

## Customs and Holidays

### Commentary for November 1, 2012 — Some Points to Ponder

The presentation this month is "Social Customs Versus Biblical Law" by Dr. Ernest L. Martin. The information in this article will help you understand how to deal with situations when social obligations and good etiquette may require you to follow or withdraw from customary events you are invited to observe with friends and relatives.

In the longer-than-usual "[Newsletter for November 2012](#)" I discuss the milestones in most everyone's life from birth, growing up, marriage, children, and finally the customs of death and dying. These are the major events of life in the cultures and societies in which we live. When we move to another part of the globe we become aware of how different the customs are in our new homes.

In this Commentary I want to briefly deal with customs which occur annually, such as holidays and anniversaries (national, regional, and personal). In the Bible these are called festivals or feasts. Your actions as a Christian during such observances can be difficult, whatever the culture and whatever the practice.

While some holidays are not religious (and those are not usually a problem), it is unfortunately true that most religious holidays in the Western world are pagan events with a veneer of Christian terms and phrases hiding their true pagan roots and symbolism. Surprisingly, most people do not care if those holidays are pagan, even after they learn the truth.<sup>1</sup>

**"But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."**

• ***Galatians 4:9–11***

You might think the apostle Paul is referring to Jewish days and feasts. Yes, he is in part, because men from Jerusalem told the Galatian *ekklesia* that they should observe Jewish times and seasons instructed in the law of Moses (Galatians chapter 3). But there is more, and what Paul is saying goes further. In verse 9 he refers to them turning "**again to the weak and beggarly elements**" and that they "**desire again to be in bondage.**"

Paul is referring to the acts and observances they did as pagans, before they believed in

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Martin's articles, "[The Bridge to the Future — The Saga of Christmas](#)" and "[Should a Christian Observe Easter](#)" are just two of several on the ASK website about the subject of so-called "Christian" holidays. If you want more ammunition on this subject, you want another opinion, or you doubt what Dr. Martin had written on this subject for 40 years, see the recent book by George Barna and Frank Viola, *Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*. For the origins of that pagan Christianity, read Dr. Martin's book [The People that History Forgot: The Mysterious People Who Originated the World's Religions](#) (Portland, OR: ASK Publications, 1993), online and for purchase.

Christ's resurrection. They were again observing pagan days, pagan months, pagan times, pagan years, and pagan festivals and rituals that went with those times and activities. Yet you and I are free to do anything we wish with regard to any customs so long as our actions:

- (1) will not be interpreted by unbelievers as idolatry (as most "Christian" acts are),
- (2) will not put the *ekklesia*, the Body of Christ, in disrepute,
- (3) will ignore or dishonor God.

This Commentary is a preview of Dr. Martin's article. Remember, God knows what idolatry is, even if most people — and most Christians — do not know what it is. Though you can do any or all things within those three categories, you do them at your own peril. You will suffer loss. Paul admonishes the Galatians later:

**"Be not deceived, God is not to be sneered at, for whatsoever a man may be sowing, this shall he be reaping also, for he who is sowing for his own flesh, from the flesh shall be reaping corruption, yet he who is sowing for the spirit, from the spirit shall be reaping life eonian."**

**• Galatians 6:7–8, Concordant Literal Version**

This literal translation will give you insight about this passage that you may not have realized before. Go and read this passage from your usual translation, such as the King James Version. Paul's point is, if you ignore God and His wishes, He will ignore you and you will reap, as Paul says, corruption. What kind of corruption? Fleshly and inevitably moral corruption. You will learn not to care what God wants, what His will is. Examine the motivations of your acts and pay attention to the reasons you do things, even keeping of customary days and events of your society.

Paul admonished those in Ephesus to renounce their pagan ways (Ephesians 5:3–20):

**"Be observing accurately, then, brethren, how you are walking [how you live], not as unwise, but as wise, reclaiming the era, for the days are wicked. Therefore do not become imprudent, but understand what the will of the Lord is."**

**• Ephesians 5:15–17, Concordant Literal Version**

Understand God's will and then act according to that will, and all will go well with you. In fact, we are to "prove" or test what is God's will (Ephesians 5:10). Also we can be certain:

**"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have [we have now, present tense] the petitions that we desired of him."**

**• 1 John 5:14–15**

We are to pray for and admonish and instruct those who lack understanding (1 John 5:16, 20–21). Do so with wisdom. It will help him or her to avoid sin. Reread this Commentary after you finish reading Dr. Martin's article. It will have additional meaning for you.

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