

“*Superstition and True Worship!*”

Jeremiah 7:1-11

Intro. – Before I begin, let me give credit where credit is due. My brother, Jim wrote an article several yrs ago which dealt with our topic today. Jim has always been an original thinker and gifted writer. I borrowed much from this article in preparation for this message.

What happens when you put a siren on a car with a bunch of flashing lights? You ask the average toddler and honestly I think they’ll respond the same way I thought when I was a little boy – it makes the car go faster!

I want to use this to illus. immature minds often give birth to superstitions – overly simplistic applications of cause and effect relationships. With this in mind, I’m not going to talk about black cats, Friday 13ths, or spilling salt over your shoulder etc. I want to consider three areas in particular that God gave us, which we in turn have degraded or “dumb down” by superstitious regard.

This matter goes way back. Ancient Israel lost the Ark of the Covenant to the Philistines (1 Samuel 4 & 5). Why? Because Israel thought carrying the ark before them into battle could substitute for a right relationship with God. Later in 2 Kings 18:4, we read how Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent God had commanded Moses to make. Why? People were treating it as a substitute god, not as reminder of the Lord’s deliverance.

Brings us to our text. God instructs Jeremiah to preach a sermon in the gate of the Temple “and here is what I want you to say” (paraphrase). “All you who go through these gates to worship the Lord take note: your worship is nothing but superstitious practices. Don’t hold this false sense of security that just because you have the Temple that such is enough to keep My favor from leaving you and My judgment from breaking you. Don’t trust such a nation. Be faithful to Me and I will be faithful to My promises to you!”

Enter 21st Century man. Outside the Church the occult gains momentum. Inside the Church, people wonder about a “shroud” in Turin, Italy as if such will either confirm or deny Christianity. I.e. many today are confusing superstitious beliefs/practices to that of *genuine worship to God*. Is it possible you and I can be parcel to such? Can it be, that we can be practicing superstitious ways unknowingly in our worship to God?!

Purpose: to identify and distinguish superstition from true worship

I SUPERSTITION AND GOD’S WORD

- I trust we know what role the Bible serves in genuine worship to God...

A. The Bible Used *Superstitiously*

- Illus. – During WW II, Korean and Vietnam wars, certain bookstores had a New Testament named by its publisher as “The Soldier’s Shield” edition. It was like any other NT, except this had a 22 gage plate of stainless steel sewn into the back cover. The idea was if a soldier carried this special NT in his left front shirt pocket, God’s Word would protect his heart from that fatal bullet.
- 1. Only the Lord knows how many lives were saved from physical death by the NT carried in shirt pockets – and other injuries averted by those who carried it in their hip pockets!
- 2. Now, if lives are saved by such a Bible, who gets the credit? – the Lord or the metal plate?
 - a. if you want to protect loved ones from bullets, give them a flak jacket...
 - b. must see Bible as *different* protection – that which comes from having God’s Word in one’s heart... and not over it!

B. The Bible is to be *Studied*

- 1. 1 Timothy 2:15 “*Be diligent (study) to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of truth.*”
- 2. Many people never really get into the study of the Bible because they view it superstitiously:
 - a. these are the ones who’ll kiss the book, enter family records, decorate tables with it etc...
 - b. Illus. – heard the story of elder visiting Mrs. Jones... “Joey, go get that book Mommy loves so much.” Joey returned with a Sears catalog...
- 3. Bible is a book to be studied/read and applied... its holy/immutable precepts do not come by osmosis

4. God gave us His Word to study, know and do... not to be our “Lucky Charm”

C. The Bible is Our *Source*

1. Everything we need to know and do the will of God = Bible (2 Timothy 3:16,17)...
2. To know the true and living God, to know how to truly/properly worship Him = must know Word!
3. In matters of faith and practice Bible must be our sole source of authority and not our superstitious good luck piece.

II SUPERSTITION AND THE *NAME OF JESUS*

- the name of Jesus is being used today in several vain/profane ways:

A. Jesus’ Name Used *Superstitiously*

- Illus. – Acts 19:11-17 the 7 sons of Sceva tried to cast out a demon *in the name of this Jesus whom Paul preached*. Demon respected Jesus and Paul, but the empty use of Jesus’ name brought fury from the demon upon 7 brothers who thought mere words were the key to their success as exorcist.
- 1. Today, there are those think they can have health/wealth by merely repeating name of Jesus...
- 2. Little difference between these and others who think sins are forgiven in proportion to the number of times a certain phrase is repeated while holding beads.
- 3. To do something in Jesus’ name = do so in accordance to His will, acknowledging His Lordship...
- 4. To glibly speak His name without knowing and doing His will is height of superstition!

B. Jesus’ Name in Prayer

1. To pray *in Jesus name* = is proper... precedence in Scripture:
 - a. Colossians 3:17 “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*”
 - b. 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6 etc. all speak of coming into presence Father through Christ!
2. Often prayers nothing more than a *give me session...*” Rather than refer to Him as “Father” ought to call Him the more appropriate name *Boy* – “Boy, do this, get me this, help me...”
3. “In Jesus name, Amen” certainly will NOT make an earnest prayer wrong; nor, will those words repeated emptily make a wrong prayer right.
 - must not glibly use Jesus’ name in a superstitious manner whenever we pray!

III SUPERSTITION AND *BAPTISM*

- could speak on a number of other areas where superstitions take place in church... one area that really begs for attention along these lines is immersion/baptism:

A. Baptism Used *Superstitiously*

1. Illus. – following is true. My oldest brother, Dan preached in Bangor, MI, 1978 he received phone call from local funeral director. “Dan, I think I already know your answer, but I have to ask. Have a family with a request. Will you baptize their deceased loved one?”... Dan did NOT...
2. Often, immersion/baptism wrongly perceived as a “ticket to heaven” or “mystical fire insurance”:
 - a. to many, as long as a person’s been immersed, doesn’t matter from that moment on...
 - b. Illus. – “sure glad so & so was immersed... doesn’t matter wrapped car around a utility pole while on a drunken spree, killing himself and the woman with whom he was having an affair!
3. Immersion/baptism is a work of God... when “whosoever will” comes before Him through faith...

B. Baptism is the Moment of *Grace*

1. When sins are remitted/covered by blood of Christ... when God’s work evident and not man’s
2. When Holy Spirit’s presence is given...
3. When you and I and *whosoever will* is *clothed with Christ...*
4. When added to the Body of Christ by God Himself!

C. Baptism is the *Beginning*

1. One's immersion into Christ is their beginning, not the end. Baptism/immersion is *WHEN* one is *born again of the water and of the spirit*.
2. Superstition believes/practices immersion as "the end" when in reality *baptism is the beginning!*

Conclusion: The Kansas State Legislature won't invite Preacher Joe Wright back. This invited this preacher from the Central Christian Church (2900 N. Rock Road), Wichita to deliver the invocation. To quote Paul Harvey, "He told God on them!" No sooner had this guest preacher concluded his prayer, three representatives of the State Legislature were on their feet at the microphones protesting, "He can't talk like that about us." Rep. Delbert Gross called the invocation, "...gross...derisive...sanctimonious...overbearing." Rep. David Haley called it, "...blasphemous and ignorant." Rep. Sabrinis Standiford echoed the indignation. What in the world had Joe Wright said in Topeka which incited the wrath of these three representative from Hays and Kansas City? Well, the following is the entire text of that invocation/prayer. You evaluate it for yourself:

January 23, 1996

"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know your Word says, 'Woe to those who call evil good' and that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium. We have inverted our values. We confess that we have ridiculed the absolute truth of your Word in the name of moral pluralism. We have worshiped other gods and have called it multiculturalism. We have endorsed perversion and called it alternative lifestyle. We have exploited the poor and called it a lottery. We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. Father, in the name of 'choice' we have killed our unborn and then in the name of 'right to life' we have killed abortionist. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building esteem. We have abused power and call it 'political savvy.' We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it 'freedom of expression.' We have ridiculed the time honored values of our forefathers and called it 'enlightenment.' Search us, O God. Know our hearts today. Try us and show us any wickedness in us. And then cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of Kansas and who have been ordained by You to govern this great state. Grant them Your wisdom to rule and may their decisions direct us to the center of Your will. I ask this, in the name of Your Son, the Living Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen!

When will we regard the cross as our personal self-denial rather than some *good luck* charm to ward off vampires? When will we see that superstition must never substitute for righteousness? Truth is, superstition must have no place for those who are *in Christ!*