



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)
So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

Volume 1, No. 12

Issue # 12

Relating to the World's Holiday Practices

I am thankful for the privilege to share with you here in one of the most looked forward to holidays in our church life, that of our Winter Bible School. This effort has proved a blessing to the church in the past years, and we believe will continue to prove a blessing as we continue to cherish and view it in a right way.

Relating to the world's holiday practices. This title implies or assumes several things first of all.

It has no subject. It implies that we know who we are, where we belong and what category we fit in. It is the Church that we represent. We call ourselves the people of God and are something different from the world. This title implies that the world's holiday practices are not our holiday practices. It also implies that these practices in the world around us do affect and touch us. They call for, and produce some

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response on our part. Further, this title implies that it is right to relate to the world's holidays.

Sometimes we hear the idea presented that since the Scripture does not say anything about the holidays that are observed in the land and nation in which we live, we should just ignore them and go on our way as if there are not any holidays. We believe that there is a right way to relate to the world's holidays. Certainly there are some of them that we

pay more attention to than others. In this subject we want to find a way to relate to them rightly. I think we have an example in the life of our Lord that is notable. We have Jesus at the Feast of Dedication in John 10:22. As a feast, it is mentioned in the New Testament but is found nowhere in the Old Testament. Jesus related to the holidays of His day, even though it was not found commanded in the Old Testament Law. We relate some-

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Messages have been selected on the basis of topic rather than the speaker. Messages have been selected from congregations or speakers within the Berea Amish Mennonite Fellowship, Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario, Conservative Mennonite Churches of York and Adams Counties, PA., Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, Mennonite Christian Fellowship, Nationwide Fellowship Churches, Ohio Wisler Mennonite, Washington-Franklin Mennonite Conference, and certain selected unaffiliated Amish Mennonite congregations.

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what the same way to the world's holidays today. Jesus did not violate any principles or disregard any truth of Scripture in His relating to the Feast of Dedication. Nowhere, does our relating to the world's holidays open the door for us to do that either.

This subject rests on two basic Bible doctrines that are very important to us, 1) the doctrine of separation, 2) the doctrine of salvation. Separation is important to us because we are interested in salvation as a people. Separation is not salvation, but we understand the Scriptures teach that if we want to possess and obtain salvation, we must know, experience, and practice separation from the world. We believe that relating right to the world's holiday practices is an aspect of separation that is necessary for us. It is important because of those who are in the world yet unsaved. We also understand the Scriptures to teach that when we forget about the salvation of others, we forfeit our own. I do not want us to lose sight of that in this subject. When we forget about the salvation of others, we forfeit our own. Therefore, in our interests in maintaining our salvation and our separation from the world, and finally obtaining salvation, we are not only inter-

ested in ourselves, but we are also interested in those who are yet in the world.

I would like to look at this message in four areas of breaking this title. 1) *I would like to think of the world.* In order to find our way in relating to the world's holiday practices, we must have a clear and right view of the world. That view is only found by defining and understanding the world as the Scripture describes it. The world, which this subject relates to, is not the world that God first created. That world that was "very good." (Genesis 1:31) No, it is the world as sin and Satan have marred it. It is the ungodly society that is controlled by sin and Satan about us.

How does the Scripture describe the world? It is something that we must remind ourselves of continually, to understand the world and to relate to it rightly. The world is "evil." Galatians 1:4 speaks of this "this present evil world." It is evil because it is controlled by the source of evil. The world is not only evil, but to us the world is an enemy. It is an active, evil force that opposes us and faces us with conflict. James 4:4 reminds us of its potential to quickly not only oppose us, but to transform us into an enemy of God. He that is "a friend of the world is the

enemy of God.” The Scripture states it so clearly and simply.

We understand the world also to be earthly. The world is the home of the earthly minded. It is the place for those who are content with things of play. The Scripture also helps us to understand that the world is empty. Luke 15 gives the story of two sons. The younger son soon discovered this fact when he went out into the world. When he had nothing to put in any longer, there was nothing there for him to obtain; Not even that which he contributed to it. This is still true of the world, in spite of the multitudes of people that are in the world, and all who have contributed already, the world is still empty.

In light of this, we must recognize, even though it is a bit surprising, the Scriptures show us that the world is enticing. In spite of what we know about the world and the way the Scripture describes the world, we have to admit that at times, the world glitters. There is something appealing and attractive, not to the spiritual man, but to the carnal nature that would like to rise up within our bosoms. This is especially true in holiday seasons, as we view the holiday practices of the world around us. It is important for us to look at

this subject because of this.

Finally, another clear definition which the Scripture gives of the world is that it is ending. “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof.” (1 John 2:17) The world will not only perish, but the world is perishing. There is nothing about us that is related to sin and Satan that will endure. The world has practices which we need to relate to, and relate to rightly, lest we come under the same definition — the same things describe us as the world — lest we too become part of the world.

II) *Secondly, I would like to consider the world's holidays.* Being in the world, we are affected by the world, and by the world's holidays. There is a sense in which they become our holidays. They are the days that we have what we call “off work.” They are the days when our employees expect to be off work. One of the first things that comes to my mind when I think of holidays (I am not sure what comes to yours first) is the thought that (for many people) Saturday and Sunday (what we call the weekend) is what we call the holiday. However, this subject is not directed to our Lord's day observance. We will emphasize relating more to those other holidays that we think of, and are also

clearly marked on our calendars.

Four categories of the world's holidays that we would like to notice. 1) *There are the religious holidays that are observed.* Yes, the world in which we live, even though it is basically a godless society, has a form of godliness. However, they observe religious holidays not primarily for the godliness that is associated with them, but for other reasons. The holidays of Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas would be examples of religious holidays that the world about us observes. If they were really interested in godliness — in religious things — it seems to me that they would emphasize more Good Friday, Ascension day, and some of those other days that we appreciate and observe as holidays (at least in a sense) to us. They are important to our faith and practice, our understanding of the work of Christ.

2) *Secondly, as we think of the world's holidays, there are the "hero" holidays.* Examples of this would be President's day and Martin Luther King, Jr. day. If those people are our role models, we should honour, observe, and keep those days as something special. However, since they are not, we basically let those type of days with the world. Our mail may not come on those days, and

there may be some other things that affect us, but we spend little time honouring what the world honours on those days.

3) *A third category we could list would be patriotic holidays.* These would include Memorial day and Independence day. Those are good holidays for those who are part of this world and part of the kingdom of this world, but for us they are reminders and ought to serve as reminders of which kingdom we are a part of. They ought to remind us to thank God for the freedoms that we enjoy. They ought to remind us to pray for our government and government leaders. In that way, we can benefit from those holidays, but, beyond that, we leave the observance of those two, to the world.

4) *Fourthly, would be the category of commemorative holidays.* There are a number of holidays that such as New Year's day, Labour day, Pearl Harbour day, and a list of others. Again, they affect us but we are not primarily interested in commemorating or esteeming the labouring man or what happened in a certain war in a certain place or time. Therefore, we let those basically to the world.

III) *Thirdly, I would like to consider the world's holiday practices.* It would probably be

impossible for us to take a defined list of all the world's holiday practices and try to decide whether they are right or wrong, or whether they are something which we can participate in or not. I will not try to do that. Rather, we will use what maybe I would call the "maple syrup principle" with them. Some of you may have had the opportunity already to observe how they make that. If we see the liquid, the sap, that they draw out of the tree, we see a watery, colourless, odourless, almost tasteless liquid that, if we did not know where it came from, we really could hardly be sure what it is. However, when we put it on the fire a while, cook it, boil it down, let it cool, and finally taste the remains, there is no question what that material is. We will use this same principle in looking at the world's holiday practices.

When you boil them down, what is the world doing on their holidays? What marks their practices? 1) *One of the first things which we identify as one of the world's holiday practices is the practice of idolatry.* We understand idolatry to be the worship of other false gods. We usually associate idolatry with heathenism. We usually associate heathenism with foreign or distant lands — someone far

away that we have never seen and do not relate to. However, it seems, about us, in the society in which we live and move that in holiday practices that there are many who seem to have set about to prove that they are heathen and that they are what Webster describes as heathen. Webster says the heathen are people who do not acknowledge the God of the Bible.

Now, many about us by lip, possibly would acknowledge the God of the Bible, but we are looking not at what people say, but at what people do. We are looking at practices. The practices and concepts that we see about us today, in the world's holiday practices such as Santa Claus as the giver of gifts. A rabbit is the symbol of life. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a man equal to Christ. What about these concepts? These ideas are nothing more and nothing less than idolatry. There is the one and only Person who is the giver of gifts. There is one and only Person who is the symbol of life. There is no one equal to our Lord Jesus Christ. No one. Recognizing any other, in any of those areas, is a form of idolatry.

2) *Secondly, as we recognize the world's holiday practices, we identify mockery.* This is closely related to the first one. The

Christmas season is not the only one. The manger scenes on the lawns of our community, what are they communicating to us? How do we understand it when there are those who are clearly rejecting Christ, living in open disobedience to the Scriptures and to the teaching of Christ, displaying a manger scene on the lawn? What is that? It is mockery. During the Christmas season in places of business or public places we will probably hear Gospel hymns coming over the air — hymns like, “Joy to the world, The Lord is come, Let earth receive her King.” Is the world worshipping? It may be a form, but I am fearful they are mocking the real invitation of Christ’s birth and coming.

What about the skeletons, castles, or the tombstones which are displayed on lawns over the world holiday they call Halloween? What were they doing? They were mocking, laughing, joking, and making light of death and judgment. That is part of the world’s practices. We shudder when we recognize what the world is doing, when they, in holiday practices, mock God and the truth. We understand the Scriptures to say, “God is not mocked.” (Galatians 6:7) Those who do that will, sooner than they realize, discover

that the things that they are mocking, even death and judgment, are not laughing matters. They are not something to mock at. God will not be mocked in that way.

3) *Thirdly as we think of the world’s holiday practices, we recognize vanity in them.* We refer to the thought that the world is empty. It is little wonder that their practices are only vanity. They are empty and vain. 1 John 2:16 says, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” That is all that is in the world — lust, pride — not satisfaction and enjoyment. There is little or no substance of lasting worth or value in the world or in her holiday practices. What and where are the lasting enduring values in lighted trees, coloured eggs, and carved pumpkins? These are things that occupy people’s minds and attention. Where is the enduring value in that? There is none there. The world’s holiday practices are marked by vanity.

4) *Another practice that we notice is the practice of extravagance.* This seems to be a growing practice in recent years. 1 Peter 4:4 mentions the thought of those who run to “excess of riot.” There is more included there than

referring to the world's holidays, but that is one time when we see the world being carried away with excess and extravagance. For the world, proper holiday practice is to overspend, over eat, and over drink, and simply to go to excess. It is a time when it is not only considered acceptable but necessary to, in this way, waste our resources of time and money on vanity. In fact, one person was heard to say recently that one thing they liked about the Christmas season is they did not need to worry about whether the money would reach or not. Simply, what they were stating was, credit will take care of the expenditures over the Christmas season. The world justifies themselves in not worrying about how far they extend credit because they are observing Christmas. That is a part of the world, in viewing their stewardship responsibility in that way.

5) *Another thing that comes out when you boil down the world's holiday practices is the thought of slothfulness.* It is not slothful to rightfully rest, relax, and recreate. No, there is a right way to do that, but to view work days as necessary evils that must be endured, so that I can gain some holidays again, is the mindset of diligent people — people who are interested in serving

God. No, it is the mark of the slothful. Many people anticipate holidays for the primary reason that they despise working. They despise service. Some may say, "Many people are so busy on holidays that we cannot say they are slothful." Proverbs 18:9 reminds us that efforts spent on vanity are related to slothfulness. "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." To spend our time, efforts and resources on vanity is a little different from slothfulness.

6) *Also when we boil down the world's holiday practices we find the product of discontent.* For many in society about us, happiness comes in the gift box (so they think). It is found at the beach. It is gained in travelling to some attraction elsewhere. The further and more often they go, the happier they are. It seems to be the idea that is promoted. Our hearts go out to those who do not know the joy and happiness and contentment at home. This is missing in many of the world's holiday practices.

IV) *My fourth consideration in this message is "How do we relate to the world's holiday practices?"* How do we find a right way for us and our little ones in these practices? 1) *We relate to them, we respond to*

them rightly when we remember and we remind ourselves of what kingdom we are a part of. If our kingdom were of this world, then we would participate in the world's holiday practices. They would be for us. However, as long as our kingdom is not of this world, they are not ours, nor are they for us to participate in. We are here as those who are in this world but not of the world. There is a challenge before us to make the holidays of this world the good days of our Lord that honour Christ. You know there is a day coming when "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." (Revelation 11:15) There are some aspects of that which we can put into motion today. Some of these things that affect us, like the world's holidays, can be a challenge to us to make good use of the things which the world is using to hasten their judgment.

2) *We relate to these rightly as we maintain a clear vision of the person and work of Jesus Christ.* Christ is not our hero. Jesus is our Lord. He is the one we bow to. He is the example for us to follow. He is not one like Webster defines a hero as, "an often mythological or legendary figure, admired for his achievements and qualities." That is the

kind of people that basically the world is following. Many of the world's heroes are not the men; They have gone on long ago. They are not the men which they esteem them to be. We saw that not too long ago around Columbus day. There was quite a public stir about the fact that the man Columbus possibly was not the character that he was promoted to be. Those facts were (I am not sure) uncovered or publicized and there was some thought that maybe we should not observe that day. At least, some promoted that because he was a man who had no respect for human rights. I do not know much about Columbus, but we do know what we read. This is also true of many of the people which the world honours. They honour them for some certain accomplishment or, I suppose the great feat they accomplished. However, when we look at the whole scope of their character, there were some serious flaws. It helps us to see the world's holidays — the hero holidays — in a right way, when we recognize that we have a person to honour, to lift up, to adore, who has no flaws, who never did and never will — our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is more to honouring heroes than merely looking at the past. The world around us pro-

motes the idea that Jesus Christ was a hero. He did a lot of great things. There are people who have tried to commercialize that and make it something that others would be interested in seeing and hearing about. Even many professing Christians sadly tried to promote this as leading people to Christ. They place Jesus Christ on the same level as Santa Claus and Martin Luther King, Jr. or some other fanciful, or historical hero whom the world holds in esteem. Recognizing the world's heroes, or even looking at Jesus Christ as merely a hero, will do something for us. It is doing something for the world which they are not aware of. Revelation 13 talks about a time when people will be swayed and swung by outstanding characters and men. We see this happening in our society today, in the holiday practices, and what and whom people are holding in esteem.

Maintain a clear vision of the person and work of Christ, will call us to worship our Lord on the religious holidays that the world observes, and to gather with His people on those days. We want no part with these people who are worshipping a man that they suppose to be a hero for them, when it is a false Christ that they are adoring.

3) *We relate to the world's holiday practices by finding our refreshment needs met in spiritual holidays, (if I may use that term).* I should call that spiritual holy days. The word "holiday," does not appear in the Scriptures. However, the word "holy day," appears twice. The first definition that Webster gives for holiday is "holy day." The two are connected. However, I hesitate to connect them because, at least in my mind, holiday does not carry the thought that holy day does. The one, I think, is how we as a church ought to look at special days and the other is how the world looks at them. That is in my frame of reference. I am not sure if we share that or not. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday." (Psalm 42:1-4)

What was the Psalmist saying here? He was saying that he

needed some refreshment. It mentions the thought of panting, thirsting, crying, and tears in verse 3, and pouring out his soul in verse 4. He needed refreshment. We too are human and we need times of rest and refreshment. Where are they found? In the world's holidays and their holiday practices? No, we find them in the spiritual holidays that we enjoy. Our weekly Lord's day observance, I believe, fills a vital place in meeting our needs for refreshment and relaxation. Those are special days to us. Semi-annual conferring meetings, or semi-annual communion services would be one illustration of that. Weekend Bible meetings, revival meetings, July 4 meetings at Numidia, and our winter Bible Schools are spiritual holy days for us. They help us meet the need for refreshment, relaxation.

What is propelling the increasing emphasis on holidays in our day and in our society? There would be many things, but not the least propelling force behind this is that many in our society are neglecting the Lord's day. They are not observing that what we believe God intended for the benefit of man, not only spiritually, but also physically. It is true that any time when we reject what God has provided for our

welfare it creates a vacuum in man. We know what vacuums do. Vacuums suck up dust and dirt. This is true materially, naturally and also spiritually. If we are someone with a spiritual vacuum that is unfilled, we will have a very difficult problem when it comes to relating to the world's holidays. However, if we are finding refreshment, relaxation and rest in what God of the Church and His people are providing for us, it will not be as difficult to find our way as we relate to the world's holidays.

In Psalm 84:10 the psalmist said, "a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." I would like to say that we ought to be able to say "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand holidays in the world." I believe this is true of the person who is interested in spiritual things. We know the New Testament quote, "Godliness with contentment is great gain," (1 Timothy 6:6) is always true. However, it is especially true in relation to our holiday observances. Finding contentment with godliness will go a long way in helping us to relate rightly to the world's holiday practices.

4) *Fourthly, we relate to practices rightly by realizing that holidays are not days off in Christian experience or*

Christian service. They are opportunities for us — New opportunities — different opportunities at times — but yet opportunities to serve the Lord. They are opportunities for refreshment in serving elsewhere sometimes other than in the normal round or routine of duty for some of us who may hold a job or our sisters who work at home. Brethren ought to be able to share in some of the lesser burden at home if they are off work especially. I am not suggesting that you take them to the restaurant. I am however suggesting that we ought to be providing some of the help that day. We need to be sure that it is not a day where our wife is taxed as hard, or harder than the days when the brethren are away. Holidays are not days off, because we understand that stewardship accountability is equally as great on the holidays as it is on any other day. They are days when God is still expecting and requiring faithfulness on our part.

5) *We relate properly to the world's holidays by drawing a clear line of separation in our observances.* We are interested in a line that is not only clearly separate from the world but that is clearly safe for us and our people. In wanting a line that is clearly safe, sometimes we need to draw the line, shall we say, a

little too far to the right. I am not suggesting that we are intemperate in our separation practices as we relate to the world's holidays. We must remember that we are to abstain not only from evil, but also from the appearance of evil.

One of the illustrations of this is a growing conviction among us. I trust this conviction is still growing and expanding among our people. We need to have the conviction that Christmas day is not the proper day to give gifts to each other — even to our children. This is not because it is wrong to give gifts. It is not because it is wrong to give gifts on Christmas day, but it is too close to the battle line of keeping the greatest Gift that was ever given in the forefront. To say that we can give gifts to each other on that day, and truly worship the One whose birth we are commemorating, is simply not a safe position to take. We want a line that is not only separate and right, but we want a line that is safe. We must remember this and apply it as we relate to the world's holiday practices.

There are a lot of decorations around us in the world on holidays, not only related to Christmas, but other holidays too — some more, some less. We ought to be aware that our separation should be evident to those

around us. I was impressed following the Christmas holiday, of hearing a brother say that someone in his community told him, "I understood that you people were plain people. This year I was impressed with the fact that your houses are plain too. I did not see any decoration on the houses of your people." The world is watching. They know where we live. They know what our practices are. Further, they know what they ought to be. Let us not disappoint them in the decorations that we may think we can involve ourselves in, when it comes to our houses and properties.

We may say, "We do not decorate trees. We do not put out special lights." I trust we do not. I am amazed sometimes at what comes out of the cookie jar sometimes in our Mennonite homes. Sometimes, that is where the decorated trees are. It is not wrong to bake cookies. It is not wrong to decorate them. However, is it right or consistent for us to "deck the tree" in the cookie jar? What about the candles and the holly that is inside on the shelf over Christmas, or over another holiday? Again, it is not wrong to have a bouquet.

We may enjoy things that contribute to the serenity, or atmosphere of our homes, but to put up

those kind of things over the world's holidays . . . I do not think we should be putting it up merely for a few days anytime, for the purpose of celebrating a holiday. It is drawing a line that is not clearly separate. What about the corn stocks tied to a few lamp posts and a few pumpkins setting there in the fall, maybe toward Halloween. We may say, "We do not carve faces on our pumpkins." Maybe we do not, but what is the purpose of pumpkins beside the lamp post anyway? It is not wrong to grow pumpkins nor to gather them in. However, it is suggesting to those who observe that and are not a part of us that in heart, maybe we would like to observe the things and practices that they are observing.

Deuteronomy 6 is a good passage to go to if we are thinking about decoration. It gives some clear and simple direction for decorating (it does not say lamp posts) our posts and the walls of our houses. Turn to that and read it for yourself sometime.

The issue of greeting cards is another thing that arises in relation to holiday practices that I think we ought to be finding a separate way. If we want to send a greeting card to another that is not wrong, but find a time other than a holiday to do it. I am not

sure that a card is always necessary. We have received some cards in our home already that did not mean so much. A friendly letter from a brother or sister that is signed with their name and "God bless you," means a lot more. There is depth to that which "Merry Christmas," or any other greeting card with another greeting that really belongs with the world will never reach. We are interested in our friends having a good time over Christmas as well as any other day. However, if they do, I trust it is not because a holiday observance was merry, but because God has blessed them and they know what the blessing of God is.

Visiting the graveyard is a good thing to do with your family. I suggest fathers, if you have not taken your family to a graveyard recently, that you put that on a list for an activity for your family. However, it is best not to go on Memorial day. A lot of people go on that day. It is not wrong to be there necessarily, but how do the many others who may be there and see us know that we did not bring some of the flowers that are scattered around by the tombstones.

Holidays are days when we as fathers may be off work, or our children are off school. Sometimes it is a temptation,

"Let us go to the zoo, or some point of interest on this day with the family." Again, it is not wrong to want to do that, nor is it always wrong to go. I do not think we ought to be taking in too many of those activities with our families. Once a year is too often to go to the zoo or those kind of places. However, but a holiday is a poor time to take your family there. We may be able to fit it into the schedule, but usually there are a lot of other people there. We are not interested in taking our families into that much exposure with the world. We need to be aware and remember that in finding a way of separation for us and our families in observing holidays.

6) *We relate right to the world's holidays by remembering the command to "be sober."* As we relate to holidays, we emphasize commemoration, not celebration like many people do. To us, as we mentioned, they are holy days, not holidays. They are not times to sit down to eat and drink and rise up to play. Do we recognize where that phrase comes from? It is found in Exodus 32:6, where there was idol worship. That kind of behaviour always belongs with idol worship, not with true worship. When Israel gathered for their special days, days which

God could bless, they were solemn assemblies.

We sometimes have gatherings on holidays, especially religious holidays. This is not wrong if it does not replace worship services which we could be taking in especially in our home congregation. We ought to be slow to route around those merely to take in a family gathering. We must remember our most important family is our home congregation — the church. However, when we do participate in family gatherings, let us be careful that there is a solemn, sober tone to those. Before the meal, there ought to be an audible prayer. It is a good time to sing together as a family. Sometimes we need to put a spiritual touch on some of the family gatherings where not everyone is interested or has the same interest that we do. If there are a couple of families together with spiritual interest, often it is a good opportunity to spend a little time singing or some other activity that sobers the tone and puts a spiritual touch to what we are doing.

Finally, we were thinking about relating to the world's holiday practices. We had mentioned that we are not only relating to what people do, but we are relating to the people too. We have an interest in those in the

world around us. We relate right to the world over holidays, when we relate with a heart of compassion, not with only a heap of criticism of all that they are doing wrong and the foolishness that it seems they are involved in. John 3:17 mentions that “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” John 16:8–11 reminds us that God sent His Spirit to do the condemning — to convict the world, “of sin . . . of righteousness . . . of judgment.” Sometimes when we relate to the world, especially around their holiday practices, we fail in this area. It is our responsibility to be what we ought to be as the people of God. It is our responsibility to share the truth with others. God will take care to see that the condemning is done because His Spirit is still in the world. We ought to relate with a heart of compassion, not only criticism, about what our neighbours and society around us are doing.

Those who manifest the love of Christ to the world do not laugh at the foolishness of the world. No, they are saddened by the blindness evident by those about us. May God continue to give us the wisdom and grace to clearly represent Him and His people in the world, in our day,

especially over the time that we days.
and the world are observing holi-

Scripture References for Volume 1

Genesis	2 Samuel	Psalms
1:31 255	13:3, 5 127	1:1 45, 47, 53
2:17 80		1:1, 2 175
27:18 37	1 Kings	1:2 49
27:19 37	8:27 8	1:3 49
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Can We Learn From History?

From a message by Lynn Diller
 given at Summersville Mennonite Church, Greensburg, KY
 October 8, 2005
 Area Wide Fellowship Meetings

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Book Reprint (Continued) **One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study**

LESSON 16.

Samuel.

- I. Birth. — 1 Samuel 1:20.

- II. Childhood.
 1. Dedicated to the Lord. — 1 Samuel 1:11, 28.
 2. Minister to the Lord. — 1 Samuel 2:11, 18; 3:1.
 3. His call. — 1 Samuel 3.

- III. A Judge of Israel. — 1 Samuel 7; Acts 13:20.
 1. Appoints his sons judges, who prove unworthy. — 1 Samuel 8:1–5.
 2. Directed by the Lord, he yields to the popular clamor for a king. — 1 Samuel 8:6–22.
 3. Anoints Saul King. — 1 Samuel 9:17–27; 10:1.
 4. Reproves Saul. — 1 Samuel 13:11–14; 15:10–23.

5. Laments over the downfall of Saul. — 1 Samuel 15:35; 16:1.
6. Anoints David king. — 1 Samuel 16:11–13.

IV. A prophet.

1. Recognition by New Testament writers. — Acts 3:24; Hebrews 11:32.
2. Reveals three signs to Saul. — 1 Samuel 10:2–9.
3. Foretells the downfall of Saul. — 1 Samuel 13:14; 15:23.

V. Death. — 1 Samuel 25:1; 28:3.

VI. Thoughts on his life.

1. Samuel's mother dedicated him to the Lord. An excellent example for Christian women to follow.

2. When the Lord called Samuel, his ready response was, "Here am I." There were no excuses of youth, weakness, etc. If we attend promptly to the call of the Lord, He will take care of our weaknesses. This same readiness to respond to duty is what made Samuel the mighty power that he was.

3. Samuel received a call from the Lord, and for a while mistook it for a call from man. Good meaning men sometimes give themselves a call to preach, and mistake it for a call from God.

4. Samuel's noble life shows the results of careful training in childhood. The best advice ever given to parents is to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

5. The wayward career of Samuel's sons shows that a man may be so much engrossed in public affairs as to neglect his family. Samuel seems to have forgotten the lesson of his own early training.

1. Was Samuel a judge over the whole, or only a part of Israel? How long did his judgeship continue?
2. What advice did he give the people when he anointed their first king?
3. Explain the Official relations between Samuel and Saul after the latter became king.
4. What offices did Samuel hold, secular and religious?
5. Compare Samuel with Eli.

LESSON 17.

Saul.

I. Sketch of his life.

1. Anointed king of Israel.

a. Cometh to Samuel and is entertained by him at a feast.

1 Samuel 9:18–24.

b. The anointing. — 1 Samuel 9:25–27; 10:1.

c. Saul prophesies. — 1 Samuel 10:9–13.

d. Chosen by lot at Mizpeh. — 1 Samuel 10:17–25.

NOTE. — This event marks the beginning of the kingdom. Hitherto God had been their direct guide; but the people rejected God (1 Samuel 10:19), and demanded to be like other nations (1 Samuel 1:5, 6). God gave them ample opportunity to test the wisdom of the change. The best man for the place in Israel was selected (1 Samuel 9:2), and he was given the spirit of prophecy (1 Samuel 10:9–13). But in rejecting God, and patterning after the idolatrous nations around them, there could be but one result — ruin. History tells the story.

2. Israelites delivered out of the hands of the Philistines. — 1 Samuel 14.

3. Victory over the Amalekites. — 1 Samuel 15:1–9.

4. Saul's disobedience and rejection. — 1 Samuel 13:8–14; 15:1, 10–23

5. Possessed of an evil spirit, and quieted by David. — 1 Samuel 16:14–23.

6. His attempts to destroy David. — 1 Samuel 18–24; 26.

7. Circumstances of his death. — 1 Samuel 31:1–6; 1 Chronicles 10.

II. His posterity. — 1 Chronicles 8:33–40.

III. From the life of Saul, we learn —

1. That when people reject God, the best of men cannot atone for their loss.

2. That a man may at one time have the spirit of prophecy, and afterwards fall from grace.

3. That when a good spirit leaves the heart, an evil spirit takes its place.

4. That the gratitude of those possessed of an evil spirit is only

temporary, and selfish at best.

5. That a man in this position cannot appreciate kindness shown him by others.

6. That a man from whom the fear of the Lord has departed, is usually filled with the fear of man.

7. That a guilty conscience brings torment.

8. That a man may be so outrageously wrong that his children refuse to indorse his meanness.

9. That the feeling, "Vengeance is sweet," makes life very bitter.

10. That God takes the kingdom away from the disobedient.

1. What value was there in Saul's confession, "I have sinned"?

2. Name two other Bible characters who made the same confession under similar circumstances.

3. What trait of his character was at once his strength and his weakness?

4. What prompted him to attempt to deceive Samuel?

5. How often and why did David save his life?

THE SABBATH OF THE BIBLE

BY S. H. NESBIT, D.D.

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DRESS

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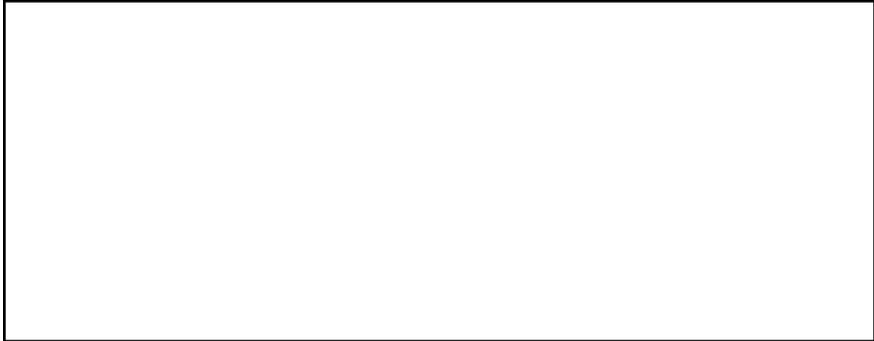
Prepared by a Committee Appointed by
Mennonite General Conference

“If any man love the world,
the love of the Father is not in him.”

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