

VIRUS 13

4. What does God reward most in worship?
 - * The intentions and motives of the heart (1 Cor. 13:1-3). God watches the heart (Prov. 4:23). Christ's love compels us (2 Cor. 5:14).
5. What is true religion according to James?
 - * ***Jam. 1:27*** *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

Prayer

Father, we offer our bodies as living sacrifices. Teach us to give our substance in love, not by compulsion. Let breaking of bread be peace and proclamation of Christ's death, not empty ritual. Search our hearts. Let Christ's love compel every thought, word, and work. Restore our dominion as we worship You in spirit and truth. Keep us pure in heart and merciful to the needy, through Jesus Christ our High Priest, Amen.

Ignorance of New Covenant Worship Updates (V)

“Ignorance”: ‘not knowing the true sanctuary, the meaning of idolatry, Christ’s oracle, or our co-worker role’.

Introduction

This virus makes believers worship like Old Covenant priests instead of New Covenant priests. Christ our High Priest entered into an invisible, eternal sanctuary, which the Lord erected and not man (Heb. 8:2). He gave His oracle (word) to the original Apostles (John 17:14). Worship must follow Christ’s directive or it is in vain (Mark 7:7).

Many still enforce Old Covenant shadows (Col. 2:17). That opens the door to idolatry, witchcraft, and principalities. But we are “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16), co-workers with God (1 Cor. 3:9). Our job is to be “bridges” - priests bringing relief to the world (Matt. 25:31-46).

Objectives

By the end of this virus, every lamb will:

(1) Know the true sanctuary into which Christ leads us, being both invisible and eternal (Heb. 12:22-24).

(2) Follow Christ's oracle. The apostles gave us God's word (John 17:14), not Old Covenant law.

(3) Understand what idolatry is, and that we should flee from it. Worship contrary to John 4:23-24 is idolatry. The Spirit guides us into all truth (John 16:13-14).

(4) Understand how any hint of idolatry can stumble a new believer.

(5) Understand their co-worker role. We are priests and benefactors to the world (1 Pet. 2:9; Prov. 19:17).

Presentation

1. The Sanctuary Update: Invisible and Eternal

The Old Covenant had an earthly temple. Under the New Covenant, Christ entered heaven (Heb. 9:24). He is our High Priest forever (Heb. 4:14).

Heb. 12:22-24 ²² *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly*

Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

We are priests led into an invisible, eternal sanctuary: “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Worship here demands perfect obedience. Only Christ can guarantee it because all spirits in heavenly places obey Him (Eph. 1:21).

2. The Oracle Update: The Apostles Gave Christ’s Directives

Christ gave God’s word to His original Apostles before He went to the Father (John 17:13-14).

We believe through the Apostles’ message contained in the New Testament. “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one.” (John 17:20-21 (NIV))

We should test all worship by the Apostles' teaching. The Apostles' work was the testimony of Jesus.

- * "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."
(Rev. 19:9-10)
- * "For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21 (NIV))
- * "We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us." (1 John 4:6)
- * "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." (Matt. 10:40)

3. Idolatry Under the New Covenant (I): Keeping The Shadow When We Have The Substance

Ex. 20:3 *You shall have no other gods before Me.*

Deut. 4:19 *And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.*

VIRUS 14

Isa. 42:8 *I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images.*

1 Sam. 15:23 *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.*

What is Idolatry? Idolatry is worshipping anyone or anything other than God. When we disobey God – that is, when we rebel against Him - what we are doing is “witchcraft” because we are giving our worship to powers and principalities (Eph. 6:12) other than God.

If we reject the commandment of God to keep our own tradition (Mark 7:9), that is idolatry.

If we love the things of this world, that is idolatry. We cannot love God and the world:

1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵ *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶ *For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.* ¹⁷ *And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

VIRUS 14

Today the world idolizes many people and many things: from sports stars and rock stars to businessmen and billionaires, from cars and money to AI and tech. And of course, Self. We live in a “selfie” culture. Men are “lovers of their own selves” (2 Tim. 3:2).

But the Church is not the world, or at least it is not supposed to look like the world. It is supposed to be separate from the world.

One of the biggest idolatries in the Church is enforcing Old Covenant rules that God has rejected and made obsolete (Heb. 8:13).

This is dangerous. Why? Whatever God sets aside, Satan adopts immediately. Applying Old Covenant regulations now results in magical activities: witchcraft, necromancy. Principalities watch those old rules, God does not.

The Old Covenant was “the shadow”, Christ is “the substance” (Col. 2:16-17).

What do we mean by “shadow” and “substance”?

By way of example, Jesus is our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29). The lambs killed in Egypt were the shadow, Christ is the substance. He

died outside the walls of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:11-13).

Luke 24:44 tells us that “all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me”. The substance is the fulfilment of the shadow written in Scripture. Heavenly things require a better sacrifice than the earthly copy (Heb. 9:23).

Note that some of the holy days have yet to be fulfilled. They are “shadows of things to come” (Col. 2:17), but Christ is the substance:

Col. 2:16-17 (KJV) ¹⁶ *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [“substance” – NKJV] is of Christ.*

“We are complete in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power.” (Col. 2:9-10)

Therefore we should avoid “worshipping of angels”, albeit perhaps hitherto we have done so unknowingly:

Col. 2:18-19 (KJV) ¹⁸ *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of*

VIRUS 14

angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

We should avoid turning to bondage under the “weak and beggarly elements”; we should not allow ourselves to be drawn into “observing days, and months and seasons and years” (Gal. 4:9-10).

At the same time we must understand that there are still “things to come”, and that there will be “signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars” for which we are told to watch. God said “be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the heathen are dismayed at them” (Jer. 10:2). Jesus said, “And what I say unto you I say unto you all, Watch” (Mark 13:37), and when we see the signs, “look up”. So whilst we are complete in Christ, we are still to take notice of the signs of heaven. We do not know how the fulfilment of the “things to come” will play out, but we should be prepared, “sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). We must stand with a girdle of truth, a breastplate of righteousness,

and with feet shod with the “preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:14-15).

4. Idolatry Under the New Covenant (II): Using “An Idol is Nothing” to Participate in Man-Made Feasts Stumbles New Born Lambs

Another potential source of idolatry is combining 1 Cor. 8:4 (“an idol is nothing in the world”) with a misinterpretation of Col. 2:16-17 to allow mixing of the worship of God with feasts and festivals which are not Biblical. Note that the KJV translation of Col. 2:16-17 on the previous page translates the Greek word ‘heorte’ as ‘holyday’, clearly referencing the annual Mosaic feasts. But other translations, such as the NKJV version that follows, translate the word as ‘festival’:

Col. 2:16-17 ¹⁶ *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a **festival** or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*

On the face of it, this translation could appear to leave us at liberty to adopt man-made feasts which are not in the Bible. But a feast which has received no mention in the Old Testament cannot possibly be a “shadow of things to

come”. This verse was only ever referencing the Ceremonial Law.

Over the last 1700 or so years, from the time of Constantine in the early fourth century, the Church has, through conquest and expansion, assimilated several man-made “holy days” and feasts from various traditions. Some of these feasts are shared with the world, with participation from believers and unbelievers alike.

Is participating in such “worldly” man-made feasts within the letter of the “law of liberty” (Jam. 1:25)? Certainly one could argue that it is, firstly on the basis that “all things are lawful” (1 Cor. 10:23) and secondly perhaps on the basis of “... by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

But Jesus said to Peter “feed my lambs” (John 21:15). “Feed my sheep.” He said it not once, but three times.

Any “new lamb” trying to join today’s assembly with a clear conscience must themselves establish the legitimacy of these practices through Scripture. The Church is people, it is not an institution, and we must all give an account of ourselves to God. There is no group salvation.

We cannot trust any institution's interpretation of Scripture, we must follow Christ.

Starting at the end of the Book of Revelation, the “new lamb” reads the benchmark set out in Rev. 22:14-15:

Rev. 22:14-15 ¹⁴*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.* ¹⁵*But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers **and idolaters, and whoever loves and practises a lie.***

It is clear that idolatry and lies are out.

“No lie is of the truth.” (1 John 2:21)

Truth and falsehood cannot be mixed. One serves Christ (John 18:37-38), the other serves Satan (John 8:44).

A lying spirit (1 Chr. 18:21) and the Spirit of Truth cannot be one and the same. Mixing them in worship is mixed worship.

Thus if the man-made feast that we seek to participate in is in any way based on an “untruth” or containing elements of “untruth”, we commit idolatry, attempting to worship God, whilst also worshipping Satan. Such worship cannot be “in truth” (John 4:24).

VIRUS 14

Is it idolatry to participate in man-made “holy days” which mix worldly tradition with worship? Mark 7:7 and the verses quoted from 1 John 2 above (“love not the world”) would suggest that it is at the very least, dangerous.

We know that everything that happened to the children of Israel in the Old Testament was for our example such that we could heed the warning and modify our behaviour accordingly (1 Cor. 10:6-11). One of the Old Testament errors is the feast that Jeroboam made. Specifically, he made a feast “on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart” (1 Ki. 18:33). The day was not commanded in Scripture. The judgment of Jeroboam for this and other sins was severe (1 Ki. 14:7-16). But is this relevant to us?

Jesus came to “bear witness to the truth”. He is our guide. We can look to Christ and ask:

- * Would Jesus Himself participate in man-made “holy days” if He was in my place in the Body?
- * In particular, does observing man-made “holy days” shared with the world put us at risk of worshipping other gods, albeit unknowingly?

Are we effectively forcing God to share His glory? The Lord said in Zeph. 1:5 that He would cut off those that swear by the Lord and by “Malcham”. Mixing worship of God with worship of another is a definite “no”.

- * What does it mean to partake “of the table of demons”?

Jesus warned twice in His letters to the churches not to eat food sacrificed to idols (Rev. 2:14, 20). Paul warns that the things Gentiles ‘sacrifice’ they ‘sacrifice’ to demons and not to God.

1 Cor. 10:20-21 ²⁰ *The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.* ²¹ *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons.*

What is Paul talking about? We know from 1 Ti. 4:4-5 that as believers, our food is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer:

1 Ti. 4:4-5 *For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with*

thanksgiving; ⁵for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

But non-believers not obeying 1 Ti. 4:4-5 are perhaps not ‘covered’ by the Word of God or prayer and therefore should we assume that their food is not being sanctified?

‘The Gentiles’ in 1 Cor. 10:20-21 refer to non-believers – ‘pagans’, ‘heathens’. They are of Belial not Christ (1 Cor. 6:14-16). What are they ‘sacrificing’?

From Strong’s Concordance (G2380), the verb ‘to sacrifice’ means ‘to kill, slay’. In the New Testament it is translated both as “sacrifice” and as “kill”, examples of the latter being John 10:10 and Acts 11:7 – “ ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ ”

Thus 1 Cor. 10:20 could be translated as:

“The things which the heathens kill they sacrifice to demons and not to God...”.

The words “and not to God” *could* imply that anything killed is sacrificed to someone – either to demons, or to God. As believers, our food is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer – it is therefore made holy, “sacrificed”

to God. As non-believers the food may not be sanctified and would therefore be sacrificed to demons – on ‘the altar of demons’. If so, when we partake in the same festivity (and ‘table’) as unbelievers, do we condone (partake of) the same altar? At the very least, it seems we may be mixing worship, the heathen to demons, and we to our Creator.

But, Paul asks, “what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” (2 Cor. 6:15).

Remember, we are looking here from the “new lamb” perspective, the new lamb who wants to worship in truth, and is trying to work out what that actually means. The same lamb that has read 1 Cor. 10:20 and Isa. 65:3, and cannot help but see a potential parallel between “sacrificing in gardens” and the neighbours’ weekend barbecue. They do not in any way claim to have knowledge, all they are doing is trying to work out whether it is OK to participate in the man-made “holy days”, and associated pagan traditions, which the church has assimilated over the last 1700 years.

As an aside here, if the implications of 1 Cor. 10:20 are that everything killed is indeed “sacrificed” to someone – either to God or to a demon, and Jesus was the “final sacrifice”, then that would perhaps beg the question of why believers want to “sacrifice” (kill flesh and / or eat it)?

Which sheep ever ate flesh?

Is this what is meant by walking as an enemy of the cross of Christ?

Phil. 3:18-19 ¹⁸*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.*

David was described as a man after God’s own heart (Ac. 13:22). Likewise, we should seek to understand God’s heart in all things. God spent 40 years separating the children of Israel from the heathen that surrounded them. He said “Learn not the way of the heathen...” (Jer. 10:2), and “Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, be clean,

you who bear the vessels of the Lord.” (Isa. 52:11)

Paul quotes this when he says “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” (2 Cor. 6:17)

When it comes to mixing our worship with pagan worship, God’s heart is plain to see – we are commanded not to jump in with both feet, but instead to “come out” (Rev. 18:4).

We should note also in this context that when the children of Israel lusted after “flesh” in the wilderness, God was very angry with them. God reveals His heart through the failings of the children of Israel in the wilderness, such failings being for our admonishment today (“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.” (1 Cor. 10:6))

Nu. 11:4-5 *And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? ⁵We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers ...*

God gave them what they craved - flesh, but He was not pleased and the people that craved the flesh were buried, for our example:

Nu. 11:32-34 ³² *And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. ³³ But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague. ³⁴ So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving.*

We should seek God's heart, which we know is for mercy, not sacrifice (Hos. 6:6), and for the knowledge of God rather than 'burnt offerings'. Does a 'burnt offering' mean the flesh that we eat, sacrificed to God – our 'meat' (flesh) which is 'sacrificed' to Him and sanctified by Him? If so does this actually please Him?

Hos. 6:6 *For I desire mercy and not sacrifice,
And the knowledge of God more than burnt
offerings.*

If we love God, we want to please Him and receive the love of the truth (2 Th. 2:10). We seek His heart, and do not choose the things in which He does not delight (Isa. 1:11, Prov. 6:16-19, Isa. 65:11-12, Isa. 66. 3-4).

- * Given the severe judgment of Jeroboam, do these feasts put us on the wide path to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14), in the territory of “lawlessness” and thus in danger of hearing the words that none of us wants to hear: “I never knew you, depart from Me.” (Matt. 7:23)?

The point here is not to answer all of these questions, because the lamb, who may well have much less than a mustard seed of faith and is still finding their “theological feet”, will almost certainly struggle to answer them. The point is to show what new lambs are up against when they find a ‘church’ that is flirting with paganism and departing from The Word. And then to ask, why does the Body put new lambs in a position of

having to answer all of these questions if they want to join the assembly?

A new lamb doubting the efficacy of the man-made “holy days” shared with the world has two choices:

- (1) Flee, or at least leave so that they, being considered weak in faith, are not accused of bringing “doubtful disputations” (Rom. 14:1) or of “dividing the brethren.” If they cannot reassure themselves as to the legitimacy of the various “worldly” feasts, they must find others of a similar mindset to fellowship with, or their fate will be to wander through internet chatrooms at the mercy of every wild beast (Eze. 34:6).
- (2) Go along with the crowd, not knowing whether this constitutes “following the multitude to do evil” (Ex. 23:2), but knowing for sure that “anything that is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). And joining the assembly but “missing out the bits that make the lamb uncomfortable” still condones the practices that make the lamb uncomfortable.

Jesus said “feed my lambs”.

He did not say “tie them in knots with so many hard questions about what constitutes ‘partaking of the table of demons’, or ‘a tradition voiding the word of God’, or ‘mixed worship’, or ‘being an enemy of the cross of Christ’, or, God forbid, ‘astonishing heaven’ (Jer. 2:11-13), that they walk out of the door as soon as they have entered, if indeed they ever dared to come through the door in the first place.”

Nor did he say “an idol is nothing” (Rev 2:14, 20) – as Paul said it may be “nothing in this world” (1 Cor. 8:4) but Jesus has made it very clear that it is not “nothing”.

Lambs are weak, they are young in the faith. Eating anything that has even a whiff of an idol’s temple stumbles them.

Paul warned us not to allow our liberty to become a stumbling block (a “cause of offence”) to those who are weak:

1 Cor. 8:9-13 (KJV) ⁹ But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. ¹⁰ For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be

VIRUS 14

emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; ¹¹ and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? ¹² But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. ¹³ Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Today the Body of Christ is most definitely divided between those who exercise their liberty to partake in man-made “holy days”, those who definitely do not partake, and those who are “on the fence”, having no idea whether it is right to partake or not.

1 Ki. 18:21 (KJV) *And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*

There are many “denominations”, and hundreds of online forums to which the lambs have fled, searching for truth.

“Flirting with the lines” - turning aside to the right or to the left - causes division, whether or not it is “lawful”. Hence anyone wishing to unite the Body must seriously consider how their walk

impacts any “new lamb” coming to the assembly for the first time.

Prov. 4:27 *Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*

Deut. 5:32 *Therefore you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.*

1 Cor. 8:13 (KJV) *Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

5. The Co-Worker Update: Priests Are Bridges and Benefactors

We are spiritual Israel: “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even the Israel of God.”
(Gal. 6:16 (NIV))

We are God’s co-workers (1 Cor. 3:9 (NIV)).
God would feed, clothe and protect if He lived in the flesh. Now He does it through us. “Christ’s love compels us.” (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

Practically, a priest is like a bridge: unbelievers pass through us to Christ, and Christ’s relief passes through us to them (1 Pet. 2:9).

When we relieve the poor, we lend to God. He repays and increases. “Whoever is kind to the

poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them.”
(Prov. 19:17 (NIV))

“For I was hungry and you gave me food.” (Matt.
25:35)

In any event, we know that our actions do not go unnoticed. Our worship must be formidable so that we do not compromise before the heathens and principalities. “We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels.” (1 Cor. 4:9)

6. Summary

The sanctuary is now heaven, not a physical building (Heb. 8:2).

Worship must follow Christ’s oracle through His Apostles. “Thy word is truth.” (John 7:17)

The Old Covenant was a shadow. Enforcing it today is idolatry and witchcraft (Col. 2:17).

If we use our liberty in Christ such that new lambs have to answer hard questions simply to feel safe entering into the assembly, we stumble the lambs, and divide the Body.

To a lamb, the concept of mixed worship with all of its associated tradition looks very like “strange fire” (Lev. 10:1-2). The lamb may be wrong, the

fire may not be “strange”, but if there is enough “smoke” for the lamb to feel that their salvation hangs in the balance, the lamb is not going to stick around to argue doctrine or doubtful disputation. The lamb is simply going to run, and the Body is divided. This is not theory; it has already happened. The door has opened and the lambs have fled.

Jesus said to feed the lambs, not to stumble them. Worship should be pure for the sake of unity and peace, walking “neither to the right nor to the left.” We are co-workers and priests to relieve the world (Matt 25:40), but not to join it.

Evaluation Questions & Answers

1. Where is the true sanctuary now?
 - * Invisible and eternal in heaven (Heb. 8:2). Christ our High Priest led us there (Heb. 9:24). We are spiritual priests (1 Pet. 2:5).
2. What is “Christ’s oracle” for worship?
 - * God’s word given to the original Apostles (John 17:14). Their writings in the New Testament are our guide.