

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. (Mat 26:29)

Today, since we're in the throes of the high and holy feast days of this incredibly wicked and perverse generation, I want to talk a little bit about feasts in Scripture. When we are inundated with everything that comes with thanksgiving and Xmas – in school, the workplace, every retail location, public sign, the light poles, basically everywhere we go is simply plastered with the images associated with their holidays, maintaining perspective is important.

There's a reason that these holidays are all organized toward bringing people together around food and drink. If you look at all their historical origins, they are built to emulate the feast days of Scripture. Many of the holy days declared in Scripture draw people together, though not in the same fashion as these false feasts, as I'll show you later. These holidays are a vain attempt to name days on the calendar as holy and draw people into a false sense of religion.

Look at Thanksgiving and Xmas – I can't bring myself to call it Christmas anymore, it's got nothing to do with Christ, and I'm not interested in having the lexicon dictated to me. These holidays are inventions of men designed to give the appearance of Christian holiness and solemnity. They are a vexing display of false religion that we shouldn't minimize. The modernists trying to secularize these events and the fact that you have Jews, Muslims and Hindus all celebrating them doesn't change the pretense of Christianity they're shrouded in. Here's an interesting quote I saw this week in a story from London where a school replaced the words 'Lord Jesus' with 'little baby' in the Xmas carol 'Away in a Manger':

'But the Diocese of Chelmsford, where the Nativity was held Tuesday, disagreed, writing, "The service maintains the traditional Christian message of the joy of Christmas in a way that can be celebrated by everyone, including those of other faiths and none."

The religiosity of these high holy days is just a façade used to draw some into idolatry, not Christianity.

Look at how the Thanksgiving holiday is just one big lie. This nation hasn't been thankful for anything in decades, maybe not ever. This notion that there is a national day of giving thanks to God for the events of the last year is completely exposed for the lie it is when you look at the things public figures declare their thanks for. Listen to this opening paragraph from the Minnesota Star Tribune's Thanksgiving editorial:

"Be thankful for the staggering abundance of modern American life, arrayed on dinner tables across the nation today, and displayed on store shelves awaiting

the holiday season shopping spree that begins for many tonight (perhaps regrettably). Be mindful of the poverty and hunger that remain amid the plenty.”

Be thankful for the shopping spree? Really? That’s what this is all about? That’s what you’re supposed to be thankful for? This is an exemplar of the way this nation looks at God and His providence. It’s actually all about them and what they get.

Now, the idea of giving thanks certainly isn’t an invention of men, and is declared from cover to cover of Scripture as a necessity:

David declares how he will personally and publicly give thanks to the Lord for all the deliverances he has received at the Lord’s hand:

“Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name.” (2Sa 22:50)

David delivers a Psalm for public praise to Asaph declaring thanks to God as a matter of public and even national declarations of thanks. Pay particular attention to the point of gathering together:

“Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the LORD into the hand of Asaph and his brethren. Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people...O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise.” (1Ch 16:7-8, 34-35)

Christ publicly gives thanks throughout His earthly presence:

“And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.” (Mat 15:36)

Paul speaks to collectively giving thanks a number of times, including this to the church at Corinth:

“Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.” (2Co 1:11)

Paul also exhorts Timothy to prayer and thanks giving for all men:

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; (1Ti 2:1)

So it's not the idea of giving thanks I have a problem with or we need to be wary of. Not in the least. It's the big lie that surrounds the holiday of Thanksgiving to be aware of and see for what it is.

For starters, the idea that Thanksgiving was originally thought up by the settlers in Plymouth Massachusetts kindly inviting a group of Indians to their feast of thanks is just a giant lie. There is plenty of evidence showing that to be a white-washed telling of the tale. Don't forget those same settlers and their descendants had no problem a few decades later nearly wiping out those Indian tribes they were supposedly so thankful for.

The idea of giving thanks obviously comes from the Biblical mandates for it, and Puritanical church elders were calling for days of thanksgiving for various events way before those Pilgrims ever set sail to establish the colonies. One of the major differences between what you see in today's organized holiday and those Puritan days of thanksgiving is many of them were declared fasting days recommended to draw the thoughts toward God, not a stuff yourself silly event.

I don't even really have a problem with a national holiday; the King of Nineveh declared a national period of mourning and repentance after all, as did Josiah and others. There is precedent for such a thing and I don't think doing something of this nature is itself problematic. As with so many things, the spirit, drivers and purpose of the thing is what matters.

If you look at the original proclamations from Washington and Lincoln, there is at least some sense of the nation's need for God, and our need to humble ourselves before Him as a nation. Here's some of Lincoln's language from 1863, which was delivered shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg:

"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 one 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."

In 1941, FDR negotiated with Congress to make this a national holiday, but FDR wanted it on the third Thursday – so he could extend the Xmas shopping season. There was no thankfulness driving its creation.

Now, when Trump delivers his Thanksgiving Day proclamation, it's a bunch of pablum about veterans and law enforcement and their terrible sacrifice blah blah blah, no mention of sin, no mention of our need for God to keep this nation together, nothing but self-serving nonsense.

Giving thanks is a thing we should be doing at all times, but participating in the self-worshiping lie this nation perpetrates with their Thanksgiving holiday is simply not something a God fearing person is going to do. We have an obligation to come away from those things that are so clearly wrong.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you," (2Co 6:17)

Which brings me to Xmas – the very epitome of 'the unclean thing'.

Xmas is the Frankenstein's monster of holidays. Every piece of it comes from some pagan celebration or the reasoning of men. It is a patchwork quilt of bile belched forth by early Roman Catholics and is an absolute example of a dog returning to their vomit, and the picture given by Isaiah:

"For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." (Isa 28:8)

We have to call this thing what it is, and it's more than just a pagan holiday. It is absolutely a mish-mash of those, but it is, I think, in its near universal acceptance and propagandized approach to being shoved down our throats, a pre-cursor to how the final Antichrist will make his false religion appeal to and be consumed by the world. It behooves us to study this and understand it to heighten our awareness.

Don't over-simplify the delicate weavings going on here. This isn't just the adoption of Saturnalia by 2nd or 3rd century Roman Catholics looking to score some new followers and their gold. It is that, but it is so, so much more, and it is highly vexing when I see this town's Catholics standing on street corners with their cutesy little banners about 'Keep Christ in Christmas – pray the rosary'. There never has been any Christ in Xmas, so you can't keep Him in it!

Let's quickly look at three things that demonstrate the false nature of the thing – the date, the tree, and the fat man. I've read a lot of sources on this, from the Catholic Encyclopedia, to Britannica, to old-school expositors and new-age excuse-makers. It's all out there on the Interwebs to read if you want to get into the details for yourself. I'm just giving you some highlights today:

- The date – Jesus was not likely to have been born on December 25. I'm not going to say it's impossible He was, because – and this is the key point – we

aren't told in Scripture. Let's be super plain on this – there is nothing critical for us to know as it relates to the worship of God that is not laid out for us, including the feast days God wishes kept. He makes this a simple proposition for us – if it isn't in the Word, don't assume.

Catholics established and have changed their story on why December 25 *a lot*. There are some who say it was to combat the pagan celebration of *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti* or the 'birthday of the unconquered sun' associated with Mithraism and the Saturnalia orgy. The idea was that if they associated Christ with the Sun and the lengthening of the days around Winter Solstice, the worshipers of Mithras and all other Sun-worshipping pagans would give God the credit so that's what matters, even if they are still worshiping their old god. That's their logic for most things, by the way.

Others say it was because it aligns with Christ's conception and the creation of the world; there's a whole calendar worshiping bunch of weirdness to this one that claims to know how the days of Creation align to all major events. Really.

The best one I read comes from the Catholic Encyclopedia (emphasis is mine)

*"In view of a reaction to certain Jewish rites and feasts, Chrysostom tries to unite Antioch in celebrating Christ's birth on 25 December, part of the community having already kept it on that day for at least ten years. In the West, he says, the feast was thus kept, another; its introduction into Antioch he had always sought, conservatives always resisted. This time he was successful; in a crowded church he defended the new custom. It was no novelty; from Thrace to Cadiz this feast was observed — **rightly, since its miraculously rapid diffusion proved its genuineness.**"*

So there we have it, friends. Because it went viral, it must be right and holy and true.

- The tree – there perhaps isn't a symbol more closely and deeply associated with Xmas than the tree. Catholics work hard to undo the tie that trees have always had in idolatry and deny this simple Bible truth when they defend Xmas:

"For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not." (Jer 10:3-4)

The use of trees, especially variations of evergreen trees, has been prominent in pagan religious practices from at least the early Egyptians, and probably going all the way back to the idolatry rampant before the flood. Men will prop anything up

to make it their god and the cause of things in their lives, giving it their adoration and worship – anything but the Living God. I refer you to Deuteronomy 7 where the Israelites are told to “cut down their groves” of trees, specifically.

The tree specifically as an element of Xmas comes from the Catholic Boniface, who traveled all through Germany in the 700s. The legend that they hold onto says that he traveled to Geismar one year to try and put a stop to the pagan sacrifice of a child to Thor around a giant old oak. He supposedly interrupted the ceremony, walked up and cut the tree down, and when he was done, pointed to a small evergreen growing nearby the oak and said:

“This little tree, a young child of the forest, shall be your holy tree tonight. It is the wood of peace... It is the sign of an endless life, for its leaves are ever green. See how it points upward to heaven. Let this be called the tree of the Christ-child; gather about it, not in the wild wood, but in your own homes; there it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness.”

Look at the nefariousness of this. Look at how this works! A holy tree? Where in Scripture are we told to behold a holy tree? Whether the story is true or not is 100% irrelevant, because it is the basis upon which this non-religious activity is made to **look** religious. Boniface is made to be a hero, saving a child and supposedly stopping the future sacrifice of children, all the while substituting one pagan idol for another, and having the audacity to call that Christian and evangelizing Christ!

If you're evangelizing Christ, doesn't it behoove you **not** to adopt the practices of His enemies? This is where false religion is so insidious, taking things of the flesh, idols in our lives and calling them holy. We must be wary of this at all times, because it is something we could do ourselves. Substituting the things of the flesh for the things of God is a behavior men have been engaging in since the beginning, and will be done by the Antichrist at the end. It is a behavior to be zealously avoided.

- The fat man – Santa Claus is the epitome of this making men the focus of worship and holding them up as false gods. The basis of Santa Claus is a real man – Nicholas of Myra, who died around 350 AD. He supposedly, as bishop of Myra, was famous for his generosity and gift-giving, and is one of the most famous of the so-called ‘saints’ of the Catholic abomination. The legends surrounding him warped and shifted over the centuries across multiple cultures until we end up with a fat guy that brings presents to children in some kind of miraculous time-warping period between December 24 and 25.

The justification used to include this folly as a supposed celebration of Christ is two-fold. First, Nicholas gave gifts to people and Christ is the gift of God to men.

Second, we can use Santa Claus to make children think about Jesus. Catholics really do say this stuff – I’m not making it up. Even secular people use it as a rationale for teaching their kids about ‘giving’. Here’s what I say to that folly:

“For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you.” (Eze 20:31)

You can’t go justifying idolatry with the ‘for the kids’ line. When you do that, and you pass them through that fire to initiate them into the idolatry, God doesn’t listen to you anymore. You tell the kids the truth! Look again at the nefarious nature of this, using the children as a justification to perpetuate an obvious lie!

Moreover, look at the subtlety of this fake Christ. A man, who universally knows if you’ve been ‘naughty or nice’, keeping a list designating you one or the other, and then either giving or withholding your deepest material desires based on your behaviors – the epitome of works righteousness and what they want Christ to be. Of course everything is done jovially and with a giant smile on his face, not with any wrath or anger, and he wants us all to be merry and jovial just like him. No punishment happens, you just don’t get some ‘stuff’. He knows what you’ve done, but not what you will do, you have the free will to work your way onto his nice list all over again. This work to displace the Christ of judgment is explicit, nefarious, and shocking when you tear it apart.

These false feasts, the declaration of the unholy as holy, isn’t just about Thanksgiving and Xmas, but they’re the ones right in front of our faces so get the focus. We want to remember, especially for those who have never engaged in this idolatry and never had to really walk away from it, that there is a reason we reject these unholy days. I’m not just having a ‘get off my lawn’ moment about Xmas here. The idolatry we are surrounded with every day is a danger to us, and while we might look at these specific days and say ‘oh, we’d never do that, we’ve got that all under control’, there are an infinite number of idolatrous practices that could creep in amongst us.

This method of declaring idols as ‘symbols to focus us on God’ is an insidious lie that has been used for **centuries** to replace the holiness of God with something man-made. This substitution principal can be used in any number of ways to re-focus attention and worship. This is bad news, and I think it is easy to trick people with the technique. Christ says:

“For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.” (Mar 13:22)

Look at the warnings that Paul, Peter and John all make about false teachers and prophets to drive home the point Christ makes here. These feasts and 'holy days' are particularly effective techniques because they appeal to our baser natures, our desire to come together and feel part of a bigger whole, to celebrate and feel collectively joyful, getting all warm and fuzzy with our friends and loved ones around a table full of good food and good company. It's a Norman Rockwell moment that just gets better if you throw a little religion into it, too!

There's nothing wrong with coming together and enjoying a good meal with good friends, just be careful what you're doing with it and what importance you put on it. It absolutely is a part of our human nature to come together around food and there's nothing wrong with enjoying the things the Lord has provided us. But when you take it too far, you end up in a place we don't want to be:

*"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."
(Rev 2:14)*

*"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."
(Rev 2:20)*

It doesn't take practicing Xmas to eat things sacrificed unto idols. It doesn't say that in Thyatira or Pergamos they were eating things sacrificed to Diana, or Aphrodite, or Baal. It says 'idols'. They could have been their own self-generated idols they were sacrificing to, not widespread false religion. And there's the danger spot we want to avoid.

If we go back to the origin of God's feast days in Scripture, I think it helps us to keep us on the right path regarding this topic. When God established His feasts, these are the words He used:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. (Lev 23:2)

The word feast here doesn't mean a party – it primarily means an appointed time. He declares these feast days as an appointed time for holy convocations. The word convocation there means a calling together, a sacred assembly or reading. So He is establishing set and appointed times for the calling of a sacred assembly and considering of His word by all His people collectively.

God declares eight feasts in Leviticus 23 called out as His.

- **The Sabbath** (every 7th day)
- **The LORD's Passover** (14th day of 1st month, or Nisan)
- **Feast of Unleavened Bread** (15th to 21st day of 1st month, or Nisan)
- **Feast of Firstfruits** (Nisan, overlaps with Feast of Unleavened Bread)
- **Feast of Weeks** (50 days after Firstfruits, 7th day of 3rd month)
- **Feast of Trumpets** (1st day of 7th month, or Tishri)
- **Day of Atonement** (10th day of 7th month, or Tishri)
- **Feast of Booths or Tabernacles** (15th to 21st day of 7th month, or Tishri)

Each of these feast days had specific sacrificial requirements placed upon them (the details of which you can find in Numbers 28 and 29), and they all had holy convocations with the exception of the feasts of Passover and Firstfruits. There were reasons and order given to what was to be done, not just a social gathering called.

The tone I believe is set here with the very first listed feast – the Sabbath. I don't think there is anything that could be further from what the current view of a feast day is than how the Sabbath was to be conducted. It was a sober day, with no work to be conducted, focused on one thing – honoring God and dwelling on His statutes. It was serious business to attend to:

“Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.” (Exo 31:14-15)

The feast days of the Lord are dedicated with holy convocations to bring people together not for some generic social gathering, but to focus on the Lord, to contemplate His holiness and His ways, how we are utterly dependent upon Him, and how abundant His mercies are. Fasting, not feasting, is typically called for on these feast days, because the feast wasn't physical and about food – you were feasting on the gloriousness of God and His word, not Aunt Susan's stuffing! Christ makes this point:

“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Mat 4:4)

And it is written originally here:

“And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.” (Deu 8:3)

Social gatherings aren't the problem – we can gather to socialize and fellowship, but it's when people assign false holiness to that gathering or its activities that the problem exists. Putting some veneer of God's holiness over your idolatry is a path to destruction.

The gathering as a group to commune, especially around food and drink is clearly an important part of what humans do. We are a social creature, which was built into us at Creation:

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” (Gen 2:18)

Christ gathered with people lots of times, like the wedding in Galilee where He turned water into wine; sometimes in large groups, as when he fed the multitude miraculously. Other times it was small and focused, like when He recognized the Passover and established the Lord's Supper.

With that ordinance, He established that there is one memorial for the New Testament church. He didn't establish the 'feasts of charity' referenced in Jude, or any other days of memorial or convocation as 'my feasts'. He established this gathering as the only form of remembrance He ordains:

*“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: **this do in remembrance of me**. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, **in remembrance of me**.” (1Co 11:24-25)*

He didn't set a strict calendaring like He did the Old Testament feast days, and like has been established for the feasts during the Millennial reign (see Ezekiel 45). But He does imply frequency when He says 'as oft'. We aren't under the Jewish economy, and things work differently for our worship logistically. There aren't as many details dictated by forms and types, but where there are directives, we should follow them. Following the directives means we also shouldn't add to them and be led by our own wisdom on the matter, trying to make holy days or declare something as holy and define it as worship. Like Ben talked about last week, there isn't holiness if God isn't there, and if He didn't call the meeting, so to speak, He isn't going to be there.

Amos makes it very plain how God feels about these false feast days:

“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.”
(Amo 5:21)

These were the declared feasts as the Jews celebrated them, as well as the ones they made up – God is having no part of rote man-pleasing worship. The way these Jews still today keep these feasts is bad theater at best, with all kinds of added elements, no proper sacrifices as they were called for, and certainly no sincerity in them, no true worship. He won't be there, no matter how solemn they make it appear to men.

We don't ***not*** celebrate these feasts out of some sense of tradition. We don't celebrate them because we have a desire to obey and keep ourselves from idols. It's important to understand that this isn't just about our group tradition or rejecting one specific practice. It is important that we each understand the reasons we don't participate in them and constantly inspect our activities and what we do in service to God so these **types** of things don't creep in. We need to make sure what we do aligns with the worship He has directed us to, making sure not to insert things that don't belong just because we think it would be nice.

I'm not suggesting anyone thinks we should celebrate Xmas. The point is that if we aren't careful, if we don't keep a close watch on ourselves individually and as a body, looking at what we do carefully and acting with purpose, we will do what these Christians at large have done. It's easy to turn some fleshly element that we think is our way of worshiping God into an idol and build all kinds of justifications around it – our sign, our singing, our preaching, whatever it might be, and end up worshiping our methods and ultimately ourselves instead of our God. That danger is ever-present, especially if we get complacent or prideful in our thinking about the idolatry around us. This time of year should put that front and center in our minds.

Our goal, never forget, is to be present at that ultimate feast, and idolatry will separate us from that goal:

“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.” (Rev 19:9)