the Word to a more general form of teaching. For instance, the Lord's prohibition of divorce (except for fornication) and His condemnation of remarriage as adultery is viewed as expressing the divine dislike of divorce, but if it happens, it happens! The Lord will understand. In one fell swoop, the Lord's prohibition of divorce is “subtracted” from His Word so that those who are determined to divorce can go ahead and do so.

Many things are added to what is written in the Word of God in the name of greater piety or to create interest in worship. Nothing is actually written into the Scriptures, but many things are added in practice! God is not honored, however, when man chooses to “adjust” His will. Don't change the book!