

# **SPEAKING TRUTH IN LOVE**

## **"Coping With Truth In A Deceived World"**

By: Phillip Hayes

*"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" [St. John 8:31-32].*

In the past, some have taken the truths I have brought to their attention and used them to ridicule, condemn and even dis-fellowship other brethren.

The intent of this article is not to ridicule, condemn or demean honest souls that truly love the Lord but may have accepted erroneous teachings or practices. My intent is to inform, encourage and enlighten every reader.

Our article is about some truths that you may not be aware of and how to embrace those truths with love and wisdom. Although we will take a brief look at some errors in the celebration of Christmas, this article is not about Christmas.

Every year, many Christians celebrate our Lord's birth on Christmas Day and His death, burial and resurrection on Easter in the spring. I believe those that choose to participate in these events should be guided by the Truth found in the Scriptures and should not judge those Christians that have chosen not to participate.

I have thoroughly searched the scriptures, and as far as I can determine each of us as individual Christians have a God given right to celebrate or esteem a day above another. *"One man esteemeth one day above another: another*

*esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks” [Romans 14:5-6].* (Please read all of Romans chapter fourteen when you have time).

According to what we have just read, you and I have the authority to esteem or not esteem any day to the Lord we should choose. The word esteem means: *to regard; reverence; honor; respect.* If I set aside a day and regard that day by esteeming it to the Lord; you should not judge me in it because I am setting it aside for God. Neither should I judge you in what you have or have not esteemed.

Keeping these scriptures in mind, let us continue.

Every born again, Bible believing Christian has a God given thirst and hunger for truth. Jesus said, “Ye shall know the Truth.” Therefore, it is the Truth in which we seek.

Every December the birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated world-wide by many Christians and non-Christians as well. It is the number one selling season of the entire year.

Merchants will tell you that without the Christmas season many retailers would go out of business. In the United States alone, the Christmas selling season brings in well over \$900 billion dollars. In comparison the selling seasons of: Mothers Day, Fathers Day, Valentine Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Easter and Halloween combined are less than \$100 billion dollars. Retail sales world-wide would be staggering! Obviously, Christmas is very important for the world’s economy!

Throughout the years I have taught about the many misconceptions people have believed surrounding the events immediately after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord’s birth is well documented in the New Testament and

there shouldn't be any confusion. However, people have added a little here and a little there to the "Christmas Story". Christmas, as well as many of the popular holidays celebrated throughout the world are riddled with pagan customs and part truths.

Every serious Bible student recognizes that many of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus are not accurately portrayed in celebrating our Lord's birth.

They also know that many of the practices associated with the Christmas celebration have their origins in paganism. Such as the use of Christmas trees, ceremonial candles, wassail bowls, holly wreaths, and mistletoe all came from Babylonian Idolatry. This as it is common knowledge and easily proven with a trip to the library, or with a mouse click on the internet.

Now, you may not be aware, but it is not just the holidays that have been influenced by pagan practices.

Remarkably, all of us are influenced by ancient pagan mythology every day. Its effect has so impacted our world that it is almost impossible to escape it!

Consider this: did you know that eight of the planets in our solar system were given names of so-called gods? In Roman mythology *Mercury* is the god of commerce, travel and thievery. *Venus* is the Roman goddess of love and beauty. *Mars* is the Roman god of war. *Jupiter* is the king of gods in Roman mythology. *Saturn* is the Roman god of agriculture. *Uranus* is the Greek deity of the heavens or supreme god. *Neptune* is the Roman god of the sea. *Pluto* is the Roman god of the underworld in Roman mythology.

But wait, there's more. What about our months? Believe it or not, some of them were also named after gods. *January*: named after Janus, the god of doors and gates. *February*: named after Februalia, a time period when sacrifices were made by the Romans. *March*: named after Mars the god of war. *May*: named after Maia, the goddess of

growth of plants. *June*: from Junius, Latin for the goddess Juno.

What about the days of the week? Same thing! *Sunday*: sacred to the sun (sun god). *Monday*: sacred to the moon. *Tuesday*: named after Tiw, a god of war. *Wednesday*: named after Woden, the leader of the gods. *Thursday*: named after Thor, the god of thunder. *Friday*: named after Frige, the goddess wife of Woden. *Saturday*: named after Saturn, the god of crops and harvest.

I want you to be aware of pagan influences that surround our daily lives. As Christians we should abhor all pagan practices! We believe there is only one God and all these so-called gods in ancient mythology are just that, myths! Paul said it this way, *"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."* [1Corinthians 8:5-6]

How does this knowledge impact my life as a Christian? It awakens me to how powerful the god of this world really is! He has blinded the eyes of countless millions to the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Personally I did not name any of the planets, days or months. It doesn't impact me one way or another for the planets, the months, or days of the week being named after pagan gods and goddesses. I am not a pagan or a heathen. I am a Christian. I live in this world, but I am not of this world! I serve the Living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; not Satan, the god of this world!

Pagan influence also dominates Washington, DC, and our money as well! Examine a one dollar bill sometime. You will find some very strange art work on it. Search out what those symbols mean. Find out what an obelisk (Washington Monument) is and where its influence came from. Believe it

or not, the steeple on our churches has its genesis in paganism! The cross itself is an ancient pagan religious symbol!

In reality, our modern society has evolved from these kinds of demoniac practices and beliefs. The prophet Jeremiah warned God's people (the Jews) not to learn the ways of the heathen. *"Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. 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" [Jeremiah 10:1-4].*

When one reads through the tenth chapter of Jeremiah it is evident that these heathen people got this tree for the purpose of worship. They may have brought the tree into their homes or perhaps it was erected in a public place. Jeremiah is not clear where it was placed. Either way, we know it was used for the purpose of worship. Verse five reveals this: *"They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good".* The Lord is saying, "It's just a tree, no matter what they have made it to appear".

Although the custom of erecting a tree at Christmas time and decorating it may very well come from this heathen practice, I have never found one person (Christian or otherwise) that said they worshipped their Christmas tree. Neither have I found anyone that decked it with silver and gold. The cost would be astronomical!

Nobody puts up a Christmas tree to worship it! "Hey, let's worship our tree", probably never entered into your mind either! My family, just like yours erected a Christmas

tree as part of their annual Christmas celebration of the birth of Christ.

Would erecting a Christmas tree affect your relationship with God? As stated before, we understand that the practice of erecting and decorating a tree came from heathen practices but the practice was connected to worship. God's commandment to His chosen people was, "Learn not the way of the heathen". Therefore we must also consider your purpose of erecting a Christmas tree.

Although there is nothing we can do about the pagan influences in our society, there is something we can do about pagan influences that have penetrated the Christian faith that might impact our worship or duty to God as Christians. We can refuse to be involved in any practice that merges paganism or any other religion with Christianity!

If the Jews attempt to mix Judaism with Christianity in the early church infuriated the Apostle Paul; think what his response would be to anyone attempting to mix pagan and heathen practices with the Christian faith! He would have been horrified, to say the least!

So, does it matter if we have a Christmas tree in our homes or churches? Does it matter if our church has a steeple or if a cross is displayed in it each of which had its genesis in paganism? That my friend is your decision! Remember, truth and how to handle it is what we are addressing. Your response to truth is between you and God.

Personally, when I see a Christmas tree, I think of Christ and His birth. I don't think those people are worshipping that tree. When I see a steeple, I think "there is a church." I never think, "Pagans meet there". When I see a cross, I think about Jesus and His crucifixion. I never think, "That's a Catholic or Pagan symbol." If you said to me, "Today is Monday, June first." I would not think about the moon god or the goddess Juno!

Although I know the truth where some of the Christmas traditions originated, I don't judge others to hell if they keep them as I believe their purpose is not the same as the purpose of heathen pagans.

Allow me to inject another thought from the writing of Paul that might help you understand why we should not judge others in the keeping of certain days that might be influenced by pagan practices.

In the following verses, Apostle Paul writes concerning things offered to idols. Although he is basically writing about the eating of those things offered to idols, we learn a valuable lesson on how we as Christians should respond to idols and to those that worship them.

From First Corinthians 8:4-6: *"As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one". "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)"*. Paul emphasizes that idols are nothing to Christians. It doesn't matter what form man creates them. Yes, there are numerous pagan idols throughout the world and people may call them gods or lords but they are nothing and we should show no regard for them. *"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him"*. To born again Christians there is only One God and this One God is Who we serve.

Paul concludes his teaching on how we should conduct ourselves when encountering idol worship in verses seven through thirteen. His summation is truly amazing! *"Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither,*

*if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" [1 Corinthians 8:7-13].*

Paul is clearly saying a born again Christian can knowingly with good conscience sit down and eat things offered to idols without it being a sin to them! Paul states that food (meat) doesn't commend us to God. If we eat or if we don't, it doesn't matter, as it doesn't make us any better or worse. Paul wants us to have this knowledge! However, here is wisdom; Paul warns those that have this knowledge to take heed as you could become a stumbling block to the weak! If someone that has a weak conscience sees you at a table in an idol's temple, he might be persuaded to eat food offered to idols and afterward because he feels condemned, be destroyed because he is weak! And so by your knowledge this weak man, a brother in Christ could be destroyed.

We must always keep in mind there are many Christians that love Jesus but are weak in many areas of their lives. The weak ones in Paul's day obviously believed that idols were real! Paul said they were nothing! In other words, if they were carved in wood or stone, that's what they were, just a piece of wood or stone! Nothing more!

Paul's warning is, you can sin against your brethren by wounding their conscience when it is weak, and when



you do this, you sin against Christ. *"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend"* (Vs. 13).

How many times have we weakened our brother or sister by the Truths we have learned by not using wisdom? This is a startling awakening! If Paul would never eat meat that is perfectly good for him to eat because it might offend his brother; how much more careful should we be with the truths God has given us.

Many times we are led down paths we thought to be pathways of truth but ended up being a dead end. As a child I was told there were three wise men that came to Jesus when He was born. I was always impacted by "nativity scenes" that I assumed was a true representation of the most sacred event in the history of mankind. There was Mary with baby Jesus in a manger with several shepherds; and there were those three wise men with them. Of course as a child, I was also told there was a Santa Claus also!

Although I came to the repulsive knowledge there was no Santa Claus at a very young age, I was almost thirty years old before I found out no one really knows how many wise men there were! Worse than that, the Bible is very plain that Jesus was a young child in a house when the wise men finally arrived. (Matthew 2:8-11) They were not there in the stable where Christ was born. To say the least, I was shocked.

How could I have believed something I thought was in the Bible but wasn't?! And, such an important event! All those years believing a lie!

Afterward, I really began to search for the truth. If I had been told there was a Santa Claus, and three wise men; what else had I been told that was not true.

Anything that is not of the truth is a lie. Jesus said, the Father is seeking a people to worship Him in spirit and in

the truth". He also said we must worship Him in spirit and in truth. (St. John 4:23-24). How are you worshipping God?

Many years ago I remember watching a telethon with Jerry Lewis as the emcee. I knew he was a Jew and not a Christian so I was shocked to hear him say, "Everybody knows that Jesus was born on December 25<sup>th</sup>". I thought, well maybe, but how do we really know? Again, I was embarrassed to find that the Bible is silent on this and no one really knows when Jesus was born. Not the day, nor the month, or remarkably, neither does anyone know the exact year! Wow!

The truth is, we don't know the day, the month or even the year Jesus was born! We don't know how many wise men there were! So who came up with three? What do we really know is true?

We may not know when He was born, but according to God's Word, we definitely know He was born! We know He is the only begotten Son of the Living God! Frankly, I don't care how many wise men there were. We do know there were wise men that came to Jesus, and they gave Him gifts of gold and frankincense, and myrrh. There may have been a hundred for all we know. It doesn't really matter. Only the Truth matters!

I do not believe God is pleased when we take truth and use it as a weapon to destroy one another.

*"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" [Ephesians 4:15].* Truth must be conveyed with love. I have known many that have used the truth to destroy rather than edify.

You might ask, "How can the truth destroy someone?" When a baby is forced to eat a steak and chokes to death on it is one way. Paul was a very wise apostle. He never gave meat to babes in Christ. He was wise enough to feed them only milk. Speak the truth in love!