

Wednesday Word, December 23, 2015: Merry Christmas and Greetings to One and All

I often get criticized for not teaching people that everything to do with Christmas is pagan. Even though I neither hold a Christmas day service (unless it falls on the Lord's Day) nor have images of the baby Jesus in my home, I still am considered too liberal by those who wish me to preach against the pagan festival of Christmas.

Since there is no need to re-invent the wheel, today's Wednesday Word, concerning Christmas and paganism is from a guest writer, Pastor Daniel Parks. He says:

I sometimes hear some men say they have nothing to do with Christmas because idolatry is associated with it. I applaud any man who has nothing to do with anything associated with idolatry. Well, I would if I could find such a man! Trust me, such a man does not exist!

Every day of the week is named after a pagan god: Tuesday after Mars (through a Germanic translation into Teiwaz); Wednesday after Odin; Thursday after Thor; Friday after Frigg; Saturday after Saturn; Sunday and Monday after celestial bodies worshiped by idolaters across the earth. Certainly, he who has nothing to do with any day associated with idolatry has no day!

"Every month of the year is intimately associated with idolatry. January is named after the god Janus. February is named after Februa, the ancient Roman ritual of ritual purification later personified by the god Februus. March is named after the god Mars. April was sacred to the goddess Venus. May is named after the goddess Maia. June is generally said to have been named after the goddess Juno (hence the popularity of this month for weddings). July is named after Julius Caesar, who had a statue dedicated to him in the temple of Quirinus in 45 BC on which was written "To the Invincible God." August is named after Caesar Augustus, who was declared to be a god by the Roman Senate upon his death in 14 AD. The fact that September, October, November, and December are not named after gods, having instead names identifying them respectively as the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth months, does not make them one whit holier. Remember that every day in those months is named after a pagan god. Also, those months have "holy days" (called holidays) designated by idolaters.

Every time you look into the heavens you see planets named after pagan gods such as Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, also Ceres, Eris, Haumea, Makemake, and Pluto.

We who are gospel ministers will obey our Lord's commission to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) even though in so doing we will visit cities named after idolatrous gods.* Such places are no less idolatrous than Corpus Christi (meaning Body of Christ) or Saint Croix (meaning Holy Cross).

I will not castigate Paul the apostle for ministering in Athens (Acts 17:15ff), named after the goddess Athena; nor for not deserting that place when "he saw that the city was given over to idols" (v.16); nor for accompanying idolaters to the Areopagus (vv.19-32), named after the Greek god Ares. (The KJV identifies this place as "Mars' Hill" in v.22, named after the Roman god equivalent to the Greek Ares.) I assure you that Christians are at liberty to eat meat that was sacrificed to an idol (1 Corinthians ch.8). But I exhort Christians to not use their liberty in Christ in such a way as to offend the "weak" brother (as Paul calls him in vv.7, 9, 10, 11, 12) who has scruples against such contact with idolatry. You may remind him that "we know that an idol is nothing in the world (v.4).

I assure you that you will not become unsanctified if you travel on a highway used by automobiles with idolatrous names such as Aurora, Mercury, Saturn, or Taurus. Nor if you have contact with an

ocean, which in Greek mythology was personified as a Titan and ruled by the god Neptune/Poseidon. Nor if you use the King James Version of the Holy Bible, in which the Greek word for Passover in Acts 12:4 is mistranslated “Easter”, named for the Chaldean goddess Astarte, Queen of Heaven.

I assure you that the Lord Jesus Christ was not tainted by idolatry when He said “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Mark 12:17) even though Caesars were idolized by Romans as gods.

The fact of the matter at hand is that we live in an idolatrous world, for “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19). We must ever obey the command to “keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21). But he who would have nothing whatsoever to do with anything associated with idolatry must “go out of the world” – as Paul expressed it (1 Corinthians 5:10). That would be contrary to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, who prayed that His people at this present time not be taken “out of the world” (John 17:15). Be confident that you may be “in the world” but not “of the world”, and that many things idolatrous in name do not require the worship of the gods associated with them.

Therefore, if you are offered “Christmas” as a holiday, enjoy it. If you are offered a “Christmas” bonus, spend it. If a merchant offers a “Christmas” sale, shop. If you are offered a “Christmas” gift, accept it – and return the favor. If you receive a “Christmas” card, read it. If you are invited to a “Christmas” meal, eat. If you are offered a glass of “Christmas” eggnog, drink. If you are invited to worship an idol, refuse. And “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31) – whether the day be Christmas Day or the Lord’s Day!

If others wish to abominate everything associated with Christmas (including all things cited in the preceding paragraph), let them. If others judge you harshly for associating with Christmas, let them. If others do not feel comfortable with exercising Christian liberty regarding Christmas things, try not to offend them.

May the Lord richly bless Christmas to one and all! May He not withhold blessing us during this season simply because it is associated with idolatry!"

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