

Heathen Festivals and Christian Celebrations

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A friend of mine sent me a cartoon depicting a Santa Clause figure with a young lad on his knee who is asking this bearded old gent dressed in red with a funny hat; “Where are you in the bible?” This inspired me to want to write an article on the evils of allowing the commercialisation of religious festivals by non-believing corporate retailers. Or perhaps I should say Corporate Retailers who worship the heathen gods of mammon. So, as I tend to do, I commenced a literature search to quantify the depth of this proposed article and its cross-reach outward to determine how far out I would need to go to encompass the majority of religions.

Of note I read with interest an article by Andrew McGowan (Bible Review December 2002) and a further touching article by Dr Elias and Mrs Hidalgo from Shalom-Peace.Com. These were, in my mind, stand-out from the usual material that are prolific in blogs and social media outlets because they came from two different inner sentiments, but both reflect a truth and reality that together orchestrate a pleasant sounding chord on this matter.

But the interesting aspect of these articles was the realisation that if I were to write anything at all in the same vein as all of those other social media-ites, it would simply be just another noise within a cacophony of chaotic shouts and grumblings that contemporary writers, like myself, become involved in. So I re-thought my inspiration and decided that perhaps I have been out-gunned by the bigger guys. Mind you, I asked the question if anybody out there in Mammonland is really reading this, and the best answer I came up with was – no. Apparently when you cross the border into Mammonland the Border Security guards spray you with an anti-gospel substance (AGS) which protects you from hearing or reading anything about God, the bible or Christian content discussions.

It’s a bit of a shame really. Some of the CEO’s and Board members of these Mammon worshipping retailers are family folk themselves with children of their own, some go to church, some don’t, mind you, because Sunday is their only day off, however outwardly they have an appearance of normality. “So what is normal?” You ask. Simple! Normal is when your name is not written in the Book of Abnormals. But because they have been sprayed with AGS these corporate high-riders simply ply their trade and to heck with whether it is right wrong or indifferent. Oh by the way, yes they celebrate big on Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Spring Racing Carnival Day, Football Day, Tennis Day, Golf Day, Cricket Day.....you get the picture, and this is just here in the Western world. It is no better in other cultures.

So what is the point of writing anything. No one is listening. Every year Mammonland expands exponentially and the general societal view is that when you go there it is exciting, it has lights, colours, lots of people, food, gifts , alcohol by the truck load, parties, loud music, karaoke, toys and playgrounds for the kids. Wow, what a great time everyone can have. And talk about costs, for a family with three children under fifteen years Christmas for example only costs about \$500 by the time you get something for your spouse, but then it is extra for your old folks and the parties you go to with Cris Cringle.

“What do you mean God is not in it? Of course he is! After all Christmas is all about God.....isn't it? Well, don't be silly, you know what I mean.”

There you have it. God becomes god and the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob becomes Mammon and no one knows or cares what the difference is. How confusing to our young children. Even they learn very early about going to Mammonland and think it is good.

This is what Jeremiah had to say. Try cleansing your ears and eyes of the AGS before you read his words.

Jer 10:1 Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:

Jer 10:2 Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

Jer 10:3 For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.

Jer 10:4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

Jer 10:5 They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.

Jer 10:6 Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might.

- Jer 10:7 Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee.
- Jer 10:8 But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock is a doctrine of vanities.
- Jer 10:9 Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.
- Jer 10:10 But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.
- Jer 10:11 Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.
- Jer 10:12 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.
- Jer 10:13 When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.
- Jer 10:14 Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.
- Jer 10:15 **They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.**

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I have been privileged to have been shown insight into Genesis 1:3-4 and I am still surprised by the depth of wisdom it keeps revealing for us in our twenty-first century Western world

Gen 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Gen 1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

It is one of those life's lessons for Christians to gain an understanding of God's position on heathen practises being hauled into our congregations where we are supposed to be gathered for the purpose to glorify God. And I might say God expects our worship and our subservience to him as the God of all creation.

In relation to these two above verses, and contrary to popular thought, the light referred to in this passage is not referring to anything about the rotation of the planet around the sun or any electro-magnetic light waves being emitted from a central big bang event fourteen billion years ago. The passage is a report, or dialogue, from God to Adam in the Garden at Eden, stating that it was at this point in the Creation period that God himself entered His Universe and the light is the revelation of God himself. Specifically that God existed.

But in fact it goes further. This revelation, ie the first revelation God ever gave to mankind for mankind, also teaches us that the light of God and the darkness of lifelessness do not and cannot be mixed together. This is the original good versus evil scenario and goes to the very root of this whole discussion. The two states are totally incompatible and can be expressed by saying that no evil (darkness) can come out of the light of God, and conversely, no goodness (light) of God can come out of evil (darkness).

So in relation to heathen rites and rituals being disguised and “snuck” (sneaked) into Christian festivals, as is very common nowadays, this same principle of God applies. If a practise or rite has its origins in heathen celebrations and festivals – albeit dressed up to look different and names changed to camouflage its origin, it is still heathen and no goodness of God can come from it.

Now I can hear some howls in the background and the stream of but-what-abouts that are inevitable. But please consider the deep origins of God's great wonder. He will not endorse the Devil's work – at any level. God told us to be wary of wolves in sheep's clothing. He warns us to have watchmen on the ramparts because he knows that mankind is – the polite word is vulnerable.

There is much discussion about Christmas and in the main scholarly opinion from research is that this festival most certainly had its roots as a heathen rites celebration. The article referred to by Andrew McGowan is good reading and confirms many other learned authors' works that there is no evidence of the Lord's birth date being mentioned or celebrated for many centuries after his crucifixion. And even our Jewish cousins who are sometimes reluctant to enter this type of discussion say that December is winter in the Middle East and it just does not comprehend that a story about shepherds out in the fields in the middle of winter can be true. It is just wrong. And there is a very good reason why God is not in this debate. His word is completely silent on the issue and this is a warning flag.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof and so now many centuries down the track let's examine our taste buds and give some opinion about the Christmas festival. And what do we find? We find that Christmas (don't be fooled by the name) is one of the greatest causes of family distress in the modern world. So commercialised is this period that it causes millions and millions of families to pay large sums of well earned money to buy gifts and travel places and go out for very expensive meals when they are forced (largely out of peer pressure and ill informed children) to go into debt.

The commercialisation is out of control with the unscrupulous retailers driving the money train like a bullocky driving six pairs attached to an overloaded wagon up a very steep hill. Tell me there is no evil here and it is all done to the glory of God. And yes we even cement this practise into place by neatly sewing it up with church services that are the price the Devil is prepared to accept so he can ply his evilness pretty well throughout the whole world. May God be blessed – but still fork out \$500 to give unrelated presents to children because – it is Christmas. Hello?

And it is the same for many other festivals. Easter - chocolate eggs and rabbits in grotesque amounts to almost every child in the Western world – but there is a church service. Why then don't the congregations at least observe the God ordained Passover on the appropriate date and honour God as He wishes us to? Why are the Christians partaking in what is well known to be the disguised festival of Astarte/Ishtar/Inanna (depending on the culture). There is no goodness of God here.

I won't even go into Halloween. For goodness sake Christians, wake up. Listen to what Jeremiah is saying here. You are in deep jeopardy for following the heathen's ways. And whilst we could just go on and on, nearly every popular festival in the Western world has its root in heathen rites and rituals. As

the saying goes, “Follow the money” and you will find the perpetrators of this evil.

Should we talk about more of these or have you got the idea that maybe God is not so generous about sharing glory with Satan. To our congregational leaders, “Fellas, you have got to shake off the evil from your observances. You have got to re-introduce a heart-felt worship of God that actually glorifies God and his Messiah and the hope of humankind for salvation.” Can’t you even do that now?

Remember, the goodness of God can never come out of evil - and evil never comes out of the goodness of God.

Geoff Rooke
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