

The “Custom” of Jesus

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his *custom* was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read,” Luke 4:16. Further reading of this chapter reveals that Jesus read from “*the book of the prophet Esaias*’ (Isaiah, chapter 61) and then expounded unto those present, declaring that that Scripture was to be fulfilled in Himself and the work He would do. With reference to Luke 4:16-18 much could be said, but the point of emphasis in this article is the fact expressed in verse 16, which informs us regarding the “*custom*” of Jesus in entering the “*synagogue on the sabbath day*” to attend the reading and explaining of the Law of Moses.

In the land of Palestine there existed numerous Jewish synagogues in which devout Jews assembled on the sabbath day to hear the Law of Moses read. It was the “*custom*,” manner, or habit of Jesus to attend and to participate in these gatherings where the Law was read and commented upon.

We, of course, do not meet in Jewish synagogues. The Law of Moses, of which the Sabbath command was a part (Ex. 20:8), has been fulfilled, blotted out, and nailed to the cross, Matt. 5:17 –18; Col. 2:14-16. Furthermore, if we turn away from the Gospel and seek to be justified by the Law of Moses, either in part or in whole, our condition is biblically described as having as “*fallen from grace*,” Gal. 5:1-4. However, let this be understood: Jesus, in this “*custom*,” set for us an example that we should follow with reference to our attending and participating in the worship assemblies of those who read and proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

One of the significant facts regarding New Testament Christians is this: they assembled together in the name of the Lord (Matt. 18:20), and “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*,” Acts 2:42. On “*the first day of the week...the disciples came together to break bread*,” to hear the Gospel preached, and to worship God “*in spirit and in truth*,” Acts 20:7; John 4:24. Assembling “*themselves with the church*” was a common practice of those who were “*called Christians*,” Acts 11:26. This was the custom, or manner of those who sought to be regulated by the requirements of the Gospel.

Unfortunately, however, there are those who call themselves “Christians” who have adopted a “custom” which is contrary to the “*custom*” of Jesus. Some have a “*custom*” of “*forsaking*” the “*assembling of ourselves together*,” even as was characteristic of those who were addressed in Hebrews 10:25, and whose negligence was strongly condemned in the verses which immediately followed, Heb. 10:26-31..

Brother or sister in Christ, if you intend to be a follower of Christ and thus abide with Christ in the eternity to come, then it behooves you to follow the “*custom*” of Jesus with respect to the matter of assembling with fellow Christians to worship, serve, and glorify the God Who “*so loved*” us that He “*gave His only begotten Son*,” John 3:16, to suffer and die for our sins, Heb. 2:9, in order to make possible our own salvation. We ask a concluding question: If you don’t love God enough to worship Him with regularity, and according to His will, do you love Him enough to **be saved**?

**** Bobby Witherington

My Friend And I, Now and Later

Monday a.m. “Hello John! How are you? Did you have a nice weekend? Oh! You went fishing? Catch any? (John holds up six fingers). Good! Well, there the 8:00 a.m. whistle...guess

we'd better get to work."

Friday p.m. "Well, John, I gotta go, 'wife and kids are expecting me. Grocery shopping to do. Expecting company."

Monday a.m. again. Same procedure. A week passes. Friday quitting time. Monday a.m. rolls around. Same process. Time passes. John and I are now good friends. We get promotions. Continue working together. Still haven't mentioned to him that I'm a Christian yet. Haven't gotten around to talking to him about his soul, either. Plan to sometime. John buys a better, more comfortable house. I'm glad. I like John. He attends my son's graduation. We go bowling together. On the same league. Still no mention of Christ.

Late Thursday night, John's eldest daughter calls. "Daddy had a heart attack!" I hurry over. Ten minutes later I arrive. Too late. John is dead!

My heart is crushed. We were so close. Then, too, we were about the same age. I leave the funeral, go home, and open my Bible. For some reason I'm not interested in TV tonight. I wonder about John's soul. He never obeyed the gospel. Is there a chance for him? I read Rom. 3:23; Luke 13:5; Rom. 1:16; 2 Thess 1:6-9; Heb. 5:9; I Pet. 4:17,18 and experience that sad, hopeless, empty feeling. Then I read 2 Tim. 2:2; I Pet. 3:15, and Mark 16:15, and I feel worse. I let my best friend down!

I lay awake at night. Can't get John off my mind. He was so cheerful in that nice, new house. Had a good family, too. Can't sleep. Get up, open my Bible and begin reading. I read about the judgment and the hereafter. My eyes somehow become fixed upon the words, "*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,*" Matt. 25:41. I quit reading. Have John on my mind. We worked together for years, and I never made a serious effort to teach him about Christ,.

John was never a Christian. All these years I've been a Christian..., or have I? John was my best friend. Now my conscience hurts, for I realize that John was my friend, but I wasn't **his** friend!

I "put off" teaching John. I can't bring him back. What can I do? Let's see...well, I do have other friends. Come to think about it, I haven't talked to them about Christ, His Gospel, his church, and things eternal, either!

Monday a.m. "Hello Jack! How are you? Say, I wish you could have been with us yesterday. We studied about the life of Christ in Bible Study, and then we heard an excellent sermon on 'Rightly dividing the Word.' How 'bout letting me drive by and taking you and your family to Bible Study and worship this coming Sunday..."

*** —Bobby Witherington

*"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and **always** be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear,"* I Pet. 3:15.

"Action is the true test of faith."