

February 16, 2020
“It Is Too Much”

Following the division of the twelve tribes of Israel, which formerly constituted the United Kingdom, “**Jeroboam the son of Nebat**” began to reign over the ten northern tribes (I King 2). Being fearful that “*if the people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem,*” Jeroboam set up “*calves of gold*” in Dan and Bethel that the people might go these places instead of Jerusalem to worship (I King 12:26-29).

In order to accomplish his shrewd, but sinful plot, Jeroboam appealed to man’s natural desire to pursue a religion of convenience. He said “*It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan*” (I Kings 12:28-29).

So it has been in every age. Man, believing “*it is too much*” to worship and serve as God has directed, has always succeeded in finding convenient substitutes, and has thereby perverted God’s plan.

Calvinists, believing “*it is too much*” to require one to “*be thou faithful unto death*” (Rev. 2:10), have deceived many by their “Impossibility of Apostasy” Doctrine,. Baptists (and others), believing “*it is too much*” to expect every alien sinner to be immersed, have substituted their “faith only” and “grace alone” doctrines. Denominational churches, believing “*it is too much*” to expect saints to observe the Lord’s Supper every first day of the week, have changed the biblical frequency to a monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or to an annual basis. Many liberal-minded brethren, believing “*it is too much*” for the church to be its own benevolent society, have established human societies to relieve the church of its God-given work. Many weak church members, believing “*it is too much*” to attend every Bible Study and worship assembly, adopt some flimsy excuses (“tired,” “company came,” “too far,” “weather too bad,” “people not friendly,” etc., etc.) and thereby excuse themselves from the worship of God and the study of His inspired work.

Sadly enough, Jeroboam’s sin did not stop at the “*calves of gold*” in Dan and Bethel. He “*made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi,*” changed the observance of the feast of tabernacles to the “*fifteenth day*” of the “*eighth month*” instead of the seventh month, which God had ordained (cf. I King 12:31,32; Lev. 23:34). To admit one departure under the guise of convenience is to open the door for every other departure which Satan desires to thrust upon unsuspecting man.

But for Jeroboam and the Israelite people, “*this thing became a sin*” (I King 12:30). So it is with any people who, for convenience sake, circumvent God’s word and excuse themselves from doing what is authorized. Reader, take heed and beware lest “*this thing*” become “*a sin*” **for you!**

*** —B. Witherington

They Burned Their Books!

While Paul labored for the Lord at Ephesus, he met certain “*vagabond Jews,*

exorcists” who pretended to be able to expel evil spirits from those thus possessed (Acts 19:13). *“There were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew”* who *“took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits”* so that said spirits might depart from their bodies (vs. 13,14).

These men, who *“took upon”* themselves a power which God had not given them and who sought to function in an assumed capacity, were *“overcame,...prevailed against,..so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded”* (Acts 19:16).

“And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver” (Acts 19:17-19).

Much could be said about the event which is herein related. First, we might state that the sincerity of these people was evident inasmuch as they parted with cherished items for Christ’s sake. Secondly, this record shows that to be accepted of the Lord, we must put away that which is contrary to Him. Doubtlessly, many other lessons are also inferred.

But the part which we desire to emphasize here is the fact that among those who *“believed and confessed”* were many users of *“curious arts”* who *“brought their books together and burned them before all men...”* (Acts 19:18-19).

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if men today conducted a book-burning festival? No, I am not against books — that is, I am not against good books. But the world would be in a better condition if many books had never been written! Trashy books, filled with smut and filth, do not belong on the newsstands nor on our bookshelves. “Pastor” Russell’s **“Studies in the Scriptures,”** Ellen G. White’s **“Great Controversy,”** Joseph Smith’s **“Book of Mormon,”** Hitler’s **“Mein Kampf,”** the atheistic evolutionary writings of Darwin, Huxley, Spender and others, the Catholic **“Catechism,”** and every creed book of so-called Protestantism, by which sincere hearts are deluded, all need to be burned. The world would be in a better place in which to live if these books had never been written.

If these books and others in their class were destroyed and sincere souls returned to the word of God, the *“Name of the Lord Jesus”* would once again be “magnified,” and His word which *“mightily grew”* then would prevail. Best of all, more people would go to heaven, and less would go to hell. Yes, many books need to be burned and **the** book should be obeyed.

*** —B. Witherington