

In Spirit and Truth, or Formality?

“So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). Every day brings us one day closer to this inevitable day, as the Apostle Paul affirmed, saying, “for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11).

Countless numbers throughout the world assemble in one fashion or another to worship, and/or show honor to God. These assemblies may be consistent with the doctrines of the Lord, as revealed by the Apostles, or they may not. The sad part is that some, as did Israel long ago, seek to worship God as they have determined rather than as God dictates. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24) God warns of such service, as Isaiah prophesied to Israel, “This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men” (Matthew 15:8-9).

Knowing that “we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10), it is evident that worship which is of pretense will receive the judgment of God. Israel of old was condemned for formality. Isaiah said, “Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts: and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of the lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies, — I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well: seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:10-17).

There is a great and notable day that each man and woman shall witness, a day when you will see, as the Apostle John saw, “a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the

things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15).

Remember the words of Jehovah to Israel, saying, “Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth; Jehovah, the God of hosts, is his name” (Amos 4:12-13).