

The Lord's Holy Day

Introduction. Our calendars are filled with many different holidays. Many of these are national holidays such as New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, Columbus Day and Thanksgiving. There are others that are religious holidays such as Yom Kippur, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Palm Sunday, Christmas, Lent and Easter.

Our word "holiday" is derived from the Old English word meaning "holy day." The purpose of a holiday is "a day on which custom or the law dictates a halting of general business activity to commemorate a particular activity." It is sad when we have a holiday and some have no clue about the purpose of the day. The same could be true of the Lord's "holy day," the first day of the week.

Many people observe days like Christmas, Lent and Easter simply from habit. Their churches celebrate the days and the members participate without questioning whether God is pleased. It may never occur to them to question whether they are really right (2 Corinthians 13:5). Because of the importance of true worship, we will consider what makes a day holy and see how men have made "holy days" that stand in great contrast to God's "holy day."

I. **What Is A Holy Day?**

- A. The word "holy" means "sacred, consecrated, hallowed and sanctified." Thus, a holy day would be a day that is sacred or hallowed. It is a day that is set apart for the Lord.
- B. Several items were called "holy" in the Old Testament. We read of holy ground (Exodus 3:5), a holy day (Exodus 35:2), a holy place (Exodus 26:33), holy vessels (1 Kings 8:4) and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). In each case these were holy or special because they were set apart for the service of the Lord.
- C. What makes something holy? There are at least two principles involved.
 1. First, God declares it to be holy. In every one of the items mentioned above, God said they were holy.
 2. Second, it must be set apart for God's purpose and service. Again, with every one of the items mentioned above, they were holy because they were consecrated for the Lord's purposes.
- D. Thus, we must conclude that for a day to be a "holy day" it must be a special, sacred day set apart for God's service by the declaration of God Himself.

II. **Holidays Of Man**

A. Christmas.

1. Much of the religious world celebrates December 25th as the birthday of Jesus. "Christmas" is a contraction of "Christ's Mass." The religious celebrations begin with the Advent, the anticipation of Christ's birth, around the beginning of December.
2. It is both pagan and Catholic in origin. The date of December 25th is borrowed from a Roman festival that honored their Sun god, Saturn. It is believed that in A.D. 345, Bishop Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate Christmas on December 25th. Christmas probably does not date earlier than A.D. 200. The most likely theory and most generally accepted one is that the birth of Christ was assigned to the date of the winter solstice.
3. But we do not know the day or even the year that Christ was born.
 - a) The Bible does not tell us the date of His birth. However, it is unlikely that Jesus was born in December because the shepherds were in the field (Luke 2:8).
 - b) We furthermore do not even know the exact year that He was born. Henry Halley observes, "When Christ was born, time was reckoned in the Roman Empire from the founding of the city of Rome. When Christianity became the universal religion over what had been the Roman world, a monk named Dionysius Exiguus, at the request of the Emperor Justinian, made a calendar, A.D. 526, reckoning time from the birth of Christ, to supersede the Roman Calendar. Long after the Christian Calendar had replaced the Roman Calendar it was found that Dionysius had made a mistake in placing the birth of Christ in 753 from the founding of Rome. It should have been about 749, or a year or two earlier."

B. Lent.

1. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Lent is "a fast of forty days preceding Easter, kept, after the example of Moses, Elijah and above all, of Christ Himself, in order to prepare the faithful for the Easter feast ... It was a season of mourning, and hence the Church has always strongly discountenanced festivities of all kinds during Lent. Lastly, the body is mortified, in order that the soul may be invigorated ..."
2. Ash Wednesday is the day when the Catholic Church sprinkles ashes on the foreheads of members as a sign of penitence, especially for those who seek to be restored to communion on Easter.
3. The name is derived from the Middle English term *lencten*, meaning "spring." The Columbia Encyclopedia states that the observance of Lent is as old as the fourth century, but it was not until about the

seventh century that it became universally recognized in honor of the Lord's fast in the wilderness.

4. Human traditions declare that certain foods should not be tasted. A show of humility is made in giving up certain vices, but it is only done temporarily, fully intending to go back to it later. Extra indulgence is done before and after Lent because there will be none during Lent. But this has no real value in overcoming fleshing indulgence.

C. Easter.

1. Easter is the annual remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. We know that Jesus was raised on the first day of the week, but we do not know what day of the year because the Bible does not say. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says, "The celebration of a special Paschal or Easter feast among Christians goes back to the remotest antiquity, though it is impossible to determine the date of its introduction."
2. The date was set by human tradition. The Council of Nicaea set the present date in A.D. 325. Other dates have been celebrated such as March 21 (in Gaul), April 18 (in Italy) and April 25 (in Egypt).
3. It is pagan in origin. According to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, the name Easter is derived from Eostre, a Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon goddess whose festival was held in the spring. Eggs and rabbits were used among the pagans as symbols of life and fertility.

D. Summary.

1. Authorities readily admit that there is no mention of these "holy days" in scripture; there is no declaration from God. There is no command, example or inference that we are to observe Christmas, Lent or Easter.
 - a) Since we are to do all things in the name of Christ, and there is no declaration, we are not permitted to have these observances (Colossians 3:17). Said another way, to please God religious observances must be authorized in His word (John 4:24; Matthew 15:9).
 - b) The scriptures instruct and provide us with all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17). When God wanted annual "holy days," He clearly commanded them. If these modern annual holy days are "good works," why are they not taught in the Bible?
2. The majority of Protestants, while not claiming to accept the authority of the Catholic Church, nevertheless believe it is more important to attend at Easter and Christmas than at other times.
 - a) This is a perversion that occurs whenever people, on their own human authority, make a special time of the year religiously more important than other times.

- b) People will begin to think it is more important to be religious than at other times (Hebrews 10:25).
- c) When people act by human authority and especially when they adopt pagan practices which are steeped in evil, immorality and religious perversions, such errors as these are inevitable and are an inherent part of the error.

III. ***The Lord's Holy Day In The Old Testament***

- A. The Sabbath is called a "holy day." The Sabbath day was a true "holy day" because God declared it as such.
- B. There are several ramifications of the Sabbath being a "holy day."
 - 1. It meant that the day was special and different from other days (Exodus 35:2-3).
 - 2. It meant that the activities of that day were to honor the Lord (Exodus 35:2-3).
 - 3. It was to be treated different than the rest of the world (Nehemiah 10:30-31).
 - 4. It was not a day for serving oneself (Isaiah 58:13).
- C. These same principles will apply to the Lord's day of the New Testament.

IV. ***The Lord's Holy Day In The New Testament***

- A. In the New Testament the first day of the week is a "holy day." It is sacred, consecrated, dedicated, hallowed and sanctified. It is holy because of what happened on that day.
 - 1. Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1; Luke 24:1, 13, 21, 46).
 - 2. Pentecost was on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23:15-16). Therefore, the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles on that day (Acts 2:1).
 - 3. The first gospel sermon under the Great Commission was preached on the first day of the week (Acts 2:13-40). Because of those people's obedience, the church began on that day (Acts 2:47).
- B. It is also holy because it is called the "Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). What other day could John have labeled as the "Lord's day"? By the end of the first century, the first day of the week was commonly referred to as the "Lord's day."
 - 1. It is holy because it is a day of worship and devotion to God. Two of the acts of worship are specifically limited to the first day of the week.
 - 2. The only passage that says anything about when we observe the Lord's supper is Acts 20:7. The only passage that says anything about when we are to give of our means is 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.

- C. Note that John spoke of the "Lord's day" and not the "Lord's hour" (Revelation 1:10). Too often we feel that if we have devoted an hour of our week to "going to church," we have really honored the Lord. The "Lord's day" suggests a day that is set apart for service to God. When we understand that, why worry when occasionally we sing all five verses of the closing song? Why worry if occasionally a sermon is ten minutes longer? Why be upset when the closing prayer takes longer than normal?
- D. The purpose of our activities on that day are to give praise to God. In contrast to Christmas that remembers His birth, the "Lord's day" is to remember His death and resurrection. In contrast to Easter that remembers the resurrection once a year, the "Lord's day" is to remember the death and resurrection of Christ every week.
1. In this memorial God tells us what to do, when to do it and what the purpose is, just as clearly as with Old Testament feasts. Yet this is a memorial of the major event of the New Testament by which our sins are forgiven.
 2. Since God has clearly authorized the Lord's supper as the memorial He wants for Jesus' death, and since all admit that He never authorized these modern annual "holy days," by what right do we observe them religiously?

Conclusion. It is admitted by all that these aforementioned days are without Bible authority and are based solely on human doctrine and tradition. They involve many perversions of Bible principles, and they are fundamentally pagan and heathen in origin, adopted in the name of the gospel by an apostate religious body, Roman Catholicism.

Modern denominations, that claim to be "Christian," observe various "holy days" in celebration of religious events. While you may read in the Bible about the events these days are supposed to memorialize, you do not find that the Bible tells us to observe these "holy days" in memory of these events.

The teaching of Christ says to remember Jesus' death in the Lord's supper on the first day of the week (2 John 9). If we abide in His teaching, we have fellowship with Him and the Father. But if we do not abide in His teaching, we do not have that fellowship. Yet it is admitted by all that these "holy days" are not found in His teaching. Moreover, Galatians 1:6-9 says that those who preach a different gospel are accursed. Yet it is agreed that these "holy days" are not in the teachings of inspired men. They are human in origin and constitute a change in the gospel.

The points we need to remember are that the Lord's day is special because it is different from the other days of the week, the activities of that day are to honor the Lord, we are to treat this day different than the rest of

the world and this is not a day for serving ourselves. May God help us all to better appreciate that the first day of the week is truly the Lord's "holy day."