

# **Key West Church of God**

**RAYMOND L. SHOCKLEY, Pastor**

**1419 White Street**

**Key West, Florida 33040 USA**

**Momentin@Aol.Com Website - <http://Momentin.us/>**

**Mobile - <http://M.Momentin.us/> Ph. 305-296-8844**

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Dear Friends,

We are in the middle of two major holidays, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Both have profound messages that are quite often shoved into the background in favor of profits and selfish rebellion. There are those who would do away with the holidays. Is that a good idea?

Who established the holiday? Who thought up the thing we call a holiday? It may surprise you to know that the Creator of the universe also created the holiday. God when he wanted to pass abiding principles to Israel, established holidays with customs that were to be taught. The parents were to carefully teach the lessons of what that holiday stood for every year. In this way eternal principles would be burned into the spirit of the child and the nation. It was those holidays that preserved the Jewish people as a separate and distinct people.

God created special times and holidays for the people of Israel so that their children would never forget the lessons of the past. They would never forget how they became a nation. They would never forget God and his place in their lives. When Israel failed to observe those holidays, it was not long until Israel chose the wrong path and became evil, resulting in the judgement of God. Often the judgement came in the form of evil kings who brought evil upon them, most of the evils that have come upon the American people are in direct results of evil governmental influences.

The American holiday we know as Thanksgiving was not just the idea of the Pilgrims. They were devoutly committed to the Christian faith. They desired the freedom to worship God according to their conscience and Scripture, so they journeyed from their home land of England to the wilderness of the New World. After a very difficult time, they were blessed with a good harvest and decided to have a time of Thanksgiving. They were grateful to their Savor and Creator. They thought of themselves as the new Israel. No doubt this promise loomed in their minds, Deu 28:1-2 KJV "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God."

God has honored their faith and obedience in making America first among the nations of the earth. While they were thankful for the blessings, they took seriously the warning of what would happen if they turned away from God and were no longer thankful. Deu 28:15-16 KJV "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed *shalt* thou *be* in the city, and cursed *shalt* thou *be* in the field." It was a promise that a curse would come over the land. It would be a land of cursed cities. The curse would reach into the rural areas of the country. Because of the promise of blessings and curses that God made to Israel, they knew it was important to maintain the state of blessings they found themselves in. So they took time to show their

appreciation to their benefactor and creator, the God of Israel. The Thanksgiving holiday evolved from an appreciation and a desire to keep the blessings of God on their land.

The Thanksgiving Holiday was established by the providence of God. There were important principles that must not be lost if the state of blessings is to be maintained. Without those principles, just as the nation of Israel brought itself under a curse, America would come under the curse.

What is implied by the Thanksgiving Holiday? First, there is a God who created us. Second, our blessing and provisions are His gifts. We see these principles in the following quote from the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.”

By making it an annual holiday certain lessons would be taught every year in a manner that would burn into the nature of the children, that way the lessons of Thanksgiving would be passed down to each succeeding generation. The parent would explain to the child the reason for this special holiday each year. He would be repeating the practice God had established for Israel and her children. God gave Israel seven special Levitical holidays. Each was structured to teach an aspect of their deliverance as a nation. The parent would explain the details and meaning of that feast thus preserving their relationship with God through the generations.

What happens to a nation when it ceases to be thankful? Paul in the Book of Romans reveals the process and results of people who are no longer thankful to God for his creation and provisions.

Rom 1:21-22 KJV “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and **their foolish heart was darkened**. Professing themselves to be wise, **they became fools,**”

Americans once knew God, but have stopped glorifying him as God. As a whole they appear to be no longer thankful. The Thanksgiving holiday has found itself stripped of its original intent of taking time to acknowledge God as creator and benefactor. It is now a day for pursuing human pleasures. Israel in a time of judgement was given the formula for removing itself from a time of cursing to a time of blessing. Isa 58:13-14 KJV **“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day;** and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.” To sum up what God has said to Israel in my own words, “If you want to turn things around for yourself, stop using my holy days to do your pleasure. Go back to doing my will on my holy days, delight in me on those days and I will bless you again.”

There was a time when Sunday was a time for worship for the nation. Businesses were in large part closed, freeing the population to take their families to houses of worship where their children learned the timeless lessons of faith, thus preserving the character of a Christian nation. Now it is just another day for business, a day for personal pleasure, God’s house has become neglected. God’s Word no longer shapes the nature of America’s children. The curse is over taking America’s children. Her cities are not safe; drugs have become a plague and the leading cause of death. There was a time when the lessons of

Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays were clearly taught, but like Sunday, the duties and responsibilities of those holidays have been cast aside for personal pleasure and profit.

God's instructions for turning around a nation are simple, give me back my holidays, making them holy again. Speak my words, not yours. Put me first and I will lift you up.

When men are no longer thankful to their creator, the natural result is that their minds become darkened and their imaginations create vain and foolish things. They become fools. Paul gives an example of vain and foolish thinking, Rom 1:23 KJV "And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." What exactly was Paul talking about? It was the rejection of the premise that God created everything and made man in his own image and the concocting of the notion of Evolution. In the simplest form we are being taught that God did not create man, he simply evolved as an end result one cell organism, evolving upward through bugs, birds and animals to become man.

Paul reveals the next step into the valley of darkness. These fools rebel against their creator and his laws. They want to cast off the restraining hand of God. God lets them go their own way. He no longer restrains them. They are free to go their own way, but will also reap the fruit of their actions. Rom 1:24-25 KJV "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: (25) Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." They made the truth of God into the lie and the will of the human creature the only truth that mattered to them. They gave themselves to sexual immorality.

Not being thankful to God opens a society up to a staggering fall. When you look at what Paul has to say next and compare it with the American society of today, you understand how what would have been unthinkable forty years ago is now considered perfectly normal, even desired. God has abandoned the unthankful rebels to any vile thought that comes to their corrupt nature. Rom 1:26-28 KJV "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;" To have a reprobate mind is according to Webster - "To abandon to wickedness and eternal destruction. To abandon to his sentence, without hope of pardon."

The most terrible judgement God can level at a man is to remove the Divine restraining grace from him, allowing that man to be ruled by a reprobate mind. Sin will take him to destruction. A society filled with such men will experience as a common event unthinkable horror. Ever wonder where the mass murders and rapist, the pedophile, the drug pushers all come from? These are men whose conscience cannot restrain them.

Paul finishes the chapter by telling us what will happen to the unthankful depraved, who no longer honor God. Rom 1:32 KJV "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Eternal death will be the end result.

Thanksgiving is the holiday past and Christmas is coming. It is almost impossible not to know that it is the Christmas season, with the television and its endless commercials beginning even before Halloween using Christmas as the persuader as to why you would buy their products.

Christmas celebrates one of the two most profound events of human history - the birth of Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection celebrated on Easter.

Christmas is a holiday day meant to make sure that the message of the birth of Jesus Christ is not lost. The Manger Scene is a visible teaching tool to remind us of what happened on that special day.

This is the event the manger depicts - Luk 2:7-16 KJV “And **she brought forth her firstborn son**, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. **And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.** And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, **Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.** And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. **And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.”**

Parents need to take the manger and teach their children what Christmas is really about. We often hear the question as to what the real meaning of Christmas is? In this age of depravity, we may hear it is about tolerance. It is suggested that God loves and accepts all men as they are. Is that true?

On one hand God loves the whole world and the Christmas event is God sending his son into the world to pay the redemption price. Joh 3:14-17 KJV “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” On the other hand God will judge sin and is angry with the wicked. Psa 7:11-12 KJV “God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.” Psa 9:17 KJV “The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God.”

It might surprise you to know that the real message of Christmas is “**INTOLERANCE!**” God has zero tolerance for sin. One sin brought death to mankind. Gen 2:16-17 KJV “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: (17) But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Man ate the forbidden fruit, he transgressed, he sinned and death came to him. Rom 5:12 KJV “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:” No other sin is ever charged to Adam. It only took one sin to separate Adam and his race from God.

God has zero tolerance for sin, Rom 6:23 KJV “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” You will notice sin is singular. Just one sin separates us from God. God does not want any man to die. He made a way for man to be saved from eternal death. He sent Jesus Christ his son into the world to pay the redemption price by his death on the cross. His resurrection from the death is proof that the price was paid in full.

Isa 9:6 KJV “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father,

The Prince of Peace.” When Jesus was born on that first Christmas morning, a baby was born. With that birth God was giving His son for the redemption of humanity. There is only one way to God and only one way to enter into Heaven. Jesus explained to Thomas this way, Joh 14:6 KJV “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

It might be well if we really understand what Christmas is about. It is about a people who had nothing to give, who needed everything and God who had everything. He needed nothing and gave it all. We were that people and Jesus the Son of God was that gift.

The wickedness of our time wants to hide the light of Christmas from those in darkness. The Salvation Army bell ringers are afraid to say Merry Christmas, as it might offend the darkness. Try to find a manger scene. Hurricane IRMA had destroyed most of my Christmas decorations so I went shopping for one. Our shopping is rather limited in Key West, but I thought it would be easy to find one, not one to be had. Its being pushed into the darkness.

Caught in the middle of two holidays we are reminded to be THANKFUL to our God and Savior the Lord Jesus Christ for the light of Christmas. On that first Christmas the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, Mat 4:16-17 KJV “The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. (17) From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

The Light has come!

**Moments in Bible Prophecy** - I am thankful that God has spared the ministry of Moments in Bible Prophecy. We have been able to keep all of our stations. One of our stations has been down and not able to broadcast. The program director told me that the station will be back on the air. My program had been airing once daily. They have decided to begin to air it four times a day at no additional charge. We thank God for His favor.

The hardest part of recovering from the effects of IRMA has been getting the newsletters written and in the mail. As a result it has been difficult to raise the finances needed. I want to thank you that have stood with us during this time. If you would like to help us at this time, you may do it online at <https://www.momentin.us/> or you can send a check payable to the Key West Church of God. Please write radio in the memo.

**The Message of the Month - “Have You Come to Jesus!”** “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life” (John 5:40). The religious leaders in Christ's time studied the Old Testament Scriptures carefully. But they missed the fact that the Scriptures spoke of Christ - and so, they did not come to Christ, and receive salvation through Him. There was a common saying among them, "He that has the words of the law has eternal life" "Search the Scriptures; for in *them* ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of *me*. And ye will not come to *me*, that ye might have life" (John 5:39-40). Have you come to Jesus? Many have come to church and religion but have never come to Jesus and are without eternal life. Learn what it means to come to Jesus. This CD is yours upon request.

Wishing you the light and Joy of Christmas!

Your Friend in Christ,

Raymond L Shockley

**“Moments in Bible Prophecy”**