

**TELECAST SERMON FOR  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024  
"THE CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE ARE VAIN"  
HEAD PASTOR BILLY HAN, JR.**

Thank you Melvin!

One of the reasons I truly feel blessed is that I have the opportunity to share the "Good News" of the glorious Gospel of the Kingdom of God with you, our TV congregation, through these weekly telecasts. Man's human instincts causes him to embrace sin and shun the Lord's sacrifice and call to everlasting life through His salvation. It is my sincerest desire, that you will not fail to heed the Lord's commandment, to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus. I pray that, as a result of the Gospel message you will hear today entitled, **"THE CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE ARE VAIN,"** you will move a step closer to Jesus.

The scriptures as well as the subject matter for this morning, warn us, "Not to learn the ways of the heathen." The word, heathen, means: any person or nation that neither worships nor believes there is a God, while the term, vain means: having no real value or significance, worthless, unprofitable.

We, who have been born again, are not heathens, but have been called to be Saints in Christ Jesus. The true born-again Christian has been drawn out of his sinful nature unto God, Who was created in righteousness and true holiness.

Therefore, and since the last days are upon us, one should be very conscientious of the Lord's righteousness and what God requires of us. Yes, viewers, you may ask, "What has this to do with Christmas?" Do you remember what a real Christmas is?

As we approach the Christmas season, you will find shop windows, decorations, newspaper advertisements, magazine articles, and other events round and about us to promote Christmas. Have you considered just what is being promoted?

Like the unique and phenomenal event which took place in Bethlehem almost 2000 years ago, current customs prevent the true light of God to shine into the hearts of those who are lost in this sin-filled world.

Just imagine, this significant event changed the course of history and affected the world in its entirety. No other birth has had such a great impact upon mankind.

Read in Jeremiah 10:2-5, "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. (Those who did not know God and who did not trust in Him were afraid of thunder and lightning, eclipses and comets, or of any unusual thing that they might see in the sky.) For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.

They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be born, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good."

Now don't these verses "hit the nail right on the head!" in regard to the perfect description of the Christmas tree?

Let us review the course many will take in preparing for Christmas.

Each year efforts are made to seek out a tree. Whether it be found in the forest, or purchased at a store, one goes through great pains to get the best tree. The tree will be taken home, decorated, cared for, and placed in the most conspicuous area of the home for all to see. Next, family members and neighbors are all invited to the house to come and see the tree which has been erected in the home. Simultaneously, county officials use the media to warn the people of the dangers of having such a tree in the home, and the precautions that should be taken to protect the home against theft and fire.

Now with all of this activity, do you think Christ is foremost in their hearts? I think not! Jeremiah tells us that the Christmas tree is the way of the heathen and a custom of the people of the world.

Yes, the hearts of men have been polluted, and more attention is given to a decorative tree, Santa Claus, and merriment, than to the Life-giver, Himself, Jesus Christ. We should not liken ourselves to the heathen of Israel, who made a figure with their hands, and imaginations to convince themselves that God existed.

We read in Ephesians 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." It is through faith we recognize that the true "tree of trees" is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the "Tree of Life." Listen to Revelation 2:7, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

From this tree, mankind can have any thing his heart desires. Everything and every gift are wrapped up in this one "Tree," which includes the trimming and decorations, "No strings attached." This tree was kept from man after he sinned, but now it has been given back to the redeemed in the form of Jesus Christ.

We read in Revelation 22:14-15, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolators, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

The real meaning of Christmas is found in Christ Jesus. Oh, it is true that the world thinks of this glorious person as a tender, little babe born in a manger! At each Christmas, the

wonderful stories of the angelic choir, the wise men from afar and the gifts presented to the babe are always recalled.

However, the glorious light dawned only upon a few, that this child was none other than the Almighty God Himself, Who was from the beginning and Who clothed Himself in a human body prepared for Him, so that the thoughts of God, might be made known unto all men.

We read in Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, and 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."

This scripture reveals that Christ came into this world to seek and to save that which was lost. Therefore, today is the day of salvation, if you will but hear His voice.

The born-again message, which was first preached by Jesus, aroused the curiosity of a Pharisee, named Nicodemus. He was a very strict religionist. He celebrated the Passover, paid tithes, said prayers, brought sacrifices, and tried his utmost to keep the Law. To him the Lord Jesus said, "Ye must be born again."

Turn to your Bibles, viewers, and you will find in John 3:5, "Verily, verily (that is to say, this is a truth,) I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." And when God says you cannot, it means you cannot!

Keeping the law, joining a church, living up to a religious creed or rituals will not save you. Hell will be full with souls of that nature, because they failed to believe Jesus has set men free.

What does it mean to be born again? It means to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ by immersion. Jesus tells us in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

We see that baptism is essential to salvation. Our physical life begins by birth. Our Spiritual life begins the same way; however, it is not done by joining a church and becoming religious. Yes, viewers, you cannot join the family of God, you must be born into it.

You can't make a Christian out of anybody. True Christians are not made, they are born! And in what name are you to be baptized? Baptism must be administered in the name of Jesus.

Please read Acts 2:38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Just imagine, in that one verse, two wonderful and enduring promises are given to you, if you are baptized in the name of Jesus: you will receive the remission of your sins (that is

to say the Lord will remove your sins as far as the east is from the west and will remember them no more), and you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which will afford you entry into Heaven.

The only evidence cited in the Bible to verify one has received the gift of the Holy Spirit is that of "speaking in tongues" or an "unknown tongue."

To confirm this, let us read in Acts 2:4, "And they (120) were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Receiving the Holy Ghost is something to see and hear. John reveals this phenomenon in chapter 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth (Pleaseth), and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The wind is a reality no man can fully explain. Only a fool would say, "I don't believe in the wind because I have never seen it, and I can't understand it."

Thus, one cannot explain the Holy Spirit. But His mighty power makes the harlot pure, the liar honest, the drunkard sober, the blasphemer prayerful, the proud humble, and the weak strong.

The Apostle Peter, once empowered by the Spirit of the Lord, revealed the keys to the Kingdom of God, in the days subsequent to Pentecost. We read Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

In other words, without administering the name of Jesus in water baptism, one is not saved! Jesus is the only Saviour for this lost, dying, and sin-sick world! He gives us all the hope that we need for every tomorrow. He is the pre-eminent Saviour! He was born to die for our sins, born to give us second birth, and born to take us home to glory.

Listen to I Thessalonians 4:16-17, "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Yes, these are comforting words for very true born-again Christian. Thusly, TV viewers, the salvation of your soul lies with the decision you make today. You may be saying to yourself, "I find that hard to believe that I am not saved!" But isn't that what faith is all about, believing and keeping His commandments.

And yes, it is a difficult decision to make, being that we live in a generation with increasing corruption, deceitfulness, craftiness, lies, murders, thefts, etc., and such is the myth of Santa Claus.

A recent magazine article stated that making Santa Claus "real" required white lies. A lie is a lie, whether it's white or black! How do we explain the multiple Santas in the different stores? How does he get down the chimney, when not all have fireplaces, and more so in Hawaii!

Moreover, how do we one day explain to our youngsters that the answers we gave them to these questions in the past were not truths at all. It is important for parent to be honest with their children, and the way to be honest is found in the Bible.

Listen to Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." I'm sure you will agree that the best training is to be an example.

Therefore, according to the Bible, "white lies" are not permissible either. We should tell our children, that the Santa Claus of this world is only a myth, a make believe one, and that all the blessings flow from our Lord Jesus Christ, the true giver of gifts.

Jesus Christ is God's love gift to the world, and "true born-again" believers are the Father's love gift to Jesus Christ. Christmas should be a real celebration for everyone, if the real source of the blessings, Who is Jesus alone, was allowed to emerge upon the Christmas scene.

In addition, the Santa Claus image, formulated by man, promotes the idea that happiness comes thru material things, and that Santa dresses in red and gives away things, which were actually bought or brought by other people. Though Santa has a beard, he is not Jesus!

We are told in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

In other words, viewers, put Jesus first in your lives, and bring yourself back to God, then the material things will surely follow, as you have need of them. We read in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom, For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

Yes, it is more blessed to give than to receive! However, it works both ways: to receive, one must give: and God loves a cheerful giver, not merely at Christmas, but at other times as well.

Paul tells us in II Corinthians 9:6-7, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth, bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

Giving need not be done only at Christmas or Thanksgiving. Generosity in spirit and in works should be expressed every day of the year, especially where the poor and needy are concerned.

Now here's some timely advice to all the children and teenagers. As the receiver of gifts, be content with what you receive for Christmas, your birthday, or other special events. Remember, your parents know what you need, and they are giving you gifts that arise from the heart, as well as out of necessity.

In other words, what you see is what you get! Suppress all negative behavior and act like men and women. Refrain from murmuring and being disgruntled. For when you assume any of these attitudes, you become like the multitudes, who rejected and crucified the "Gift" that came down from heaven.

Just imagine, His first trip down to earth was marred by humiliation, shame, and suffering. But that ordeal finally terminated. He is back in glory, for as the Psalmist says, "The King of glory shall come in!" Another custom of Christmas, created by mankind, includes eating, drinking, and engaging in merriment. Hence comes the phrase: "Merry Christmas."

The main attraction features liquor, that is alcoholic beverages. What is the Christian to do: Do we abstain, or is moderate consumption acceptable? The answers are found in the scriptures.

Let us read in I Corinthians 10:6, "Now these were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." The setting up of that desire as an idol, can be found in the 7th verse: "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

The result of fellowshiping with the world and its pleasures is death, as we read in verse 8, "Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand."

Can you imagine the destruction that came when they sat down to eat, drink and be merry, instead of praying? We should pray, "Lord help us to escape all these things," and I'm sure God, Who is faithful, will not suffer us to be tempted above that, we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it.

One of the major problems that plague us today is alcoholism. It is a dilemma which is getting progressively worse. If consumed, wine gives one false hope and courage; hard liquor leads to confrontations. What fools men make of themselves, reeling to and fro, drunkenly down the street.

God tells us not to carouse with drunkards and gluttons, for they are on their way to poverty. We read Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Alcohol ridicules and mocks a person.

We read in Proverbs 23:29-30 & 35, "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who had contentions: who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."

It is forbidden for a Christian to drink wine or whiskey, lest he drink and forget his duties, and his Judgments be afflicted and perverted.

We read Proverbs 31:4-5, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink. Lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted."

Today many drink because they are depressed, or stress has gotten the best of them. They drink to forget their poverty and misery. Remember, TV viewers, no matter how much you drink, after it's all over, the problem is still before you. Drinking never solves anything, it often makes matters worse. A sense of guilt develops, which can lead to more drinking and eventually alcoholism.

America's major problem is not with drugs, but it lies with alcohol. We all know that drinking harms and endangers not only the drinker, but other innocent people, as well. Small amounts of alcohol in the blood system can reduce one's coordination and reflexes. It can cause one to be overconfident and take risks such as driving too fast, passing at the wrong time, etc.

Loss of coordination and judgment make drinkers accident-prone at home, on the job and elsewhere. Losing work, "Monday-morning" absences due to hangover, or coming to work intoxicated may cost a person his or her job.

Arrests for drunkenness or creating disturbances are not only embarrassing but can mean a damaging arrest record. I'm happy to see laws are being passed to protect the innocent, and which give the offender something to consider before he drives intoxicated again. Each year we hear of tragic accidents and the needless loss of lives on the highways, due to drunken drivers. If you drink, don't drive!

Therefore, as Christians, we should abstain from alcohol. We of the Apostolic Faith Church preach abstinence, not moderation.

Let us read in I Peter 4:2-4, "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banqueting, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking vile of you."

The things of this world will not bring satisfaction. Likened to Moses we should make the right choice.

We read in Hebrews 11:26, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

Jeremiah writes in Lamentations 3:40, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."

Yes, indeed, the customs of the people are vain. The tree, Santa Claus and alcohol do not enhance our salvation or worship, one iota, in the eyes of God, but such practices continue to prevent one from entering into the kingdom of God. 3, 2, 1,

If you would like to learn more about God's Word and the Church, and view these telecast presentations in their entirety, please visit our website at <http://Jesuscomingsoon.org>.

Until our next telecast, this is your host, Head Pastor William Han, Jr. expressing my sincerest appreciation to each of you, who have allowed us to come into your homes. May the good Lord bless and keep you all in the hollow of His hands.

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