

Wednesday, March 28, 2018 - The Yearly Trek

Truth hurts. This is an adage that I have heard as far back as my memory goes. This saying has come to mind this week because there is a truth that needs to be spoken from pulpits across the world this Sunday and it won't because it will "hurt" some people's feelings: Secularism continues to creep into the Lord's church and many are getting too comfortable with it!

Please don't get me wrong. I have no desire to make anyone mad when I preach or teach but I would much rather them be angry with me than to have them believe the lies that participating in man made "celebrations" once or twice a year is scriptural or shows the proper love and reverence for Jehovah God!

Unfortunately, websites and bulletins alike, from some in the Lord's church, tout the blasphemous deception that there is something special about "Easter Sunday!" Deception my friends is a lie and we must NOT give people a false sense regarding their spiritual condition just because they made their "yearly trek" to the local pew.

What are the implications of a lie supporting one first day of the week being more important than any other? It is the difference between heaven and hell.

Once a year, on a day termed Easter, millions of people around the world "celebrate" the fact that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, overcame the clutches of death and was raised from the dead to then return home to the Father. We should be thankful that there are those that will take time to reflect on our Lord's resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is without a doubt the most monumental event to ever take place. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the foundation of the Christian system (1 Cor. 15:14). If there was no resurrection, Christianity is a fraud, and we are wasting our time. However, as with Christmas, the Bible does not authorize the religious observance of Easter with its emphasis on resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Christians are not authorized to celebrate Easter as a special annual event acknowledging the resurrection of Christ. Faithful children of God reflect upon the Savior's resurrection every Sunday (the resurrection day – John 20:1) as they gather to worship God in the regular assembly of the church (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

The celebration of Easter originally referred to a pagan goddess and the occasion, annually, when she was worshipped. The pagan feast occurred each year near the time of the Jewish Passover. The Catholic Church, desiring to distinguish its annual commemoration of Christ's resurrection from the Jewish Passover, adopted the name of the pagan feast for its own use. The term "Easter," in the King James Version of the Bible (Acts 12:4), is a mistranslation. The Greek word is pascha, correctly rendered "Passover" in later translations. In

fact, though pascha is found twenty-nine times in the Greek New Testament, it is only rendered "Easter" once, in the KJV. When correctly translated "Passover" in Acts 12:4, and understood correctly, not one day but a number of days are meant. This refers not to Passover day, but to the whole celebration of Passover which lasted eight days." Incidentally, the reference to "Easter" in the KJV or "Passover" when correctly translated had no reference to any Christian activity. It was merely (1) a convenient reference to a particular time in the year, and (2) the Jewish feast days only after which Herod could proceed to execute another apostle without offending Jewish sensitivities; after all, the purpose of seizing Peter and planning his execution was for Herod to endear himself to the Jews. Neither the feast known popularly as "Easter" nor the name "Easter" itself is biblically authorized. That is, the Bible does not prescribe an annual commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ.

Rather, the New Testament teaches that the first century church, which was led by inspired apostles, met on the Lord's Day (Sunday on our calendars), which occurs once weekly. On that day of the week, Christians are to meet for worship, to include singing, preaching, the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7) and the contribution (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). The focus of the Lord's Supper or communion, which should be observed each Sunday, is not the resurrection of Christ, but his suffering sacrifice for our sins on the cross. His Resurrection is understood to represent an assurance that we can have forgiveness from our sins. Paul contended: "If Christ hath not been raised, our faith is vain; ye

are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). The reverse of the apostle's affirmation would be this: if Jesus was raised, sins will be forgiven when we obey the gospel (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

The Scriptures are not silent about who should partake at the Lord's table. When Jesus inaugurated the supper he distributed it "to the disciples" (Matt. 26:26). He commanded "them" to eat and drink (Mark 14:22-23), specifying these privileges as "for you" (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:24). The supper was not given to unbelievers.

When Paul wrote on the subject, he addressed "the church" (1 Cor. 1:2). Therefore, it was specifically Christians to whom Paul referred when he said: "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (1 Cor. 11:23). Those who partake are to be in the "one body" (1 Cor. 10:17). It is for the "brethren" (1 Cor. 11:33).

Those who participate in this memorial of his death are to be those who have previously been united into that death through baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). The Corinthians to whom Paul wrote did not presumptuously approach the Lord's table uninvited. These people were those who were evangelized and who "hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). They had been washed, sanctified and justified (1 Cor. 6:11) and had come into the kingdom (1 Cor. 15:24). To such Jesus said: "I appoint unto you a kingdom ... that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:29-30). He said that those who thus commune would do so "in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29).

The Lord's Supper is not just a meaningless ritual, nor is it a "sacrament" whereby we obtain grace or forgiveness of sins. Its purpose is three-fold:

A commemoration of the past. We often have a memorial for those who depart this earthly scene, and we strive to fulfill whatever wishes they leave behind. This supper was Jesus' dying request. It was set up as a memorial of his death. As Jesus distributed the bread, he said: "This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). Likewise, he said: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do ... in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:25). The Lord's Supper is therefore primarily a memorial of the sacrificial death of Jesus in which his body and blood were given.

A participation in the present. As we eat and drink and remember, the Lord's Supper becomes a "communion" of the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16). It is a spiritual participation in the death of our Lord, and Jesus is with us as we do it. He told his disciples that he would "drink it new" with them in the kingdom (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25). As we drink literally, Jesus drinks spiritually -- in a "new" kind of way (*kainos*), and we commune together.

A declaration of the past and future. In our partaking of the Lord's supper we "proclaim the Lord's death" (1 Cor. 11:26). It stands as a declaration of our belief in the cross to each other and to any observers who might be present. It further proclaims our faith in the certainty of the Lord's return, for we are to partake of it "till he come."

To gather around the Lord's Table is a sacred privilege. May we never violate its form or profane its purpose. And may we ever strive to focus our attention on our crucified Lord as together we commune with him in his kingdom.

His death; an event certainly worthy of more than a yearly trek.