

Is Thanksgiving Day Really Pagan?

It has been claimed that the American day of Thanksgiving is PAGAN in origin, like Christmas and Easter, and therefore we should have nothing whatsoever to do with it. Is this really true? Or is it just self-righteous, fanatical, and religious extremism?

William F. Dankenbring

The apostle Paul warns true Christians to “beware” of false Christians who entered the church and who “secretly brought in” false teachings and heresies – “who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (Gal.2:4).

God says to His true servants, “Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears . . . they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables ” (II Tim.4:2-4).

Such man-handlers of the Word of God protest vehemently that “Thanksgiving” is “PAGAN” and we should have nothing to do with that holiday, on fear of Gehenna fire, lest we die! And so they sow suspicion, doubt, and anxiety in the hearts of God’s people!

What is the TRUTH about this matter?

The apostle Peter warned: “But there were false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in *destructive heresies*, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” He went on, “By covetousness they will *EXPLOIT YOU* with deceptive words” (v.3).

Peter warned about those who “despise authority,” and who are “presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries” (I Pet.2:10).

They claim to have great “knowledge” – to be “special” – but who fulfill the Scripture, “But evil men and *impostors* will grow *worse and worse*, deceiving and being deceived” (II Tim.3:13).

Is the claim that Thanksgiving is “pagan” such a “destructive HERESY”?

Bondage Versus Liberty

Of course, we all know that nations from antiquity have had various festivals related to the harvest. Some try to connect those ancient festivals of pagan nations to the American feast day of Thanksgiving, and call it “PAGAN” at the top of their lungs!

I have encountered people like that years ago. But upon closer examination, I have found that their claims are weak, unsubstantiated, lack a real historical basis, and those ancient festivals have nothing whatsoever to do with the AMERICAN feast of Thanksgiving.

Is there a real connection between Thanksgiving and the ancient PAGAN festivals? If so, then we surely should not observe it, because God says, “Do not learn the way of the Gentiles” (Jer.10:2).

Is thanksgiving therefore a day of worship of the ancient heathen nations, and a day of false worship of false gods? God commands us to “PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good” (I Thess.5:21).

Are we at “liberty” in God’s eyes to celebrate Thanksgiving? Or do we risk “damnation,” as some might put it?

Ceres, Goddess of Corn

Some claim that Thanksgiving originated with ancient pagan harvest festivals and the worship of the pagan goddess “Ceres,” the Mother of Corn.” The Greek and Roman “Ceres” was worshipped not simply as the “discoverer of corn” but also “the Mother of corn.” Her son was “He-Siri,” or “the Seed,” or as he was called in Assyria, “Bar,” which signifies “the Son” and “the Corn” (Hislop’s *The Two Babylons*, page 160).

Says Hislop, “The Druids were devoted worshippers of Ceres, and as such they were celebrated in their mystic poems as ‘the bearers of the ears of corn.’” (Hislop, page 161). Ceres was another form or name of the pagan arch-priestess Semiramis, wife of Nimrod, the ancient “Baal.” She was also known as “Astarte,” “Ashtaroth,” “Venus,” “Aphrodite,” “Isis,” and “Easter.” Alexander Hislop’s seminal book points out all these ancient pagan connections and how these figures infiltrated the nominal “Christian” churches through the Roman Catholic church which adopted pagan festivals wholesale and called them “Christian.” Read our articles on “The Hidden Origin of Easter” and “The Shocking Pagan Origin of Christmas!”

Ceres was the goddess of grain, harvest and agriculture in ancient Roman mythology. The Romans dedicated a temple to her in the 400s B.C. She was one of six children of Saturn and his sister Ops. A festival called Cerealia was held to honor her on April 12 to April 19.

One might ask, What does all this have to do with the American feast of Thanksgiving? *The answer is—NOTHING!*

Harvest Festivals

Says the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: “The Romans had their Cerealia or feasts in honour of Ceres. The Druids celebrated their harvest on the 1st of November. In pre-reformation England Lammas Day (Aug. 1st, O.S.) was observed at the beginning of the harvest festival, every member of the church presenting a loaf made of new wheat. Throughout the world, harvest has always been the occasion for many queer customs which all have their origin in the animistic belief in the Corn-Spirit or Corn-Mother. This personification of the crops has left its impress upon the harvest customs of modern Europe. In west Russia, for example, the figure made out of the last sheaf of corn is called the Bastard, and a boy is wrapped up in it. The woman who binds this sheaf represents the ‘Corn mother,’ and an elaborate simulation of childbirth takes place, the boy in the sheaf squalling like a new-born child, and being, on his liberation, wrapped in swaddling bands.

“Even in England vestiges of sympathetic magic can be detected. In Northumberland, where the harvest rejoicing takes place at the close of the reaping and not at the ingathering, as soon as the last sheaf is set on end the reapers shout that they have ‘got the kern.’ An image formed of a wheatsheaf, and dressed in a white frock and coloured ribbons, is hoisted on a pole. This is the ‘kern-baby’ or harvest-queen, and it is carried back in triumph with music and shouting and set up in a prominent place during the harvest supper. In Scotland the last sheaf if cut before Hallowmass is called the ‘maiden,’ and the youngest girl in the harvest is given the privilege of cutting it. If the reaping finishes after Hallowmas the last corn cut is called the *Caildeach* (old woman).”

The Britannica continues: “Throughout the world, as J. G. Frazer shows, the *semi-worship of the last sheaf is, or has, been the great feature of the harvest-home*. Among harvest customs none is more interesting than harvest cries. The cry of the Egyptian reapers announcing the death of the corn-spirit, the rustic prototype of Osiris, has found its echo on the world’s harvest-fields, and to this day, to take an English example, the Devonshire reapers utter cries of the same sort and go through a ceremony which in its main features is an *exact counterpart of pagan worship*. ‘After the wheat is cut they cry “the neck.” An old man goes round to the shocks and picks out a bundle of the best ears he can find . . . this bundle is called “the neck” ; the harvest hands then stand round in a ring, the old man holding “the neck” in the centre. At a signal from him they take off their hats, stooping and holding them with both hands towards the ground. Then all together they utter in a prolonged cry, “the neck!” three times, raising themselves upright with their hats held above their heads. Then they change their cry to “Wee yen! way yen!” or, as some report, “we haven!”’ On a fine still autumn evening ‘crying the neck’ has a wonderful effect at a distance.

“In East Anglia there still survives the custom known as ‘Halling Largess.’ The harvesters beg largess from passers, and when they have received money they shout

thrice ‘Halloo, largess,’ having first formed a circle, bowed their heads low crying ‘Hoo-Hoo-Hoo,’ and then jerked their heads back-wards and uttered a shrill shriek of ‘Ah! Ah!’”

These are interesting facts of ancient pagan harvest rites and ceremonies, but what connection do they have with the American holiday, Thanksgiving?

Absolutely nothing at all!

Ceres-Demeter

In *The Golden Bough* by James Frazier, the goddess Demeter, another name for Ceres, means by definition “nothing more nor less than ‘Barley-mother’ or ‘Corn-mother’” (page 463). Barley and wheat are associated with her. “Further, the Corn-mother plays an important part in harvest customs. She is believed to be present in the handful of corn which is left standing last on the field; and with the cutting of this last handful she is caught, or driven away, or killed” (page 464).

“Sometimes the last sheaf is called, not the Corn-mother, but the Harvest-mother or the ‘Great Mother.’” All these pagan customs relate to the harvest of grain or barley and wheat. This of course, does not mean that these pagan celebrations mean we should not eat barley or wheat!

Nor do they have anything remotely to do with the American holiday of Thanksgiving!

The harvest customs of the pagan nations of antiquity involve many acts and rites, regarding the reaping of the harvest, and the customs of the harvest of the corn-spirit is represented both by the last sheaf and by the person cutting it or binding it or threshing it. To the corn-spirit is ascribed a fertilizing influence, on animals and women.

Says Frazier, “Plainly, therefore, these spring and harvest customs are based on the same ancient modes of thought, and form parts of the *same primitive heathendom*, which was doubtless practiced by our forefathers long before the dawn of history” (p.476).

Notice! These particular customs are “from parts of the SAME PRIMITIVE HEATHENDOM,” Frazier plainly notes!

But what do these ancient pagan traditions and customs have to do with the American holiday of Thanksgiving?

The Answer? ABSOLUTELY NOTHING AT ALL!

Origin of Thanksgiving – the Simple ‘Truth

What is the true origin of the American holiday of Thanksgiving? It began with a people known as the “Pilgrims,” a branch of the “Puritans.”

Who Were the Puritans and Pilgrims?

A Puritan is a name often misunderstood. During the 17th century English Civil War (known as the Puritan Revolution), the Puritans were Protestant fundamentalists who wished to “purify” the Church of England. Some of the Puritans, known as Separatists “separated,” forming their own church. The Puritans felt that Parliament, and not the King, should have the final say and that the moral guidance for all legal decision should come from the Jewish Bible which they considered to be the highest authority in all matters.

The Puritans were obsessed with the Bible and came to identify their political struggle against England with that of the ancient Hebrews against Pharaoh or the King of Babylon. Because they identified so strongly with ancient Israel, they chose to identify with the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible). In 1620, the “Separatists” sailed for America on the Mayflower. The Separatists/Puritans who settled at Plymouth Colony called themselves “Pilgrims” because of their wanderings in search of religious freedom.

The Puritan culture of New England was marked from the outset by a deep association with Jewish themes. No Christian community in history identified more with the Israelites of the Bible than did the first generations of settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who believed their own lives to be a literal reenactment of the biblical drama of the chosen people—they were the children of Israel and the ordinances of God’s Holy covenant by which they lived were His divine law. Since they viewed themselves as the persecuted victims of the sinful Christian establishment of the Old World (England), the Puritans also had a natural sympathy for the Jews of their own time.

The Pilgrims and Persecution

The Pilgrims, who celebrated the first thanksgiving in America, were fleeing religious persecution in their native England. In 1609 a group of Pilgrims left England for the religious freedom in Holland where they lived and prospered. After a few years their children were speaking Dutch and had become attached to the Dutch way of life. This worried the Pilgrims. They considered the Dutch frivolous and their ideas a threat to their children’s education and morality.

One of their leaders was William Bradford. In Holland, they began to explore the idea of moving across the ocean to the “new world” where they could practice their faith freely, without persecution from England, which had imprisoned and put to death some of them, and who might exert pressure on the Dutch to do the same.

Despite of warnings of savages and hardships which befell the Jamestown colony, the Pilgrim church at Leyden believed God would grant them success if they sent a party to settle in America. “After all the discussion and agonizing decision making—and

before departing from Holland—the church spent a day in fasting and prayer for the journey ahead.” The pastor chose as his text Ezra 8:21 – “*Then I proclaimed a fast . . . that we might humble ourselves before God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions*” (*Thanksgiving, a Time to Remember*, Barbara Rainey, p.19).

The “Separatists,” ready to depart from England for the new land, fasted in a manner reminiscent of the fasts held by the Israelites before any new undertaking. Their Pastor Robertson read I Samuel 23:3-4 and then they sailed to the New Canaan in America. The biblical basis for this procedure is manifest; just as the ancient Israelites prayed and fasted before undertaking an uncertain venture, so did the Puritans. Once settled in America, the custom was retained and frequently renewed.

Perilous Passage

Their ship the *Mayflower* finally left England on September 6 with 102 passengers, including 33 children. The food was terrible, and the ship was crowded. The seamen did not like “landlubbers,” especially religious ones, calling the Pilgrims “psalm-singing puke stockings,” and ridiculed them for taking time each morning to sing psalms and pray.

One sailor was especially nasty, cursing those who were sick and boasting how he would enjoy throwing them overboard if they died. Two weeks out to sea this same seaman developed a raging fever, and within one day he died of an unknown sickness, raving and cursing as he breathed his last breath. This sobered the other seamen, and being quite superstitious, as many seamen are, they ceased ridiculing their passengers.

The *Mayflower* encountered a raging, ferocious, furious storm with waves 50 feet high or higher, which pounded the ship’s wooden hull. The storm was so intense, even blasphemous sailors prayed. Without warning, a huge cross-beam supporting the main deck suddenly cracked, endangering the ship. The sailors and Pilgrims were worried. The Pilgrims took their concerns to God in prayer, and asked for deliverance. One Pilgrim remembered a large iron jack screw they had brought with them to use in construction. The sailors used it to crank up the cross-beam to its original position. The Pilgrims gave God the praise!

Finally, on November 9 they saw land for the first time.

On November 11, they dropped anchor, “and fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven who had blessed them and brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth,” wrote William Bradford. They observed every Sabbath (Sunday to them) with prayer, meditation, singing of psalms, and a sermon.

The “Separatists”

These “Separatists” or “Pilgrims” believed the Bible, literally. They journeyed to America to proclaim by their lives the message of redemption, the New Covenant, and the light of Christ. “They knew God’s Promise – His Word. They knew He would keep His Covenant Word to them as they went forward by faith. So they obediently gave thanks in all things, and boldly they prayed for all their needs” (Raney, *A Thanksgiving to Remember*, p.31).

Their trials continued. A flue-like illness swept through the new-born colony, with only six or seven strong enough to tend the rest who were sick. Two or three died daily during the worst of the epidemic.

Sailors on board the ship at anchor also became infected and began to die. The Pilgrims ministered to their needs as well, prompting one sailor, who had ridiculed and cursed them, to exclaim, “You, I now see, show your love like Christians indeed one to another, but we let one another lie and die like dogs.”

Although they had first sighted land off Cape Cod they did not settle until they arrived at Plymouth, which had been named by Captain John Smith in 1614. It was there that the Pilgrims decide to settle. Plymouth offered an excellent harbor. A large brook offered a resource for fish. The Pilgrims’ biggest concern was attack by the local Native American Indians.

The first winter was devastating to the Pilgrims. The cold, snow and sleet was exceptionally heavy, interfering with the workers as they tried to construct their settlement. March brought warmer weather and the health of the Pilgrims improved, but many had died during the long winter. Of the 110 Pilgrims and crew who left England, less than 50 survived the first winter.

On March 16, 1621, an Indian brave walked into the Plymouth settlement. The Pilgrims were frightened until the Indian called out in English, “Welcome!”

His name was *Samoset* and he was an Abnaki Indian, and a chief of the Algonquins. He had learned English from the captains of fishing boats that had sailed off the coast. He told them the Indians who had lived in this region were the Patuxets, a large Indian tribe who had murdered every white man who landed in their territory. But four years before the Pilgrims landed, they had suffered a mysterious plague and every member of the tribe died!

Neighboring tribes were astounded at this misfortune and avoided the area lest they, too, would be killed by the plague. As a result, the land was left vacant – God had prepared the way and opened up the land for His people!

After staying the night Samoset left the next day. He soon returned with another Indian named *Squanto* who spoke better English than Samoset. Squanto told the Pilgrims of his voyages across the ocean and his visits to England and Spain. It was in England where he had learned English.

Squanto's importance to the Pilgrims was enormous and it can be said that they would not have survived without his help. It was Squanto who taught the Pilgrims how to tap the maple trees for sap. He taught them which plants were poisonous and which had medicinal powers. He taught them how to plant the Indian corn by heaping the earth into low mounds with several seeds and fish in each mound. The decaying fish fertilized the corn. He also taught them to plant other crops with the corn.

Squanto stayed on with the Pilgrims, and "adopted" these families as his own, never leaving them till he died.

Massasoit

In March of 1621 the Pilgrims met Massasoit, chief of the Wapanoags, all naked but for a black wolf skin on his shoulder, a loin cloth, and a string of beads around his waist. He was a very honorable and peace-loving man and courageous. The Pilgrim leaders made a peace agreement with him and his people at that first meeting, agreeing to treat each other honorably, not to steal from one another, or cause harm to one another, and to come to each other's aid if attacked. The agreement lasted 50 years!

In March of 1623, Massasoit became very ill and was on the verge of death. Governor Bradford sent two men with medicines to his village to offer help. While on the way, they were told he had already died. But they continued their journey, and found out that he was hovering on the edge of death. They offered to treat him with medicine. Although his sight was gone and he hadn't eaten in two days, he submitted to them and within half an hour a great alteration occurred in his condition, and his sight came back. He fully recovered, and he said, "Now I see the English are my friends and love me; and whilst I live, I will never forget this kindness they have showed me."

He kept his word. Before the Pilgrims left, he told them of a plot that eight Indian tribes were planning to kill all the English, and then gave advice on how to deal with this terrible threat to their existence.

The First Thanksgiving

The harvest in October 1621 was very successful and the Pilgrims found themselves with enough food to put away for the winter. There was corn, fruits and vegetables, fish to be packed in salt, and meat to be cured over smoky fires.

The Pilgrims had much to celebrate. They had built homes in the wilderness, they had raised enough crops to keep them alive during the long coming winter, and they

were at peace with their Indian neighbors. They had survived against all odds and it was time to celebrate.

The Pilgrim Governor William Bradford proclaimed a day of thanksgiving to be shared by all the colonists and the neighboring Indians. They invited Squanto and the other Indians to join them in their celebration. Their chief, Massasoit, and 90 braves came to the celebration bringing wild game and other food, to help provide for the celebration. It lasted for 3 days. They played games, ran races, marched and played drums. The Indians demonstrated their skills with the bow and arrow and the Pilgrims demonstrated their musket skills. Exactly when the festival took place is uncertain, but it is believed the celebration took place in mid-October.

The following year the Pilgrim's harvest was not as bountiful, as they were still unused to growing the corn. During the year they had also shared their stored food with newcomers and the Pilgrims ran short of food.

The Miracle

The third year brought a spring and summer that was hot and dry with the crops dying in the fields. The Indians said they had never seen such a dry spell. Writes Barbara Rainey, "After twelve weeks the Pilgrims realized they would face certain starvation in the coming winter if it did not rain soon. They wondered if God, who had always gone before them, was against them. They began to pray. William Bradford asked everyone to participate in a day of fasting and prayer to ask the Lord for rain.

"All the Pilgrims felt a deep sense of humility before God, and they sincerely sought His mercy. Edward Winslow described what happened: 'But, O the mercy of our God, who was as ready to hear, as we were to ask! For though in the morning, when we assembled together, the heavens were as clear and the drought as like to continue as it ever was, yet . . . before our departure [from the day of prayer and fasting], the weather was overcast, the clouds gathered on all sides. On the next morning distilled such soft, sweet and moderate showers of rain, continuing some fourteen days . . . such was the bounty and goodness of our God!'" (p.49).

William Bradford wrote: "It came, without either rain or thunder, or any violence, and by degrees in that abundance as that the earth was thoroughly wet and soaked therewith. Which did so apparently revive and quicken the decayed corn and other fruits, as was wonderful to see and made the Indians astonished to behold."

Winslow wrote concerning the response of the Indians to this miracle of God's deliverance, "All of them admired the goodness of our God toward us, that wrought so great a change in so short a time, showing the difference between their conjuration [rain dances] and our invocation on the name of God for rain, theirs being mixed with such storms and tempests, as sometimes, instead of doing them good, it layeth the corn flat on the ground, to their prejudice, but ours in so gentle and seasonable manner, as they never observed the like."

The crops were saved! That harvest seasons was an abundant one. Another day of Thanksgiving was planned and celebrated. Edward Winslow wrote, "Having these many signs of God's favor and acceptance, we thought it would be a great ingratitude if secretly we should content ourselves with private thanksgiving for that which by private prayer could not be obtained. And therefore another solemn day was set apart and appointed for that end; wherein we returned glory, honor, and praise, with all thankfulness to our God who dealt so graciously with us" (p.51).

To celebrate, November 29th of that year was proclaimed a day of thanksgiving. This date is believed to be the real true beginning of the present Thanksgiving Day.

Through the Years

The custom of an annually celebrated thanksgiving, held after the harvest, continued through the years. During the American Revolution (late 1770's) a day of national thanksgiving was suggested by the Continental Congress.

In 1777 the first national day of thanksgiving was declared by the Continental Congress following the providential victory at Saratoga over the British. In 1789 the newly formed U.S. Congress passed a resolution requesting "a day of public Thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording an opportunity peaceably to establish a Constitution of government for their safety and happiness." President George Washington signed that proclamation and declared Thursday, November 26, 1789, as the first national Thanksgiving Day.

As the years passed, the holiday was celebrated sporadically. State governors would sometimes issue proclamations and sometimes not, often setting different dates from year to year.

A magazine editor named Sarah Hale helped organize a movement to make Thanksgiving a national holiday. Every year from 1846 to 1863, Mrs. Hale printed an editorial in her magazine urging the government to establish this holiday. The date Mrs. Hale desired was July fourth! It was a logical choice, but as the Thanksgiving momentum increased, others proposed a November date. Finally, in 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln set aside the last Thursday of November as a day of national "Thanksgiving, and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens."

Lincoln declared another Thanksgiving Day the following year, as did his successor, Andrew Johnson. Other presidents followed the new tradition annually with the holiday landing in December for a few years. The date for Thanksgiving was again changed briefly in 1939 to the third Thursday in November, but a public uproar of opposition caused the Congress to establish the fourth Thursday as the holiday date. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a bill on November 26, 1941, that finally established the fourth day of November as our national Thanksgiving Day.

Thanksgiving is definitely a CHRISTIAN holiday, and not a pagan holiday – not by any stretch of the imagination!

It should be clear to any logical, rational balanced mind that the American feast of Thanksgiving has NOTHING WHATSOEVER to do with any ancient PAGAN worship of pagan gods or goddesses!

It was simply a day of sincere and godly worship of the TRUE GOD of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel, for His mercy, favor, and answered prayer and blessing in a time of great difficulty, peril and need!

What the Word of God REALLY Says!

Some self-righteous ministers and false teachers have MISUSED and TWISTED Scripture to attempt to condemn the celebration of Thanksgiving! They point to Deuteronomy 12, verse 32, and read: “When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to possess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them . . . and that you do not enquire after THEIR GODS, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates have they done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it” (Deu.12:29-32).

The American Thanksgiving Day was NEVER observed prior to 1621 A.D.! It does not follow ANY ancient custom of the pagan world to their gods and goddesses. It is celebrated as a NATIONAL HOLIDAY, not by commandment but by proclamation, for the people to give thanks to Divine Providence for our many blessings. No doubt many have bastardized it and leave out the “giving of thanks” part, and merely make it a day for a big turkey dinner, or watching “football,” and a “family affair.”

But the day and celebration itself has NO PAGAN CONNECTION AT ALL!

BE VERY CAREFUL WHAT KIND OF FALSE, HYPOCRITICAL UNSCRIPTURAL TEACHING YOU ALLOW TO PENETRATE AND INFLUENCE YOUR MIND!

God Almighty thunders, “WOE TO THOSE WHO CALL EVIL GOOD, AND GOOD EVIL; WHO PUT DARKNESS FOR LIGHT, AND LIGHT FOR DARKNESS; WHO PUT BITTER FOR SWEET, AND SWEET FOR BITTER! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isaiah 5:20-21).

Some want to bring you into ‘BONDAGE’ to their way of thinking – to make your life miserable – to make you a SLAVE of their pernicious, injurious, demonic

teachings – to DESTROY your family, and good relations with others! They seek to CONDEMN that which is good and right, and make a fetish out of their own form of “LEGALISM” AND EXPLOITATION!

The apostle Paul condemns such people and their evil doctrines of demons. He says to us, “So let NO ONE JUDGE YOU in food and in drink, or regarding a FESTIVAL [such as Thanksgiving!!!] or a new moon or Sabbaths. . . . Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in FALSE HUMILITY and worship of angels, INTRUDING INTO THOSE THINGS which he has not seen, VAINLY PUFFED UP by his *fleshly [carnal, physical] mind*, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God” (Col.2:16-19).

It is vain worship and a LIE to claim that the holiday of Thanksgiving is PAGAN and therefore an “abomination” to God Almighty!

Paul went on, “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you *subject yourselves to regulations* – ‘*Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle*’ – which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of MEN? These things indeed have an APPEARANCE of wisdom in *SELF-IMPOSED RELIGION, FALSE HUMILITY*, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Col.2:20-23).

We must learn to “JUDGE BY THE FRUITS”! I have found the “fruits” of the celebration of Thanksgiving are GOOD – VERY GOOD! It is a way to bring a family closer together, an opportunity to reunite a family’s love for one another, and to give thanks and praise to GOD!

Therefore, as Paul said, “And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do ALL in the name of the Lord Jesus, GIVING THANKS to God and the Father through Him” (Col.3:17).

Some want to lift themselves up above you, and enslave you into a Satanic, diabolical, clever, high-handed, condemnatory, damnable FANATICAL RELIGION!

Remember what Paul said – we must not let Satan “take advantage of us; for we are *not ignorant of his devices*” (II Cor.2:11). Beware his traps and pitfalls and seductive lies and deceitful words that *seem* on the surface to be “reasonable,” but are nothing but DARKNESS and wicked fanaticism, doing great injury to those who listen to him!

Are YOU “ignorant” of Satan’s dirty tricks, machinations, and tactics to deceive and enslave you, and to put you into a spiritual straitjacket? Are you eager to listen to every “pied piper” who comes along with a message that sounds superficially “righteous” but is SELF-righteousness?

Paul went on, “For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God and of Christ” (verse 17).

The Feast of Purim

Christ came to DELIVER us from false teachings and pagan practices. But celebrating a national day of Thanksgiving is not one of them! Oh how Satan would like to pull the wool over your eyes and deceive you and get you all mixed up and confused!

For Americans and Canadians to celebrate Thanksgiving is like the Jewish people celebrating Purim. It is NOT PAGAN! It is NOT WRONG to observe. Christ never condemned Purim while He was among the Jews, on the earth! He never spoke against it! Although it was not “holy days of God,” but a national holiday, He never condemned its observance – *never!*

Purin is not a part of the Law of God given at Mount Sinai. Yet it was “added” to the festivals of the Jews in the days of the Persian Empire, after God’s great deliverance from Haman, the Amalakite, the prime minister of Xerxes. The book of Esther describes the story, and how God turned the tables on the wicked Haman who sought to kill all the Jewish people in the Empire. God gave His people favor in the eyes of the king, and He allowed the Jews instead to slay all their enemies, and Haman himself was hanged on the huge gallows 75 feet high.

As a result of this divine deliverance, we read that Mordecai, the new Jewish prime minister, “sent letters to all the Jews, near and far,” throughout the Empire, “to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor” (Esther 9:20-22).

“So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them” (v.23).

CLEARLY, CELEBRATING A FEAST in honor of the true GOD, in THANKSGIVING to Him,, is NOT evil or pagan or wrong in God’s sight!

The Story of Hanukkah

Hanukkah is known as the “Feast of Dedication.” It was begun by Judas Maccabeaus after the Jews revolted against Antiochus Epiphanes and recaptured the Temple of God from the Syrians in 164 B.C., after it had been defiled by them for three years. It was rededicated on the 25th day of Chisleu, about the month of December. The Jews began to celebrate this victory granted by God over the powerful Syrian army and created a feast of eight days, much like the Feast of Tabernacles which they had not been able to observe during the Syrian occupation.

This festival is mentioned once in the Bible. In the 10th chapter of John we read: “Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s Porch” (John 10:24).

Notice! This verse does not say whether or not Jesus Christ “observed” the feast – but He never condemned it, either! He was present, at the porch of the Temple, however, when the feast was being observed, during the stormy month of December, in mid-winter. Here would have been a good opportunity to thunder against it and to denounce it, if He chose to do so! But His silence in this case is deafening. He never condemned it.

Observing such national holidays, not commanded by God or part of His divine Law, was NOT CONSIDERED “ADDING TO” the Law, commandments, or statutes of GOD!

If it was contrary to God’s Law, and was an “addition” to the law because it was a celebration not commanded in Scripture, then surely Christ would have condemned its observance! But He never mentioned it one way or the other!

Therefore it is NOT SIN OR EVIL OR WRONG to observe a national holiday, such as the 4th of July, Memorial Day, or especially the Thanksgiving Day, in an attitude of thankfulness to God and praising Him for all the bounty and blessings He has bestowed upon us! In fact, it is a distinctly GODLY thing to do!

For as Paul writes, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but UNDERSTAND what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, GIVING THANKS ALWAYS TO GOD THE FATHER in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph.5:15-20, NKJV).

President Lincoln’s National Proclamation

In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln appointed a national day of thanksgiving. He declared in resonating words of meaningful eloquence and sincerity:

“The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theater of military conflict; while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the act had enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battlefield; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years, with large increase of freedom.

“No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

“It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.

“In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

“Done at the city of Washington, this third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty-eighth.” (signed) A. Lincoln.

Let Us Give THANKS!

“Oh *give thanks to the LORD*, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples, Sing to Him, sing praises to Him, Speak of all His wonders, Remember His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth” (Psalm 105:1-2, 5).

“Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God; .it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with *thanksgiving*, and His courts with praise. *Give thanks to Him*; bless His name. For the Lord is good; His loving kindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations” (Psalm 100).

“Offer to God a *sacrifice of thanksgiving*” (Psalm 50:14).

“He who offers a *sacrifice of thanksgiving* honors Me” (Psalm 50:23).

“Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with THANKSGIVING; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms” (Psalm 95:1-2).

“Let them also offer *sacrifices of thanksgiving*” (Psalm 107:22).

“To You I will offer a *sacrifice of thanksgiving*, and call upon the name of the LORD” (Psalm 116:17).

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, GIVING THANKS ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ” (Eph.5:18-20).

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, WITH THANKSGIVING, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will GUARD your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil.4:6-7).

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are TRUE, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Phil.4:8).

Thanksgiving brings us all closer to God, and to one another, when we do it all together, as a spiritual “family.” Don’t let the Devil hoodwink you, or delude you, or steal your crown of righteousness. Don’t let him devour you, as a lion preying on a wayward, lost sheep. Don’t let him deceive you by any means, as he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. As Paul wrote, “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (II Cor.11:3).

Giving thanks to God is a form of sacrifice that forces us to take our eyes off ourselves and to put them on the Lord. Giving up self-focus and learning to look to God as our Provider and Protector and Father is a kind of denial that pleases God and leads to His further blessings. Developing a heart of gratitude and thankfulness – a grateful and thankful spirit – is a huge step in growing in faith and trust in God, and is very precious in His sight.

So let us draw near to God and celebrate Thanksgiving with joy and great gratitude! Halleluyah! Praise God!