

Question: What do you think about Friday the 13th and other superstitions that many people in our world fear?

In spite of scientific progress and education, many ancient superstitious ideas continue among us. For example, many buildings leave out a thirteenth floor: the elevator goes from the twelfth floor to the fourteenth floor. Some people refuse to go out of the house on Friday the 13th, and others carry a lucky rabbit's foot. It is not uncommon to hear someone quote an old folk saying like “throw salt over your shoulder” or “suck a lemon with a pinch of soda if a black cat crosses your path.” Sometimes we hear of athletes who refuse to wash their socks as long as the team is on a winning streak. Hopefully, most intelligent people understand that these old sayings are harmless and do not take such superstitions very seriously.

All superstitions that I am aware of are in some way based on fear. The word sometimes translated “superstitious” in the Bible comes from a word that literally means “fear of demons” (Acts 17:22). Ancient pagans believed that many gods dwell in the rocks, trees and other things around us; and they lived in constant fear of offending these gods and of being destroyed by them. But the only power in superstition is found in the fear it evokes. Many superstitions of today are based on these fears. In contrast, the Bible teaches that God is the sovereign ruler over all things in heaven and on earth. We should live with reverent fear and trust in God alone (Deuteronomy 6:13).

Jesus often demonstrated that his power was greater than any demonic power (Mark 5). Later, the apostle Paul wrote to Christian believers that “you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship” (Romans 8:15) and that “God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7). When speaking to the philosophers of ancient Athens, the apostle Paul made it clear that the God who created the world is Lord of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24ff). As creator, he is not nature itself nor in any created thing. As creator, he is separate from and above all that he created. Therefore, we should no longer live under the control of superstitious fears.

Our God desires that we love and obey him. Thus, John wrote: “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). The writer of Hebrews encourages us by saying, “God has said, ‘Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5-6). With God on our side, neither man nor demons can harm us.

We have a choice. We can live in superstitious fear or we can live with courageous faith in God the Heavenly Father who rules the universe. I pray that my readers will choose the latter and forget the superstitions of the world.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2012/04/20