

What Happened with Christianity?

"As the apostolic age comes to a close, the Church seems to pass through a dark tunnel. When it comes out at the other side, the original bond of unity, the clear Standards, and the love of [Yahweh] seem to have been replaced by an unsettling, institutionalized spirit of domination and by beliefs which are more Gnostic than Christian. What happened? We are now confronted with the possibility that the original identity and true definition of Christianity have become lost," from *The Apostasy of the Lost Century*.

Scholars, historians, and sincere clerics agree that during the first 200 years following the deaths of the Apostles, drastic, unscriptural changes came about within the early Assembly that would flourish down to our day. It was prophesied in the Bible. But the Bible also speaks of a "remnant" who will be adhering to the original, scriptural truths in these last days. Understand what happened, and the urgent need today to return to the "faith which was once delivered to the saints"! (Jude 3)

Are You a Christian?

Simon, the elderly Bible student, twisted restlessly in his auditorium seat, wondering how he should respond to the preacher's call. A friend insisted he come along to this special revival service because Simon "needed to be straightened out." Simon had always been very much interested in the Bible (which he referred to as the *Textbook of Life*) and welcomed the opportunity to attend a revival service hoping to increase his Bible knowledge.

"All who do not believe in Jesus Christ as Savior, please stand up," intoned the evangelist as his talk drew to a close. Simon stood up. Simon believed deeply in the personal Savior sent to pay the penalty for man's sins. But he had always wondered, would the angel Gabriel have told Miriam (Mary) to call her Son by a Latinized-Greek name? After all, she was a Jewish virgin in the Hebrew community of Bethlehem. That would be like an American mother from grass-roots Iowa giving her son a Spanish name!

Furthermore, Simon had observed that whenever a celestial being spoke to mankind, it was to those who understood Hebrew. The name Jesus Christ is not a Hebrew name. Nor is it entirely Greek, or Latin.

"Will all those who are standing, please come down to the front of the auditorium," invited the evangelist. Old Simon shrugged and shuffled with the others down to the front.

A waiting helper at the lectern asked, "Are you a Christian?"

"Am I what?" Simon responded. "Are you a Christian-you know-do you believe Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior?" "Not exactly," was our friend's reply, "but I do believe the Bible-every bit of it."

"But doesn't your Bible say that the name of the Savior is Jesus Christ?" insisted the young man. Simon smiled and replied that the Bible we have is but a translation of the Latin, which is a translation of the Greek, which is a translation of the Hebrew. The names people call the Father and Son are far different from those originally given to mankind. Furthermore, what we have now is a three-times-removed, man-made translation of the originally inspired Old and New Testaments, none of which could have contained the name "Jesus Christ."

"Somewhere the true name Yahshua, our Hebrew-born Savior, was lost and our beloved *King James Bible* has given us a substitute," Simon explained. "But it is the word 'Christian' that puzzles me," he went on. "Why has Christianity twisted so much of the Bible's truth, teaching another

evangel, another doctrine? It seems to me that a movement identifying itself so closely with the Messiah would teach what He taught!"

Preaching Another Evangel

Our friend Simon is not a fictitious character. The experience related above actually took place in a tent meeting years ago. Through much study on his own he had drawn conclusions that differed from what is routinely taught in nominal Christianity throughout our land.

Do we need a priest or minister to interpret for us what the Bible says? Surely the Creator of this universe would not leave an instruction Book for man that humble, sincere, truth-seeking people could not properly understand!

Is truth that leads to salvation so complicated that it can be grasped only by those with seminary degrees in Bible interpretation?

Translators Changed Names

With the help of today's concordances, lexicons, dictionaries, and other Bible study helps, we can come to a better understanding of many archaic words and renditions found in the *King James Bible*.

As we move closer to the end of the age, knowledge of the Bible's true message shall be increased (Dan. 12:4). At the same time there will be a restoring of original truth neglected through the centuries (Acts 3:21).

Most of us with a little study can easily find a number of incongruities and even serious errors perpetuated by churchianity. As alluded to above, the name "Jesus" appears in Acts 7:45 in the *King James Version*, which obviously refers to Joshua the son of Nun, the great Israelite general. Hebrews 4:8 is another place where Joshua-or more correctly Yahshua-should appear in the *King James Bible*. The newer Bible versions recognize this error and have since changed the name to the Latinized "Joshua" in both Acts and Hebrews. These are definitive examples revealing that the Savior's name Yahshua (later altered to Joshua) was changed wholesale to "Jesus" by translators!

The average churchgoer has no idea what the word "Christ" means or where it came from. Bible dictionaries show that "Christ" derives from the Greek *christos* (*Strong's Concordance Greek Dictionary* No. 5547, from "*chrío*" meaning to anoint or rub with oil). It means anointed, as does the Hebrew *meshiach*. Why would a Jewish Savior, speaking Hebrew, be given the Greek title "Christ?"

Yahshua Himself said our salvation is of the Jews (not Greeks, John 4:22; Acts 1:6-7 indicates that the Kingdom will be restored to Israel). Yet English Bibles contain the Greek title "Christ." Why was it not properly translated "Anointed"? One would be more correct to refer to the Jewish Savior by His Hebrew title "Messiah" rather than identifying Him by a title that is "Greek" to most people today.

It does seem rather strange that the Greek title "*Christos*" is transliterated (that is, brought over into English with the same sound), yet the Name of Yahweh and His Son Yahshua are both translated by the English "Lord" in our New Testament. Too often in the *King James Version* the word "Lord" leaves us in doubt who is meant, Yahweh the Father or Yahshua the Son (see Acts 2:34, Hebrews 10:30 and many others).

Strange Practices and Customs

There is a grass roots religious or spiritual movement afoot around the world to free mankind from the shackles of pagan customs and beliefs. This is true not only in the United States, but also in Europe and the Middle East. This spiritual revival seeks the old paths of truth.

The problem with mankind is simply one of human nature and sin. Yahweh clearly defines sin for us: *Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law*, 1 John 3:4. We cannot do things as we alone see fit, but are obligated to follow His instructions, living His way. He is the final Judge. When our lives are over and we are in the grave, Almighty Yahweh will be the One who matters. We must please Him now, while we can.

As we near the end of the age it appears that Yahweh is moving to clear from the minds of sincere truth seekers the accumulated rubbish of pagan influence that has overwhelmed and saturated the faith once delivered. Error is evident everywhere, yet the majority attending weekly church services are ignorant of the subtle and pervasive influence of pagan customs. Christianity perpetuates the error instead of rejecting paganism and retracing its steps back to truth.

Profane Customs Hard to Shake

It is no secret that the first Israelite Bishops and overseers were replaced at death by converts from paganism. Brumback's *History of The Church* states on page 53, "The Roman emperor, by the office of Pontifex Maximus, directed all religious affairs. When Christianity became the state religion, Constantine [ruling 306-337] assumed all of the authority in the church, which he had exercised as supreme director of paganism."

As more pagans were supposedly converted to Yahshua, the true Redeemer of Israel, the more difficult it was to resist the strong influence of pagan practices and customs they brought along. *Halley's Bible Handbook* includes a section on church history entitled "Paganization of the Church," which aptly details what happened since the time of Constantine who was the first Christian emperor.

While Constantine did not make Christianity the state religion, he favored Christians in official appointments and positions. After his death, other Roman emperors favored Christianity above all else. Note Halley's comments:

"Emperor Theodosius, 378-395 CE, made Christianity the state Religion of the Roman Empire, and made Church Membership Compulsory. This was the Worst Calamity that has ever befallen the Church. The forced conversion filled the Churches with unregenerate people..."

"But now the military spirit of Imperial Rome had entered the Church. The Church had conquered the Roman empire, but in reality, the Roman Empire had conquered the Church, by making the Church into the image of the Roman Empire..."

"The Imperial Church of the 4th and 5th centuries had become an entirely different institution from the persecuted Church of the first three centuries. In its ambition to Rule it lost and forgot the spirit of [Messiah]."

"Worship, at first very simple, was developed into elaborate, stately, imposing ceremonies having all the outward splendor that had belonged to heathen temples..."

"Conversion of the Barbarians. The Gothes, Vandals and Huns who overthrew the Roman Empire accepted Christianity; but to a large extent their conversion was nominal; and this further filled the Church with pagan practices..." p. 867, *Halley's Bible Handbook*.

Transformation of the Early Faith

Historians attest to the change that came over the early fledgling Assemblies following the death of the Apostles, all of whom had been Jews. It is as if a curtain had come down upon their activities, and when it is raised a hundred years or so later, an entirely different situation is seen.

Syncretism—the merging of pagan practices with Bible truth—is obvious everywhere. The heathens continued keeping their former pagan ways, but under a new name and with a slightly different meaning.

Man's desire to do things his way, rebelling against the commands of Yahweh, started back in the Garden with Adam and Eve. Rebellion continued, forcing Yahweh to intervene through the flood, the tower of Babel, and even while the Israelites were being fed manna and having Moses lead them to the Promised Land. Isaiah's opening chapter is a condemnation of His chosen people. Rebellion against Yahweh's law continues and is becoming even more evident today.

The point of Isaiah's rebuke and that of Yahshua reveals that the syncretism has continued throughout history. Carnal man has continued to inject his own thoughts and concepts in his worship and thus early on contaminated the True Worship of our pure and holy Creator Yahweh.

We Have Not Learned Israel's Lesson

Having come out of Egypt, and recalling that pagans worshipped a golden calf, Israel decided they would have a visible object that they could see, handle and touch to represent the invisible Yahweh, Exodus 32:4. The clear warning in Exodus 20:1-5 was that under no circumstances were they to follow the idolatrous practices of the pagans in the land they were to possess.

Israel's covenant was to follow the teachings of Moses and so be a light to the nations around them. Israel's mission was to be a model nation and to lead others in the pure worship of Yahweh. This is clear from Isaiah 27:6: *He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.*

Psalms 80:8-11 clearly shows that what Yahweh sought from Israel, His vineyard, did not become a fruit of righteousness. His people were soon removed from their favored and unique position among all peoples and sent into exile.

What happened? Israel had become ensnared in the worship practices of the pagans about them. Instead of holding Yahweh's way of life—with its many blessings and security—as an example to the world, Israel took up pagan ways, turning their backs on pure worship given in the Bible.

When Israel finally went into the Promised Land, it was a new generation, a people that had seen the miracle of the daily manna being provided for them, and the presence of Yahweh in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

This new generation of Israelites should have gotten the paganism of Egypt out of their system. They had among them Moses and the tabernacle with a functioning priesthood to keep them mindful of the goodness and bounty of Yahweh's providence. All of this to no avail.

After the death of Moses, Israel, instead of driving out the inhabitants to a man, tolerated the pagans, married them, absorbing their heathen worship and practices. The pagan nations were still in the land at the time of David and Solomon and were a snare to them. Eventually, the false religions of the world so corrupted the Chosen People that Yahweh divorced them spiritually.

It Happens All Over Again

History repeated itself centuries later after the Messiah left His group of 12 disciples and returned to the heavens. The first disciples were all Israelites, as were the first bishops. Within the

first hundred years, however, the "called-out ones" no longer were of the characteristic Hebrew flavor. Paganism had moved in and taken over.

Yahshua our Redeemer came to bring us the pure religion of Yahweh, teaching us to follow His ways instead of carnal, human understanding.

Historically we see that Christianity rejected the Hebrew religion, which led to a despising of the Mosaic Law given by Yahweh Himself to man (Rev. 22:14). Instead, it tolerated and absorbed pagan customs and teachings in flagrant violation of Scripture.

The *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, commenting on the widespread infusion of pagan influence, on page 84 states: "The 'opaque' areas of experience, of institutions and daily living, if they had not disappeared by [Pope] Gregory's time had become absorbed into a Christian universe as translucent parts. In principle, there was nothing that could not be absorbed into the radically Christian world."

The religion of modern churchianity has absorbed many foreign doctrines that have no basis in the Bible, but are rooted in mystery religions. Many today could be likened to the rebellious Israelites who took up whatever new worldly fad or liberal trend came upon the scene. Yahweh is completely out of their thoughts.

And even as they did not like to retain Yahweh in their knowledge, Yahweh gave them up to a reprobate mind (unfit to pass judgment), to do those things which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness...who knowing the judgment of Yahweh, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them, Romans 1:28-29, 32.

Baptized, But Not Reformed

Historians attest to the change that came over the early fledgling Assemblies following the death of the Apostles. With the exception of Luke, all the New Testament writers were Jews. They had grown up following Israelite customs, keeping the Saturday Sabbath, the annual Feast Days and hearing the Torah (Law) read to them each Sabbath. Yet, there are those who contend that these Jews were dyed-in-the-wool Christians and wrote their books of the New Testament in Greek! See our mini-study, *Was the New Testament Originally Greek?*

Syncretism (the merging of paganism with Bible truth) is obvious everywhere. The pagans continued keeping their pagan ways, but under a new name and with a slightly different meaning.

We quote again from the *Oxford History of Christianity*, page 85, "Baptism turned a pagan into a Christian...What constituted a 'pagan' was a matter of definition by clerical authority; in practice it meant what evaded the bishop's control. Gregory the Great's decision that English converts to Christianity might continue to use their traditional places of worship provided they were sprinkled with holy water was a revolutionary extension of clerical tolerance, with momentous implications for later missionary activity."

All of this is to say the pagans were baptized, but returned to their former houses of idolatry and continued to worship as before. Only the name had been changed to gain larger numbers of converts to Christianity.

Disquieting Facts from a Detached Historian

The following is taken from the book, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source*, written by Shlomo Pines. The Islamic historian reveals much about growing dissension between Jews and Christians shortly after the Savior's time and the blending of pagan beliefs brought into Christianity by the growing number of gentile converts.

Pines makes revealing comments from his vantage point of an outside spectator, namely, as an observer of the history of the two distinct groups which emerged from Judaism-Christianity and Islam.

First, there were Jewish Christians who adhered to the teachings of Moses. Beginning with the Apostles, the first converts to the Messiah were from Judaism, especially from the synagogues where the Apostles went to preach.

Later came the torrent of Gentile converts who are referred to simply as "Christians." While the Jewish Christians continued keeping of the law and the ways taught by Yahshua the Messiah, those converts coming from non-Israelite nations became known as Gentile Christians (whom author Pines refers to only as "Christians"). These retained their many heathen doctrines, blending them into "Christianity."

Shlomo Pines writes of the early centuries of Christianity and states, "The original Gospel was regarded as written in Hebrew." He goes on to point out what history has verified, that the Gentile converts to the Messiah no longer used the Hebrew texts to bring about the conversion of many other nations. Because of the infusion of foreign doctrines by Christianity, the Gentile bishops and teachers avoided the Hebrew Scriptures, relying mostly on the Greek texts. Pines tells us why in this eye-opening statement:

"In their view, this was a deliberate policy on the part of the Christian leaders, who did not want to have their doctrines demolished by the scholars grounded in the Scriptures who were numerous among the Jews."

It is noteworthy that this Islamic writer is acutely aware of the many unscriptural doctrines of early Christianity. Christians had abandoned the Commandments of the Old Testament and substituted alien laws and heathen customs and practices.

Rather than evangelize the nations around them through the authentic Hebrew Scriptures, the Christian leaders from Gentile backgrounds avoided the Hebrew texts because so many of their "Christian" doctrines were nowhere found in the Bible. Thus, they avoided any clash with those knowledgeable of the Hebrew Scriptures which condemned taking on any aspect of worship foreign to the Word of Yahweh.

Author Pines contends that Emperor Constantine turned against the pagan philosophers and adds, "The philosophers' books were burnt and monks were lodged in their temples, which were transformed into churches (or monasteries)" p. 30.

Unscriptural Teachings Flourish

That the pagan temples were turned into churches or monasteries explains the heathen derivation of the word "church" used in the *King James* and other Bibles. The Greek word *ekklesia* literally means "the called-out ones," which carries the same meaning as the Hebrew *kahal*. *Ekklesia* refers to a body of people, not a building. The word "church" is a poor translation of *ekklesia*. Church refers to the building, coming to us through the Anglo-Saxon *circe*. *Circe* was the Greek goddess who turned men into swine. In Scottish the word is *kirk*, relating to the Hebrew *kikkar*, meaning a circuit or disc-the sun! The ancient link to sun worship (on Sun-day) is undeniable.

Following are excerpts taken from Pines' work:

"The Romans and the Greeks had a feast called the Nativity of Time, which celebrated the return of the sun in January. They introduced into it various modifications and called it 'The Nativity of [Messiah]' or the Nativity. This feast was unknown at the time of [Yahshua] and of His companions.

"The Jewish Christians...are not vegetarians and they do not reject certain portions of the Old Testament. Like the Jewish Christians of our texts, they are, as far as the observance of commandments is concerned, orthodox Jews...They thus carried on the old tradition of the first Christian community of Jerusalem..."

A footnote on page 39 reveals, "Strecker points out that the Jewish Christian doctrine started out by being the Christian church doctrine and became a heresy only in the wars of historical evolution."

In other words, paganism and worldly doctrines infiltrated the early body of believers and corrupted it. As more pagan converts became "Christians," they flooded the church with their traditional practices that soon were "baptized" by the Christian clergy and absorbed as doctrine. This is how Sunday, New Year's, Xmas, Easter, Lent, Halloween, Valentine's Day, and much more crept into and became "holy-days" (holidays) of churchianity. More on that momentarily.

Two Distinct Christian Groups

The early movement saw one group of Christians as rooted in the teachings of Messiah which still clung to Israelite laws. These converted Jews known as "Jewish-Christians" continued to meet in the synagogues of the Jews as did Paul, Acts 13:14; 15; 42; 14:1.

The other group, composed mostly of Gentile converts, took on Grecian culture and Hellenistic customs and were simply called "Christians." According to Pines, this latter group brought about "the abandonment and portrayal of what is regarded as true Christianity and its replacement by Greek notions and ways. It is the relation of a historic failure; victory rests with the agents of corruption," page 14.

In other words, the flood of pagan converts to Christianity soon overwhelmed the pristine truth of the Messiah, and Christianity became tainted. Christians today, many unknowingly, observe more pagan carryovers than days plainly commanded in the Bible. These popular days include Sunday (a day historically set aside in honor of the sun), Easter (the day honoring *Astarte*, alias *Ishtar* and *Ostra*, Chaldean Queen of Heaven) Xmas (midwinter solar-fertility celebration), Lent (40-day fast for Ostra), New Year's (near the midwinter solstice instead of the Biblical spring), Valentine's Day (Roman fertility celebration), Halloween (demonic observance), and many others.

There is no teaching or foundation for any of these "Christian holidays" anywhere in the Bible. They are the concepts and doctrines of men, firmly embedded in Christianity through centuries of tradition and practice.

Pines continues: "After Him [Yahshua] His disciples were with the Jews and the Children of Israel in the latter's synagogues and observed the prayers and the feasts of (the Jews) in the same place as the latter" (page 41).

The early believers (referred to by Pines as "Jewish-Christians") continued on with the worship of Israel by observing the weekly Sabbath, the annual Holy Days, and heard the preaching of the Old Testament along with the prayers of the Jews. They continued meeting in the Jewish synagogues just as did the Messiah and the Apostles.

A decided difference soon arose between the "Jewish Christians" and "Christianity" itself. The true believers continued with the "Jewish" worship based on Yahweh's immutable law, while Christianity had amalgamated into its doctrines almost every foreign belief and practice necessary to accommodate the new convert. Accepting Christianity for the pagan was made easy. For him his old ways remained the same, only the name had been changed.

True Worshipers Alarmed by Changes

The Jewish Christians were deeply concerned about events that had corrupted many converts to the Messiah through the Roman Caesars and the "'Romanization' of Christianity," according to Pines.

"...Jewish Christian authors of our texts and presumably other members of their sect may have been the only people in the world-at the relatively late period (perhaps the fifth or sixth century) at which these texts were composed-who still deplored the split of Judaism and Christianity, two religions which should have remained one. They also deplored the fact that the Christians (or perhaps only most of them) no longer read the Gospels in Hebrew, the language of [Yahshua], and all the prophets. Quite clearly, these Jewish Christians believed that they preserved and continued (perhaps clandestinely) the traditions of the first not yet corrupted Christian community of Jerusalem founded by the immediate disciples of [Yahshua] who professed His religion, i.e., observed the Mosaic Commandments," p. 65.

Author Shlomo Pines summarizes the accounts of other historians who maintained that the early believers in the Messiah still observed the Sabbaths and the Annual Holy Days. Paganism proceeded apace and soon overwhelmed Bible truth, replacing Scriptural customs and celebrations with paganized additions and substitutes.

Other Historians Speak Out

While the comments of historian Pines are revealing, they are by no means unique. Many astute historians who are aware of the vast changes that took place from the time of the Messiah until now corroborate what we have read.

Luther H. Martin's book *Hellenistic Religions* reads on pages 118-119, "One of the first issues to be debated by Christians was whether they were a new religion... These early Jewish Christians understood Christianity in terms of its Jewish past and they continued their observance of Jewish ritual practices exemplified by dietary requirements and circumcision." Tracing the history of paganism, Martin writes, "...and by the second century, Christianity had assumed many of the forms and practices of the mystery cults" p. 162.

Brumbach's *History of the Church*, referring to the beginning of the true Assembly at Pentecost in 31 C.E., reveals, "In its practices that are common in the religious world today were not found," p. 19. Author Brumbach explains that the early church did not celebrate many of the holidays observed by most of churchianity today, which we have mentioned.

Then follows an explanation of the pagan source of Lent. "The word 'Lent' is derived from the old English word 'Lencten' which means spring. It was connected with a pagan feast that was celebrated in honor of the goddess 'Ostra,' the goddess of the east. The sacrifices to this deity were offered just about the time of the Passover and in this way it became associated with the resurrection of [Messiah] which followed the Jewish Passover.

"Not until the Council of Nicea (325 C.E.) decreed that Easter should be kept on Sunday next after the full moon on or after the vernal equinox, was there a definite day for the observance of Easter. Here is the evidence that it has a human origin, as it was not known until after the fourth century just when Easter would be," p. 20.

Easter is not a Biblical celebration. It is found in only one place in the *King James Version*, at Acts 12:4, a woeful mistranslation of the Greek *Pascha*, or the Passover.

Author Brumbach goes on to explain in fuller detail a bit of Easter's history, adding, "Certainly no such day is authorized by the teaching of the Apostles."

"What brought these changes about? Why did disciples submit to having these days set apart as special days for the church? The answer is found in the failure of those who were the people of [Yahweh] to know what [Elohim's] Word taught. Lack of this knowledge made it possible to introduce new doctrines and new practices into the teaching of the church. The apostasy of the church and the corruption of the [evangel] resulted from neglect of the church to study [Yahweh's] Word" p. 21.

Old Testament Foundation Was Lost

Brumback continues on page 31, "In the beginning the church was pure. The divine plan of the church as revealed in the New Testament was followed. Now the apostasy of which the apostles warned, began to develop."

"Ultimately Christianity overcame paganism and thousands of those who had once opposed the church now became identified with it, without understanding that such a step called for the reformation of life, separation from the world, and devotion to the cause of [Messiah]. Christianity in its purity was thus destroyed by paganism," p. 54.

Widespread neglect of the Old Testament meant that converts were not schooled in the Old Testament and were ignorant of Israelite background and the books of Moses. They simply accepted the Greek Septuagint as their source of Old Testament teaching, but knew little and understood even less of the Feasts and the deep meaning of the sacrificial laws. By and large the Christians detested the Jews and would have none of their teaching or understanding of the Torah.

The New Testament is built upon precepts and teachings of the Old. Paul was inspired to write that salvation is found in the Old Testament: *And that from a child you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yahshua*, 2 Timothy 3:15. The early Apostles based their teachings on the Old Testament to prove that Yahshua was the promised Messiah of Israel. Yahshua confirmed that Himself in Luke 24:44, "...that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me."

In Luke 4:4 Yahshua said that man shall live by every word of Yahweh. He constantly referred to the Scriptures, the Old Testament, when answering matters concerning the law, divorce, and personal conduct (the New Testament was not yet in existence at this time! See Luke 24:27).

The last warning of the Bible is that man is not to add to the Bible or to take anything away, on pain of losing salvation (Rev. 22:18). "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Yahshua said, "Search the Scriptures" (John 5:39).

Gentiles did not always comprehend the deep meaning of the Sabbaths and knew little of the Feast Days found in Leviticus 23. The Bible calls them "Yahweh's Feasts," not "Jewish" Feasts. See our in-depth booklet, *Biblical Holy Days*.

Gentiles detested the Jews and would have nothing to do with their practices, nor did they try to understand or study Hebrew. As a consequence of arrogantly ignoring the Old Testament basis of truth, Christianity generally still does not understand the foundation of Scripture. "Now therefore you are...fellow citizens with the saints...and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets [Old Testament], Yahshua Himself the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-20).

Is the Bible Greek to You?

The influence of paganism is easily found in many historical sources. Charlton Laird's book, *The Miracle of Language*, reveals:

"The Church furthered Greek as well as Latin, the early Fathers of the church wrote Greek, and even as early as the seventh century Greek was being studied in England. Thus Greek words entered the English directly; they became Latin words which were borrowed directly; and they became Latin words which became French words which were borrowed directly" p. 90.

This custom of admitting Greek and Latin names wholesale into English Bibles resulted in replacing and disguising Hebrew names. These names supplanted the true, original names, making them surrogate hybrids with a Grecianized flavor.

Today the claim is made that the entire New Testament was written in Greek, which is disputed by reputable scholars who find an unmistakable Hebrew original underlying the Greek text. For more information on scholars who uphold an original Semitic New Testament, read our mini-study, *Hebrew/Aramaic Origin of the New Testament*.

Because early Christian translators were woefully ignorant of Hebrew, Greco-Latin names soon replaced the inspired Hebrew names. Even today the *King James* uses Esaias for Isaiah, Judas for Judah, Elias for Eliyah (Elijah), Urias for Uriah, Ozias for Uzziah, Josias for Josiah, Ezekias for Hezekiah, Idumea for Edom, Paul for Shaul, James for Ya'akov, Peter for Kefa, John for Yochanan, and many others.

The most holy of all words in the Bible, the sacred Name Yahweh, was replaced with *kyrios* and *theos*, which the *King James* renders Lord or God-outright substitutes. Read our free in-depth booklet entitled, *The Mistaken J*.

Further enlightenment is given on page 118 of *The Miracle of Language*: "The Anglo-Saxon word for a general director was stigweard, the sty-ward, the man who looked after the pigpen, for an Anglo-Saxon capitalist was likely to have his stocks and bonds mostly in the form of razorbacks. We have reduced the word to steward. The boss himself was a hlafweard, a loafward, the man who looked after the bread. We cut that word to lord..."

Thus, we can see how the English Bible has reduced the sacred Name of our Creator Yahweh to "keeper of the loaf," or Lord! His holy Name Yahweh is now replaced with an inferior title.

In his *History of the Church*, Brumback answers the question how pagan ways and pagan days infiltrated the early church. He points out:

"The answer is found in the failure of those who were the people of [Yahweh] to know what [His] word taught. Lack of this knowledge made it possible to introduce new doctrines and new practices into the teaching and worship of the church. The apostasy of the church and the corruption of the gospel resulted from neglect of the church to study [Yahweh's] word.

"Pagans were accustomed to observe a feast to Proserpine with the burning of candles. To make the transition from pagan worship to Christian worship easy, the church in apostasy instituted on the same day a feast to the virgin Mary and burned tapers in her honor. Lactatius, a historian of the church, spoke of this practice as superstition, ridiculing those who lighted candles for [Yahweh], as if He lived in the dark.

"Here were changes that appeared in the teaching and worship of the church as it developed into an apostate institution. Holy water, the burning of incense, the observance of Lent and Easter...were connected with paganism. When the church dropped the guidance of [Yahweh's] word pagan ceremonies found their way into the church and they are today a part of that system of worship which grew out of the apostasy," page 21-22.

Supreme Source of Error

The extent to which non-Biblical doctrines and error have become unquestionably accepted as fundamental truths directly from the Bible has alarmed sincere Bible students.

The Bible as originally given is indeed the pure Word of Yahweh. Man has translated the Scriptures into other languages while viewing the Bible through the eyeglass of human error. Such errors are accepted as the true teachings of the Messiah without further inquiry. Some are outright substitutions with no basis in the truth of the Scriptures.

Satan certainly has twisted the minds of some who perhaps unknowingly have accepted error as truth and call truth error. Thus, Satan "leads the whole world astray" (Rev. 12:9). And he began a long time ago.

Genesis 3:4 reveals Satan's first lie. He told Eve that she would continue living, that she had an immortal soul, that she would not die. Why, she would be as Elohim! Satan is a liar and the father of it, said our Savior in John 8:44.

Satan needs not to speak directly to mankind today as he did to Eve, but controls the minds of certain ones who do his will, perhaps even ignorantly. Satan seems to have complete latitude to proclaim his lies and is working hard to deceive the whole world. Yahweh also has His people who are standing fast in His truth and studying the Scriptures to prove whether these things be so.

The purpose of this study is to help us better comprehend the source of error so that we can separate truth from falsity. History shows that all pagan religion has its source in Nimrod's Babylon. The teachings of Babylon have dominated Egyptian as well as Greek and Roman religion.

Teachings right out of Babylon can be found in almost all religions of the world. These abominable doctrines have even undermined the true religion Yahweh gave mankind through Israel. With corrupted doctrines and error, ministers have continued to twist the Bible so that "truth" is no longer Bible truth.

Syncretism: A Dangerous Blend

The Bible when first given to mankind was inspired by Yahweh's Spirit. It was pure, holy and undefiled. Problems began when translations were made from one language to another. Our English Bible, for example, is taken primarily from the Latin. Which was translated from the Greek. Which was translated from the Hebrew, with much being lost along the way. It is like taking change from one pocket to place in another and losing some in the process. This is why it is our goal to return as closely as possible to the original languages.

Through what is known as syncretism, pagan doctrines are merged with Bible teachings and blindly accepted as if from Scripture. Thus, the pristine Truth of the Bible has been adulterated with paganism and unknowingly accepted.

On page 109, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* quotes Patrick Wormald on adaptations of Christianity, "Christianity had been successfully assimilated by a warrior nobility, a nobility which had no intention of abandoning its culture or seriously changing its way of life, but which was willing to throw its traditions, customs, tastes, and loyalties into the articulation of the new faith."

While the expressed purpose of the church was to convert pagans and bring them into the fold of Christianity, in reality it was paganism that triumphed over churchianity. It was the church that absorbed and retained the pagan rituals, symbols, holidays, and precepts, but gave them a new name with a new meaning and a "Christian" understanding.

Meyers' *Medieval and Modern History* states on page 42, "Many of our religious ideas, festivals and ceremonies, as witness Easter, and Christmas may be traced back to an origin in the practice and belief of our heathen ancestors."

Thus, pagan converts felt right at home as they retained their worship of the sun on Sunday, observed the re-birth of the sun in December, and called it not "*Sol Invictus*," but "Christmas." It made for a painless conversion to "Christianity." So, the unregenerate pagan was baptized and became a "Christian"—but was still a pagan at heart.

Had Israel and churchianity not done what they respectively have done in corrupting of Truth and establishment of falsehood, anti-Biblical sentiment would not be what it is. The conflict between light and darkness is no new conflict. It has carried on ever since sin first entered the Garden of Eden.

Churchianity reads the Bible and sees no parallel between Israel's past dismal history and its own deplorable record. Bible teaching rests upon learning from the examples of others (1 Cor. 10). But what if man contends that he needs no examples? With our high-tech society and our sophistication and knowledge, along with our scientific thinking, modern man feels competent to find his way if only given money enough and sufficient time to follow whatever light is given. Man is convinced that he is quite sufficient unto himself, and given time will eventually work things out.

Israel was overwhelmed by the visible power of Yahweh at Sinai (Exodus 19 and 20). The thunderous voice and trumpet, the lightning, the smoking, the rumbling and quaking of the Mount itself was evidence enough. The vaunted ability of man was tested. Israel vowed they would be perfect in everything and be obedient. Yet, when they tried they obeyed in nothing. Israel was pardoned again and again, and each time they continued to transgress.

The Tabernacle (and later the Temple) was right in their midst with the visible priesthood actively carrying out Yahweh's instructions day by day. Instruction, warning, chastisement, and the evident presence of Yahweh in the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night were of no avail.

Holy Spirit: Given to the Obedient, for Obedience

By himself, man lacks the ability and moral fiber to be holy. This is the primary lesson we are to learn here on earth, namely, that man's way is not Yahweh's way. We are to change our mind, the way we think, by having Yahweh's Spirit dominate our very being. "The carnal mind is enmity against Elohim: for it is not subject to the law of Elohim, neither indeed can be," Romans 8:7.

It is only through the workings of Yahweh's omnipotent Holy Spirit power, which now is available to us, that we can rise above this mundane world. This means obediently following the way of life given us throughout the Bible, for it is through obedience that we are given the Holy Spirit: *And we are his witnesses of these things; and [so is] also the Holy Spirit, whom Elohim has given to them that obey Him*, Acts 5:32.

By professing to be His worshipers, ancient Israel assumed they could obligate Yahweh to tolerate whatever whim their degenerate minds could devise. They mentioned His Name, but their hearts were far from obedience.

Yea, you took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your deity Remphan, figures which you made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen, Acts 7:43-44.

Doctrine and the Commandments of Men

Giving only lip-service is not acceptable to a holy, just, and righteous Yahweh. It never was and never will be. Genuine obedience comes from a contrite heart. Yahshua Himself said, *They*

worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules made by men, Mark 7:7 NIV. This is a direct quotation of Isaiah 29:13, condemning the city of David, Jerusalem, for their idolatry and wickedness.

The Savior then castigates the Pharisees and teachers of the law with those same words when the Pharisees heap criticism upon His disciples who apparently paid too little attention to the tradition of the Pharisees and Jewish elders.

The point of Isaiah's rebuke and that of Yahshua reveals that the syncretism (mixing pagan concepts and customs with Bible teaching) has continued throughout history. Unconverted man injects his own thoughts and notions into his worship and continues to contaminate the pure worship of a holy Yahweh.

While we hear much of the error that has crept into the worship of our Creator, many have not studied deeply into the truth of the Bible and are oblivious and unschooled in what is actually taught as Bible doctrine. A growing movement of sincere Commandment keepers with faith in the Savior is prophesied to arise at the end of the age as we see in Revelation. *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of Yahweh, and the faith of Yahshua*, Revelation 14:12.

Modern Misstatements Commonly Heard

Few are aware of the many teachings abounding in nominal religion that are contrary to the Bible. Here are a few, in which one or two verses of correction follow the erroneous teaching:

- **"The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three persons in one, and are equal."** "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28b). Yahshua Himself acknowledged that the Father was greater. Paul said, "The head of Messiah is Yahweh" (1 Cor. 11:3b). The Holy Spirit (*Ruach ha Kodesh*) is the power, the force of Yahweh shared by the Son and is not a person. Read our in-depth booklet on *The Truth About The Trinity*.
- **"We keep Sunday because that is the day the Son was resurrected, and that changed the Sabbath."** *There remains therefore a rest [Sabbatismos, Sabbath] for the people of Yahweh*, Hebrews 4:9 (reference to verse 4). There is no Bible justification for changing the day of worship. Sunday-keeping stems from pagan sun worship. Yahshua did not rise Sunday morning, but at the end of the Sabbath, and said nothing about any change whatsoever in the weekly day of worship.
- **"The Son by His resurrection changed Sabbath to Sunday."** *And it shall come to pass, from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, says Yahweh*, Isaiah 66:23. This speaks of the future kingdom. Note: The Saturday Sabbath has never been changed but is in effect now and will be observed in the Millennium.
- **"The Son was put to death on Friday and arose Sunday morning."** "...in the midst of the week He shall cause the oblation and sacrifice to cease" (Dan. 9:27). He was impaled on Wednesday (Wednesday in German is *Mittwoch*, midweek) and was in the grave three days and three nights. He rose from the grave before sunset on Saturday (Mat. 28:1—"end" is the Greek *opse* meaning "late on"—read our free mini-study, *When Does the Scriptural Day Begin?*).

For as Jonas (Jonah) was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, Matthew 12:40. There is no way one can get three nights from Friday until Sunday morning.

- **"The Son came to do away with His Father's law by nailing it to the cross."** *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill,* Matthew 5:17. He brought the law to its fullest intent and meaning; He did not destroy it, but lived it as an example for us (John 14:31).
- **"The Son cleansed all foods and now all animal flesh like pork and shellfish is good for food."** *"They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together,"* says Yahweh, Isaiah 66:17. This is speaking of the end of the age and those eating swine's flesh will be consumed. Clean food laws are still in effect. See our mini-study, **Scripturally Clean Food**.
- **"Man is born with an immortal soul."** *Yahweh Who ONLY has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; Whom no man has seen, nor can see: to Whom be honor and power everlasting,* 1 Timothy 6:16. We do not yet have immortality but are seeking it. *To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life,* Romans 2:7. Why are we to seek for immortality if we already have it? Why a resurrection, if we are already immortal and can't die? (1 Thess. 4:16)

Not a Dead Soul Alive

The most blatant of all erroneous teachings fostered by churchianity is that man has an immortal soul, a teaching found in most pagan religions. That the soul upon death leaves the body and immediately goes to heaven or hell is not found in Scripture.

Many such errors are accepted as the true teachings of the Messiah without any inquiry. Some are outright substitutions to the Bible and have no basis but lead to a corruption of the truth of the Word.

Satan certainly has twisted the minds of some who perhaps unknowingly have accepted error as truth and call truth error. Thus, Satan "leads the whole world astray" (Rev. 12:9).

Genesis 3:4 reveals that this is Satan's first lie. He told Eve that she would continue living, not die, but additionally would be as Elohim. Satan is a liar and the father of it, said our Savior (John 8:44).

The purpose of this study is to help us better comprehend the source of erroneous teaching so that we can sift out the truth. Scripture and history show that all pagan religion has its source in Nimrod's Babylon where Satan's lies have complete sway. The ways of Babylon have dominated Egyptian as well as Greek and Roman religion. Babylonian teaching can be found in almost all religions of the world. These abominable doctrines have even undermined the true religion Yahweh gave mankind through Israel. Yahweh calls Babylon the Mother of Harlots, who has corrupted the earth (Rev. 17-18).

Modern Blind Guides

Bible readers today follow the history of Israel and shake their heads in disbelief over the fickleness of the people of Yahweh who were led astray by heathen practices. They read of Israel's falling into pagan idolatry and marvel that Yahweh, full of mercy, always was ready to take Israel back when they repented.

But these same people today do not see that they are doing the very same thing and following the same pattern of lawlessness. Today it is not the pagan worship and temples about us that lead people astray. Instead it is those of churchianity who are supposedly upholding and teaching Yahweh's Word who lead men away from Yahweh (2 Pet. 2).

They preach from the pulpit that Yahweh's law no longer applies to us. Law was only for ancient Israel; we are under grace, and not under the law, say those teaching a modern and up-to-date gospel of love, grace and forgiveness. Being obedient to the Law of Yahweh is said to be bondage, and we are not under the bondage of the law, we are told. Supposedly when the Messiah came to die for the sins of the world, He did away with the Law.

Now all we need is faith. "Faith alone!" was the rallying cry of the Reformation. But the Bible says that faith alone is meaningless! "Faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:26). By twisting the Scriptures and choosing to emphasize certain portions over others, today's preachers strain hard to do away with the Law. They especially despise two of the Ten Commandments.

The first tells them that the Sabbath is on Saturday, the seventh day. The second tells us to handle His Name with respect and reverence. Known as the Third and Fourth Commandments, these two "test" commandments show our complete obedience to Yahweh. They are among the first to be rejected by many people. Some ministers seem willing to move heaven and earth to get these two Commandments buried under faith, love, and grace!

Your Bible says that if you break one commandment you have broken them all. That is, unless you keep all Ten, you have fallen short of perfection. Yahweh expects His people to keep His Commandments, for all His Commandments are righteousness (Psa. 119:172). We read in 1 John 5:3 that the love of Yahweh is the keeping of His Commandments. He loves us in return when we keep His law (John 14:21). Because they have been told from countless sermons that the Savior came essentially to bring a new religion, many simply repeat what they've heard without thoroughly checking their Bibles.

Yahweh's Law—His Way—Still Stands

"We are a New Testament Church and emphasize the teachings of the Savior who nailed the law to the cross," they say. The Messiah never said or even intimated that He came to do away with His Father's laws! He said just the opposite. "My doctrine is not mine but His that sent Me," he said (John 7:16).

Think not I came to destroy the law and the prophets. I came not to destroy but to fulfill, Matthew 5:17. Some attempt to get around this verse by telling us that the Messiah did away with His Father's laws, fulfilling them completely—filled them up—and now has set them aside.

Actually, what He has done is fulfilled them with a greater depth of meaning than before. He shows us the fuller spiritual intent of Yahweh's laws. "Fulfill" is the Greek *plerosai* and means to conform to or accomplish. Notice how the Savior elaborated on one of the Ten Commandments:

You have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not commit adultery:" but I say unto you, "That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart," Matthew 5:27-28.

Clearly, the Savior was emphasizing that the keeping of the Commandments begins with proper and right attitudes, thoughts, desires, and goals. To entertain a wrong thought could well lead to committing the act-sin.

Furthermore, we read in the last book of the Bible that true believers will be keeping the Commandments of Yahweh when Yahshua returns to rule.

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the Commandments of Yahweh, and have the testimony of Yahshua, Revelation 12:17.

Note, there is but a "remnant" of the seed of the true Israel. There is no large multitude following the way of the Bible today, but a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). They are also known as the "Saints." Don't look for a large group of people to make up the "Bride" at the end of the age. Consider the

parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins. Only half of them went in to the marriage supper. The other half was locked out.

What about you? Where do you stand? Are you on that downhill, broad and easy road to destruction? (Matt. 7:13-14). Or that narrow, more difficult road that leads to life everlasting? Let us help you in your quest for Truth.

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