

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Judy
The Williams' Family
Ophelia

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

www.pinolechurchofchrist.com

Vol. 14, No. 35 - June 9, 2013

Elders:

Brad Behrens - bradbehrens@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Michael Odom - MichaelOdom@pinolechurchofchrist.com
Ernie Sprinkel - preacher@pinolechurchofchrist.com

This Week's Question:

What king was killed by Jehu and then cast into Naboth's field?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Agabus - Acts 11:27-28

Published by the church of Christ which meets at 755 Pinole Valley Road, Pinole, CA 94564, Phone (510) 724-1994, (Mailing address: church of Christ, P.O. Box 453, Pinole, CA 94564)

Idolatry and Sorcery

by John Clark

G. K. CHESTERTON WAS right when he said, "The Iliad is only great because in it all of life is a battle; the Odyssey is only great because in it all of life is a journey." These two concepts of those Greek classics are combined as Paul shows our journey to heaven can be a titanic struggle between flesh and spirit (Galatians 5:17). If I am to triumph in this struggle, what I want must be defeated by what God wants. O glorious defeat! I win by losing! "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts there of" (Galatians 5:24).

Idolatry: Rivals to God

Paul came to Athens and unleashed a logically devastating attack on idolatry (Acts 17). When he wrote of the works of the flesh, he put idolatry and sorcery in the midst of a catalogue of horrors that have ruined every quest for human happiness (Galatians 5:16-26).

William Barclay helps us understand the works of the flesh with his observation that "every one of them is a perversion of something which is in itself good" (Flesh and Spirit, p. 39). We pervert true worship by substituting something for God and doing things contrary to God's instruction. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" is one of six declarations about God in

Exodus 20:1–7. All denounce idolatry. Another is, “I the Lord God am a jealous God.” God will not share the love of His people with another god. Idolatry is infidelity. Jeremiah described it as “adultery with stones and with stocks” (Jeremiah 3:9). This is Paul’s point in his discussion of godly jealousy and devotion to Christ with the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:2–3). The illogicality (Acts 17), the absurdity (Isaiah 44), and the tragedy (1 Kings 18) of idolatry are also repeated themes in Scripture.

Where Have All the Idols Gone?

Can an ancient evil really be a modern menace? Our perceptions are improved by reading Paul’s word, “Covetousness is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5) and “a covetous man is an idolater (Ephesians 5:5). A covetous person cannot go to heaven (1 Corinthians 6:10; 5:11). Any ultimate concern becomes our god. When pride, money, property, job, or personal achievement become rivals to God, we are idolaters (Matthew 6:24; Philippians 3:19; Romans 16:18)!

Satan is “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). There are forces of evil that influence men to act as if God were not God. Secularism turns human achievement into a god. Humanism denies man’s spiritual nature and idolatrously substitutes a part for the whole, worshiping the fragment. Communism, described by a disillusioned disciple as “the god that failed,” has murdered millions and holds a third of the planet captive by an economic interpretation of history. Yes, the modern world can be correctly viewed as Paul saw ancient Athens, a “city wholly given to idolatry” (Acts 17:16). As we ponder such a world and ask if Christians can change it, there is a more primary question: “Am I an idolater?”

Sorcery: Seeking Light in Darkness

Idolatry and sorcery are habitual allies. Pharmakeia, from which our English word “pharmacy” comes, is translated either “witchcraft” or “sorcery” (Galatians 5:20; Revelation 9:21; 18:23). W. E. Vine says it “primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells; then poisoning; then sorcery” (The

Expanded Vine’s, p. 1064–1065). A number of different words are translated “witchcraft” in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Chronicles 33:6; 2 Kings 9:22; Micah 5:12 and Nahum 3:4). God forbade His people to have anything to do with what we term today the “occult” (Deuteronomy 18:9–14). A witch was put to death (Exodus 22:18; 1 Samuel 28:7–9). God’s people were not to look for light in darkness! Probably the best biblical equivalent for the word “occult” is the word divination. “Divination is the attempt to decipher the will of the gods through the use of magical techniques. The pagans believed they could use human skill and ingenuity to acquire from the gods knowledge about certain situations” (Packer, Tenney, and White, *The Bible Almanac*, p. 114–115). The diviner would be one who thinks he can dispense with divine revelation. We read in Scripture of “divining lies” (Ezekiel 22:18). Sorcery surrounds us! Men seeking to have their own way and find their way are doomed to darkness, for they have turned from the light.

Spreading Rebellion

Sorcery is spreading! Everything from reading tea leaves, human palms and cards, to astrology (Isaiah 47:13). The drug culture revives pagan sorcery. In the marketplace, devices of manipulation abound: Mind Dynamic, yoga, Silva Mind Control, EST, Scientology, Zen Buddhism, New Age Theology. Closer to home, we must beware of every thought or deed that elevates what we want above what God wants. “For rebellion is as witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Samuel 15:23). When people turn from God and His revelation, it is not so much that they don’t believe in anything; they believe in everything! “Everyone has a right to his own belief is not found in the Bible. Neither is it found in the mind or mouth of the true believer. It is the voice of idolatry! “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21)! (Christianity Magazine, APRIL 1987, VOLUME 4 NUMBER 4)