

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

On November 5, 2013, we received the following comment and inquiry from a visitor:

“Excellent article! [[Bringing Heaven Down - An Historic Overview](#)] Me and my brother have been discussing these things as well, and we were talking about the events that took place in Heavens... that war... and we were getting to the same conclusions as you. I do have a question thou. You wrote:

“We do not have to search out the origin of every practice and holiday and custom, and meticulously avoid those with questionable roots.

“...You are scrupulously observing days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.” – Galatians 4:8-11

I thought these verses suggested the contrary. How you came up with such conclusion? I'm going to agree with you. It is tiresome to read all the articles from certain "Christians" on why holidays are pagan, etc. But do not realize that there are so many things that has pagan origins and we practice/use them on a daily basis. Thoughts? Hope to hear from you soon! With love.”

To the author, thank you for your email. This is a subject many among Jehovah's Witness are interested in. Although the teaching of the Governing Body is that Christians should not celebrate birthdays or most holidays because of so-called pagan origin, we know firsthand that a very large number do participate in such celebrations though they might do it a day before or after, or they might call it something else, or they simply do it in secret. These brothers and sisters are not allowed to exercise their God-given free will or to make personal decisions based on their own conscience without coming under judgment or condemnation from their brothers. Of course, this results in many of our brothers and sisters leading double-lives, which is a mild way of saying that they are practicing hypocrisy.

It is hypocrisy, not because they are celebrating pagan holidays. It is hypocrisy because they are not living truthfully. They are not being true to what they hold themselves out to believe. They are not worshiping ‘with spirit and **truth**.’ (*John 4:24*) Thus, it behooves all of our brothers, whether Jehovah's Witnesses or not, to endeavor to live truthfully in all things. If one holds the belief that celebrating certain days or holidays is wrong, be true to that belief and refrain from celebrating. And conversely, if they believe they are free to make a personal decision in this regard, they should do so without shame.

Now to the author's question. We made the above statement and supported it by quoting *Galatians 4:8-11*. We understand these verses to mean that, after they had been released from the Mosaic Law, some of the Jewish Christians continued to strictly observe the holidays and special anniversaries under the Law. Paul was telling them that this was no longer necessary and he expressed frustration that they did not understand that after all he had taught them. He wondered if he was wasting his time teaching them about Christian freedom that released them from obligation to these mundane observances.

Paul explained that under ‘The Way’ for Christians, we are not obligated to observe any holidays, memorials or celebrations other than the one celebration instituted and commanded by Jesus – the Memorial Supper. The operative word here is ‘obligated.’ As Christians, we are free from obligatory religious observances with that one exception. While many Christians understand this freedom, they actually use that freedom to create another form of slavery. In other words, they are free from celebrating under the Law, but they are restricted from celebrating anything else. They are giving freedom and then taking it away!

Jesus’ teachings freed us from dominion by priests along with their rites. Our spiritual lives are now in our own hands to do as our own spirit directs us. It is true freedom and it carries with it the freedom to celebrate certain events if we so choose, as long as they are not in direct conflict with the plain and open teachings. We are free people with free will. But we are counseled:

“Be as free people, using your freedom, not as a cover for doing wrong, but as slaves of God. Honor men of all sorts, have love for the whole association of brothers, be in fear of God, honor the king.” – **1 Peter 2:16-17**

So, really, we are free to do most anything we want to do. But we are not to use our freedom to ‘do wrong,’ whereas we can use our freedom to honor men of all sorts. To us, that means we can celebrate significant events in our lives and the lives of others such as birthdays, anniversaries, memorials, etc. We can even make up our own special days to celebrate, if we choose. But when doing so, we should remember that in everything, we must be ‘in fear of God’ – careful not to do things that grieve the Father’s Spirit that dwells within us. (**1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19**)

For example, if we chose to celebrate a birthday, we, obviously, would not want to behead anyone such as occurred during Herod’s birthday celebration (**Matthew 14:6-10**), nor would we want to hang someone as occurred at the Pharaoh’s birthday celebration. (**Genesis 40:20-22**) And if we are invited to a celebration where we can expect gross loose conduct, such as a modern-day bachelor party, we might refrain. This is apparently why the early Christians refrained from certain celebrations. Not specifically because of the type or name of the event, but based on what would occur at those events.

Whatever the celebration, the decision is up to the individual. There are so many variables that it is difficult and unfair to lay down hard fast rules in these matters. Each celebration, **and the way it is carried out**, must be considered on its own merit. Jesus did not lay down doctrine in this regard. Therefore, we must follow the leading of the spirit and the spirit of Christ. In all things, we remain sons of God and heirs to the Kingdom of the Heavens. (**Romans 8:16-17**) In all of our dealings we are ambassadors ‘substituting for Christ’ conducting ourselves in a way that honors the Father and the Christ. (**2 Corinthians 5:20**) And it is as a matter that rests within each individual’s own free will to decide for themselves and their families in this regard. That’s how we see the matter and that is the way we conduct ourselves.

“***Elaia Luchnia***”
