

## “Learn Not the Way of the Heathen”

*Can Christians really worship the true God using “Christianized” pagan holidays?*

The holidays observed by mainstream Christianity—Easter, Christmas, New Years, Halloween, etc.—are *not* commanded in the Scriptures. In fact, as is easily proven from history, those very holidays are *pagan* in origin. Yet, those who observe them claim to be worshipping the true God. They rationalize that He now accepts such worship.

But the Scriptures do not support these assertions. God says, “**I am the LORD, I change not**” (Mal. 3:6). And again, the New Testament declares: “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, affirms that Christians cannot worship the true God with pagan, occult rituals and holidays. He writes: “But that which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not wish you to have fellowship with demons. **You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and the table of demons.** Now do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” (I Cor. 10:20-22).

As we will see, the same pagan holidays that were celebrated by the apostate children of Israel and Judah thousands of years before Christ are the same days apostate Orthodox Christendom hallows today. Yet, God has commanded His people to *not* learn the way of the heathen: “Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel. Thus says the LORD, ‘**Do not learn the way of the heathen** [occult practices and the worship of false gods], and do not be terrified at **the signs of the heavens** [as in astrology and witchcraft]; for the nations are terrified at them’ ” (Jer. 10:1-2).

**Idol Worship at the Temple:** God’s own people repeatedly turned to idolatrous forms of worship. In a vision, God told the prophet Ezekiel, “ ‘Son of man, do you see what they do; even the **great abominations** which the house of Israel is doing here...?’ And He brought me to the opening of the [temple] court; and I looked, and behold, a hole in the wall.... And I went in and saw. And behold ... **all the idols** of the house of Israel.... And He said to me, ‘Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, each man in his room of **idols**? For they are saying, ‘The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the earth’ ’ ” (Ezek. 8:6-12).

“He also said to me, ‘You shall see greater abominations that they are committing.’ And He brought me to the opening of the gate of the LORD’S house, toward the north. And behold, women were sitting there **weeping for Tammuz**” (verses 13-14). The son of Nimrod, Tammuz was the ancient false messiah who allegedly died and was resurrected each year. James G. Frazer writes: “Under the names of Osiris, **Tammuz**, Adonis, and Attis, the peoples of Egypt and Western Asia represented the yearly decay and revival of life, especially of vegetable life, which **they personified as a god who annually died and rose again from the dead**....

“The worship of Adonis was practiced by the Semitic peoples of Babylon and Syria, and the Greeks borrowed it from them as early as the seventh century before Christ. The true name of the deity was Tammuz.... In the religious literature of Babylonia, Tammuz appears as the youthful spouse or lover of Ishtar [Easter], the great mother goddess, the embodiment of the reproductive energies of [Mother] nature.... [Every] year Tammuz was believed to die, passing away from the cheerful earth to the gloomy subterranean world, and every year his divine mistress journeyed in her quest for him ... that the two might return together to the upper world, and that with their return all nature might revive.

“Laments for the departed Tammuz are contained in several Babylonian hymns.... His death appears to have been annually mourned, to the shrill music of flutes, by men and women about midsummer in the month named after him, the month Tammuz” (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp. 378-79; emphasis added).

Orthodox Christendom practices a similar ceremony in the spring of the year at Easter time. This ceremony begins on “Good Friday” evening with mourning for the crucified Jesus (as was done for Tammuz) and is continued through Saturday night. In some predominantly Roman Catholic countries, women beat themselves with whips and weep in an attempt to enter into the physical sufferings of Jesus. At the stroke of midnight, beginning Easter Sunday, the mourning is turned to joy with shouts, “He is risen! He is risen!” These familiar Good Friday and Easter rituals are clearly derived from pagan Babylonian practices.

In all the ceremonies and sacrifices that God commanded to be performed at the temple, the priests and Levites always faced toward the west, not the east. However, when the apostate Israelites and Jews worshiped the sun god Baal, they worshiped toward the east with their backs to the temple of God. Ezekiel continues: “And He said to me, ‘Have you seen this, O son of man? You shall see greater abominations than these.’ And He brought me into the inner court of the LORD’S house, and behold, at the opening of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east; and **they worshiped the sun toward the east**. And He said to me, ‘Have you seen, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they do the hateful things which they do here?’ ” (Ezek. 8:15-17).

Yet, thousands of years ago, before God brought them into the Promised Land, He warned the Israelites *not* to follow the customs of the nations around them. “You shall not do according to all that we do here today, each doing whatever *is* right in his own eyes.... Take heed to yourself that you do not become ensnared by following them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not ask about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods [the customs of the heathen], that I may also do likewise?’ **You shall not do so to the LORD your God**, for every abomination to the LORD, which He hates, they have done to their gods; even their sons and their daughters they have burned in the fire to their gods. **Whatever thing that I command you, be careful to do it. You shall not add to it, nor take away from it**” (Deut. 12:8, 30-32).

God made no exceptions when He commanded Moses to write, “If a prophet rises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder which he foretold to you comes to pass, saying, ‘Let us go after **other gods, which you have not known**, and let us serve them,’ **you shall not hearken to the words of that prophet** or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God *is* testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 13:1-3).

Both the Old and New Testament Scriptures uphold God’s ban on occult practices, which are named in the book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 18:9-14). The Scriptures do not make a distinction between using witchcraft or sorcery to achieve a “good” purpose or an evil purpose. Despite the intention, all such practices are inherently evil because they **make an appeal to a forbidden source of power—Satan and the demons**. The Church has the obligation to disfellowship those practicing such sins (Matt. 18:15-17; I Cor. 5:4-13).

**God Hates the Abominable Occult Holidays:** God is a jealous God and will not give His glory to any other so-called god, nor to images: “I *am* the LORD; that *is* My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images” (Isa. 42:8). Therefore, it is *impossible* to worship God by the means of occult holidays and/or rituals. Yet, Israel and Judah repeatedly went into apostasy wherein they denied the true God and worshiped false gods.

As Jeremiah testified, they exchanged God’s seventh-day Sabbath and annual holy days for the practices of the other nations. But God proclaims that He hates those practices: “**I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies**. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them. Nor will I regard the peace offerings of your fat animals. Take the noise of your songs away from Me; for I will not

hear the melody of your harps.... Have you offered sacrifices and offerings to Me forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? But **now you have carried the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun, your images, the star of your gods** which you made for yourselves” (Amos 5:21-26). As we saw in Ezekiel, ancient Israel and Judah became so corrupt that they had the gall and hardheartedness to actually worship other gods at the temple of the true God in Jerusalem!

Modern Christendom is doing the same today. In the name of Jesus Christ, ministers, priests and popes command the faithful to worship on occult holidays. They teach people to sin against God while claiming that God has *sanctioned* these abominable iniquities and lies. Yet, these days—Easter, Christmas, Halloween—are the same pagan occult days of worship that ancient Israel and Judah observed when they apostatized from the living God.

***The Apostles Encounter Occult Opposition:*** The early New Testament Church was confronted with an occult adversary who was a powerful religious leader in Samaria. His name was Simon Magus (i.e., *magician*), a false prophet who bewitched his followers with sorcery. “But *there was a certain man named Simon, who had from earlier times been practicing sorcery [witchcraft] in the city and astounding the nation of Samaria, proclaiming himself to be some great one. To him they had all given heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’ Now they were giving heed to him because he had for a long time bewitched them with sorceries*” (Acts 8:9-11). Peter and John later confronted Simon Magus (verses 18-23). History shows that Simon Magus never repented. Rather, he devised a counterfeit Gnostic religion—which has become the world’s greatest “Christian” religion with its headquarters in Rome.

In the book of Acts, we find that after Paul came to Athens he witnessed to the philosophers and religious thinkers gathered at Mars’ hill, the center of pagan Greek religious and philosophical thought. The Greeks did not worship the true God and had never heard of Jesus Christ. They worshiped all the known gods and goddesses of their region, and they even had an altar dedicated to an *unknown god*. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Paul “stood in *the center of Mars’ hill and said, ‘Men, Athenians, I perceive that in all things you are very reverent to deities [demons]; for as I was passing through and observing the objects of your veneration, I also found an altar on which was inscribed, ‘To an unknown God.’ So then, He Whom you worship in ignorance is the one that I proclaim to you. He is the God Who made the world and all things that are in it. Being the Lord of heaven and earth, He does not dwell in temples made by hands; nor is He served by the hands of men, as though He needs anything, for He gives to all life and breath and all things. And He made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth, having determined beforehand their appointed times and the boundaries of their dwelling; in order that they might seek the Lord, if perhaps they might feel after Him and might find Him; though truly, He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being; as some of the poets among you also have said, ‘For we are His offspring.’ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we should not think that the Godhead is like that which is made of gold, or silver, or stone—a graven thing of art devised by the imagination of man; for although God has indeed overlooked the times of this ignorance, He now commands all men everywhere to repent [of such idolatry and paganism]’ ” (Acts 17:22-30).*

Likewise, Paul evangelized and taught about the true God in numerous cities known for their paganism—such as Ephesus, where there was a great temple dedicated to the pagan goddess Diana. In all of the Gentile areas where Paul preached the gospel he encountered pagan religions and idolatry. For example, recently converted believers in Galatia had previously worshipped false gods and idols. Some time after their conversion, a number of them began to apostatize from the teachings of Christ that Paul had taught them and began reverting to pagan practices. Paul instructs them in his epistle: “[When] you did not know God, you were in bondage to those [idols] who are not gods by nature.... [Now] after having known God—rather,

after having been known by God—how *is it that you are turning again to the weak and impotent elements*, to which you again desire to be in bondage? You are *of your own selves* [again] observing [pagan] days, and months, and times and years. I am afraid for you, lest somehow I have labored among you in vain” (Gal. 4:8-11).

In the same epistle, Paul writes that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, **licentiousness, idolatry, witchcraft** [hence, all pagan occult observances and practices], hatred, strifes, jealousies, indignations, contentions, divisions, sects, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such things as these; concerning which I am telling you beforehand, even as I have also said in the past, that **those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God**” (Gal. 5:19-21). Likewise, when Paul wrote to the Colossians, he urged them to stand fast in Christ and not be deceived by “the traditions of men, according to the elements [elemental spirits or demons] of the world...” (Col. 2:8).

Throughout the Scriptures, commonly accepted “Christian” days of worship are identified as ancient pagan holidays which have been cleverly disguised, sugar-coated, re-packaged and sold to Christendom as though they had spiritual value. But the true God of the Bible cannot be worshipped via pagan, occult holidays—even if they are “Christianized.” God seeks only those willing to worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth* (John 4:24).