

GOD WARNS ABOUT HUMAN TRADITIONS

David Halbrook

Last week, we asked you to think about God's warnings concerning human traditions. Not all traditions are sinful but making Christmas a holy day of the church is sinful because:

In Matthew 15:3, Jesus warns of human traditions which transgress the commands of God. Christmas does this when it is viewed as equally or more important than the weekly Lord's Day. Do you see the harm in taking a day man views as important and elevating it alongside, or above, a day God views as important? When men make Christmas and the Lord's Day equally important they transgress God's law by their traditions. Matthew 15:9 tells how serious this is.

In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns of empty deceit. A religious lie fits this category. Christmas is typically called "Jesus' birthday," but God did not tell us the day of Jesus' birth. It is empty deceit to say "Christmas is Jesus' birthday." Most people know that The Catholic Church chose December 25 to replace a pagan holiday. To claim December 25 belongs to Christ due to His birth is nothing more than empty deceit. (Read the rest of this article at our website)

Editor's Note: This is our weekly article for *Arkansas Weekly*. Find it, clip it, and give it this week. Most people have given this subject no attention. Who will tell them if we don't? An expanded version of this article was printed in our bulletin last week and is on the front page of our website.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

-- Can you post Scriptures on our signboard during January?

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES GREAT ASSURANCE (ROMANS 8:16) [1]

David Halbrook

Spirits (spiritual beings) communicate with each other through words. God is spirit, and man is spirit because God made man in Their image (Gen. 1:27). On that day, God used words to reveal His expectations and blessings for Adam and Eve. The words that God spoke remained in their memory and thus they always had access to God's testimony of the truth-- that they were to multiply, were to have dominion over the rich resources of God's creation, could eat freely of all trees (except one), and would die the day that they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 1:28; 2:16-17).

When the rich man and Abraham spoke in Hades, though they had no physical tongue or lips, they expressed themselves through words. By explaining why the rich man's request was impossible, Abraham bore witness to the condition of the rich man and the hope of his brothers (Luke 16:19-31). After this conversation, every time that the rich man thought about how to help his earthly brothers avoid his punishment, Abraham's testimony assured him of their only hope, without requiring Abraham to repeat himself. As long as the rich man remembered Abraham's words, the testimony of reality was with him.

In consideration of these familiar examples, we can understand Paul's statement in Romans 8:16, *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*. Our spirit often needs words of assurance and reassurance that our relationship with the unseen God is real. Who replies when our spirit cries out for answers concerning spiritual, unseen truths? In the pages of Scripture, the Holy Spirit has recorded words of the assurance, joy, and hope of salvation that prepare us to face the barrage of attacks from the devil (Eph. 6:11).

The Holy Spirit Assures Us of the Way of Salvation

A Christian today who hears the variety of claims made by seemingly sincere people about their salvation may begin to wonder about their own salvation. He may wonder “I didn’t say a sinner’s prayer, speak in tongues, or hear God’s voice in my head like my friends claim led to their salvation. Are they really saved? Am *I really saved?*” When someone is searching for solid assurance, modern denominations will often offer affirmation based on a personal, internal experience. But, the Christian can read or recall the witness (testimony) of the Holy Spirit Himself who directed Peter to say *Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:38). The same Spirit directed Mark to record Jesus’ simple statement about two reactions to hearing the gospel, *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.* (Mark 16:16). These words convince the Christian that he is a child of God and expose all false claims. When the religious world offers different practices and division, the Holy Spirit gives great assurance.

The Holy Spirit Assures Us of God’s Willingness to Give Salvation

A Christian today who reflects on his past life of sin may wonder about the certainty of his salvation. The damage done by decades and dollars wasted on drugs, pornography, or alcohol is not easily forgotten. The memory of raising children without including Christ or by living as a hypocrite during crucial years of a family, may cause the spirits of Christians to question whether God would forgive them. When regret raises our emotions it can suppress clear thinking leaving doubt where there was once certainty. Is the Holy Spirit silent on such occasions? No! The Hebrew writer tells us that *the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us. . . “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more”* (Heb. 10:15-17, note the present tense of “witnesses”). He daily testifies, *God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:8) The witness of the Holy Spirit is clear--those who once walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries can today live the rest of their time for the will of God (1 Peter 4:1-3). *[to be continued in next week’s bulletin]*

TWO SEAS (author unknown)

This is a fable of two seas. They are representative of two people, two lives, two outlooks. This fable is taken from real life, for both seas exist today.

This first sea is altogether beautiful. From the golden strands of its beaches to the green, lush meadows that surround it. This sea lives, for in it are varieties of fish found over many parts of the world. Trees grow nearby and branches shade the water’s edge.

It is a tranquil sea, though, at times, the odd storm may sweep upon it. Children dot the beautiful beaches as small ships move about the deep. It laughs in the sunshine and both men and birds desire to build houses near it.

The Jordan River flows into this sea with sparkling fresh water from the hills. Every kind of life is happier because it is there. It is the Sea of Galilee.

Farther to the south, another sea is found. Around it nothing grows. No laughter of children, splash of fish, building of houses, or happy people. Life itself is a stranger to this sea. Nothing survives. Dead air hangs heavy above its sullen waters. It is a reject of life.

The Jordan River also flows into this sea with sparkling fresh water from the north, but instead of bringing life, these happy waves flow into the grasps of the Dead Sea vaults.

While the Jordan blesses both seas with fresh sparkling water - the difference in the seas makes one life and the other death.

Galilee receives the Jordan with thanksgiving and, in turn, allows the sweet water to freely flow on to bring their blessings to others. The Dead Sea receives the fresh flowing tide only to lock them within her walls. The fact that this sea refuses to give to others what was so generously given to her causes her to “die every day.”

Now, just stop and reflect. Think of wife, husband, son, daughter, neighbors, friends and even enemies - and pictured in their basic philosophy will be the mirror of one of these two seas.

That generous hand that is always open always attracts others to it. Happiness dwells within and seems to offer to others the same blessing. The sweet spirit gives sweetness, and the kind heart brings an understanding of life that surpasses knowledge. Like honey to bees - the attraction is always there.

Then think for a moment of the selfish – that miserly soul whom others despise. He receives much, but gives little. He hoards and holds, titles and possesses, but has never acquired that one thing most desirable - life and the wonderful ability to give.

The Knollwood (OH) Reminder, 10-27-13

Editor’s Note: In our songbooks #641 (“There Is A Sea”) carries the same theme and interesting lesson from the landscape where our Lord once walked.