

Holy Days?



By Philip E. Busby

It is not our job to judge men in respect of a day, for he who regardeth a day, regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. (Rom. 14:6) All this is to say that when we respect a day it should be unto the Lord, and every man must make up his mind as to whether he will respect a day or not. This is not to say there are no days that should be respected, but it is to say that whether a man does or does not respect, is strictly between him and God. This is no different than anything else in a life lived for Christ. We each must take a look at our actions every day and decide if we have followed God in all things! For this purpose God sent His Holy Spirit to guide us. The book of Ephesians (4:7-16) tells us that Jesus gave gifts unto men in the form of apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors and teachers. If you find a true minister of the Word of God, these ministers too can help us make good choices.

I have been called to be the last on that list, a teacher of the Word. So, it is not for the matter of judgement as many would charge, that I write about the holidays, but as one called to help. It is my sincere hope that as we go into the "Holiday Season" we realize that not only are there many things non-Christian about many of these holidays, but most of them are basic humanistic celebrations created by man and held for millennia. There are far too many things to cover in a simple newsletter like this, but maybe we can understand the basics. The Bible tells us the story of man, and since the fall in the garden man has always migrated to a religion that would worship

the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). This goes into many things, but the most basic is the worship of the passage of time and season. In this worship there are four main events, the spring equinox, the summer solstice, the fall equinox, and the winter solstice. Solstices are times in the year when the sun reaches an extreme of its northward or southward motion. Equinoxes are the two points in the year when day and night are approximately equal in length. As man began to use calendars, for many the celebrations that marked these times became less about the day of the event and more about just having the celebration! This is an interesting point in all worship of the creation. People start out by worshiping something like the sun; then one day someone has the idea of creating an image that represents the sun, and people worship that. These gods many times grow from being a representative of the worshiped object, like the sun, to being the ruler of the object. This elevates the image to true god status! The result in many cases is the image coming to the point where it is simply a god, and whether the original object of worship has any connection to it or not becomes irrelevant to its worship. As time goes forward, different gods are formed and start at different points in this progression, but it all amounts to the same thing. All are made by the hand of man!

So, many of the celebrations formed on the basis of the four yearly events have little connection to those events in their modern forms. The same event is celebrated at different times in different cultures. It is important to understand that this last fact is due to the act of God at the Tower of Babel! The confounding of the languages would serve as a stop gap measure to insure people everywhere would not be able to form a universal religious system. Why? Because God wanted to insure that a universal religious system would not be able to turn all men from hearing about Him, thus having a chance to hear the message of true salvation! That is where it gets down to what Paul was saying about respecting a day. God instructed Paul to write these words because God knew there were many people serving Him in many different very established cultures with very established religious practices. He also knew that some of those religious practices would claim to be in His name even when they were nothing more than carnal occasions! This is definitely where we are in today's world. The "universal" or Catholic church has overlaid many of these pagan celebrations with Biblical story lines. So, now many people do not celebrate the arising of the earth from slumber in the spring, but they celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Instead of a fall festival worshiping the earth for its harvest and thinking of it as a time for the dead, we have All Saints Day, the celebration of the saints. Saints just happen to be dead people who the church has elevated to god-like status. Of course, most celebrate the more



popular eve of this holy day, which is All Hallowed Eve, or simply Halloween. Instead of celebrating the winter solstice we hold Christ's Mass, the celebration of Christ's birth.

As I said before, many of these holidays maintain pagan traditions even if we say they are done for God. One most amazing fact is that the spring celebration maintains its pagan name, Easter. This is just a variant on Istar who is the goddess of fertility and love. Others say Easter is an English derivative of some other goddess' name, but in almost every case the goddess referred to is still the goddess of fertility and/or spring itself. If this fact comes as a surprise to anyone, don't just take my word for it, this fact is recorded in many encyclopedias. Easter traditions, like the decorating of eggs, are done in many parts of the world, and not as part of a Christian celebration. Egg decorating in parts of Europe traces back to things like traditional Celtic stories that state the universe was formed from an egg. Oddly, these stories are not so different from the "Big Bang" theory. It seems that the more things change the more they stay the same!

Many traditions are very mix and match. Some traditions are even moved from being a part of one celebration to being a part of another, and the ancient past is not our only enemy. Modern times have brought new questions as to what is good and wholesome. Such things as Santa Claus, is yet another amazing fact of confusion. Many believers in Christ feel that Santa Claus is one of the most worldly traditions. In fact Saint Nick may be one of the most "Christian" traditions to be seen at Christmas. The yule log and the tree stem back to roots, very ancient, representing the death and birth of false gods. Gift giving itself stems back far before the time of Christ. Holly and ivy are only symbols used by northern people who did not have the palm trees that are mentioned in ancient stories from the more southern areas of the world. However, Santa Claus is a saint, ordained by the church, doing the good work of bringing joy to children! Thus he may be the one part of Christmas that is not just a Christian overlay of a past story.

In all of this confusion, there is the question of what, or if, believers should be a part of any of these things? This question is hard to answer, and God knew that it would be! There are those who choose not to celebrate any of the major holidays. There are those who believe that cutting out the Christmas tree is a good thing, but still hold the celebration of Christmas itself. There are even those who believe if believers do not celebrate these holidays then they are setting a bad example to the world. They say that, to not celebrate, is to not care about the

things of God because these traditions seem, in our modern time, to be so Christian! So, what should we do?

The answer is not really that hard, but does require us to have a real relationship with God! As I stated at the first of this article, these things are between each person and God. If you feel the day should be recognized unto God, then you should do so, and be careful that you do recognize it unto God and not just as a party! If someone else feels the day should not be recognized, then that person should be convinced that God does not ask it of them. The question of what traditions should we be involved in, goes to the words of Paul. If meat is put before you and said this is for a false god or unto a false god, then turn from it. (1 Cor. 10:23-28) The tradition has no power in itself to turn or keep you from Christ. (1 Cor. 8) No, that decision is constantly up to each person. However, those persons desiring to ignore the things of the true God, and pay tribute to a false god, will harm themselves as well as set a bad example to others!

Even as we celebrate a holiday we believe to be as holy as Christmas, we must always be careful not to let worldly things take over the day. We need to be careful what rituals we participate in and practice. Are they really things to celebrate God, or are they things we simply have come up with as good excuses to keep in our lives because we do not want to let things go? If we can truly celebrate a holiday unto the Lord then let us do it, but if we can not keep it focused on God then let us drop it from our minds and calendars!

Beyond these simple facts, I would point to other scriptures that should be involved in your decision making process such as Philippians 4:8 which tells us that "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." As we look at holidays such as Halloween, this scripture really plays a part. Is there anything that is of good report in this holiday of death? Some people make the ridiculous argument that this holiday is for children, but even if that were true, wouldn't it seem a little strange? Does it really promote the Biblical values that we try to teach our children? I know many people who stay at home on Halloween because they are afraid. Some pass out candy just to keep kids from destroying their property. Is this really the kind of holiday we want our kids to be involved in? Halloween has always had trouble having a positive influence at all, and it is truly not of good report! I also would like to suggest that we stop fighting to replace this holiday with "Harvest festivals". These "festivals" rarely have more Godly as-



pects to them than any Halloween party. Are we really so desperate that we cannot give up one simple holiday for the sake of taking a stand against evil? Do we really have to give our children something else to do? Some say that by having other parties we are taking the day back for God. No man need take a day back for God, they all belong to Him. We simply need to be careful not to involve ourselves in the activities man has chosen to do in a day, that are not Godly!

Instead of trying to replace this negative holiday with other festivals, we should use the time to teach our children, if they are going to live for God they may have to give up a few things of this world! (Matt. 6:19-21, 10:37-39) Sure the Jews had a God given harvest feast, but the difference is the fact that it was a holy day of it's own, to praise the Lord for what He had given, not just a party trying to change the focus of a pagan celebration! To argue that we must have a harvest festival at Halloween is quite ridiculous for those living in the U.S. We already have a holiday for that, it is called Thanksgiving. Maybe we should put more emphasis on the true reason for Thanksgiving instead of spending so much time trying to save Halloween!

Remember, the debate as to what to celebrate should be based on our desire to serve and praise the Lord! Jesus is not actually the reason for the season, but if you are going to celebrate Christmas, be sure that He is the reason for your season! However, don't get caught up on the idea that, because it was ordained by the church, a celebration like Christmas is somehow more HOLY than something like Thanksgiving. Whatsoever things are pure, think on these things! The Jewish nation has God given days of celebration, and most of these do not even allow for the involvement of non-Jews. For the non-Jew God gave no such days. The fact that an organization of men (church, denomination, ex.) "ordains" a day does not make it Holy! It is only good if it is held in the heart of each person as unto the Lord.

Believers should be thankful to the Lord for a holiday like Thanksgiving! As most holidays have their roots in pagan festivals, Thanksgiving is purely praise to God, and it is hard for anyone to do much with this holiday to shake that! The best most can do is simply ignore it, or try to make it just a kick off to Christmas, but for the believer in the true God of creation, Thanksgiving is actually a great opportunity to openly show your faith! A great time to teach your children the lessons of the Bible! A great time to have a "Harvest festival" that can have the right kind of emphasis. What true believer would not want to be apart of that? This holiday gives us the opportunity to have a feast in the same way that the law of Moses gave to the

children of Israel. A feast that emphasizes our thankfulness to God, no matter how hard things may be, we live and thank the Lord! As we teach our children, let us take time to tell them the story of Noah and the Ark! As Noah left the ark, he thanked the Lord for His salvation. Noah built an altar unto to the Lord, and as the Lord smelled the sweet savor, God promised to never again destroy the earth with a flood. God also tells us in His Word that as long as the earth remains there will be seed time and harvest! This year let us Thank the Lord for his continual care.

Instead of talking so much about just the pilgrims, we should tell our children the story of how Thanksgiving came to be a national holiday in the U.S. In 1863 President Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of the month of November a national day of thanksgiving. Lincoln did this in the midst of a civil war! There may never have been a harder time for Americans than these. Yes, the war was over states rights; but no one can deny that the heart of the issue was slavery, and the fact that this nation was supposed to stand for the rights and freedoms of all people! Because all people were "created equal" by God! Even today, this nation continues to stagger under the weight of temptation to do wrong; so, let us take the time to Thank the Lord through, good and bad, that He continues to have his hand in all things. I've said it before and I'll say it again, we may not know the future, but we know who holds the future. We see in the cycle of this planet the death of fall that gives us the seed to plant and spring forth new life in the spring. This is an illustration of the promise of God that where sin abounds grace much more abounds! (Rom. 5:20-21) Even in death, with God there is new life! So this year, as well as the years to come, let us not focus on the death of saints or the planet. Instead, let us grow in faith and be thankful for the promise of new life through Jesus Christ our Lord! No matter what day we choose to celebrate, let all be done to the glorification of the Lord, (Col. 3:16-17) and let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not! (Gal. 6:8-10) So, as the seasons of our lives come and go, let us always be mindful each day that we draw closer to the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we pray each day and try our best to keep our hearts and minds pure before God, we also pray come Lord Jesus and let the Father's will be done on earth as it is in heaven! This holiday season, and in every season and holiday, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

