

27.5 In God We Trust – Period!

Isaiah 53:12 (ESV)

**¹²Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.**

1 Peter 2:24-25 (ESV)

²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Yesterday we spoke of trusting God through Jesus for salvation instead our own formulas and our own acts of obedience. In fact, when we trust something other than God, we trade a relationship with Him for a relationship with ourselves and our own capabilities. This is great guilt-inducer because we learn very quickly that we are incapable of perfection and in great need of grace and mercy. This can also lead us into superstition.

Have you heard of the “**Cargo Cult**” in the South Pacific? They developed some superstitious rituals. During WW2, American set up bases on the isolated Melanesia Islands. Of course, the natives had not seen anything like the equipment the Americans brought often by planes airdropping supplies. The Americans traded with the natives and treated them well. After the war, the soldiers departed. Cargo cults arose, attempting to imitate the behaviors of the soldiers, thinking that this would cause the soldiers to return with their cargo.

The natives incorporated symbols associated with Christianity and modern Western society into their rituals. For example, they used cross-shaped grave markers. They set up of mock airstrips, airports, airplanes, offices, and dining rooms. They also attempted the construction of Western goods, such as radios made of coconuts and straw. Some staged "drills" and "marches" with sticks for rifles and attempted to make themselves look like soldiers. They treated the activities of American military personnel as rituals to be performed for the purpose of attracting their cargo.

The apostle Paul met some people in Athens who were similar. Notice his words in **Acts 17:22-23** (ESV):

“Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

They were “religious” or even “superstitious” with all of their idols. They even built an altar to the “Unknown God” to cover all of the possibilities. By the way, there was a supernatural story attributed to the Unknown God that we may discuss later. The altars and idols of Athens were crafted by human hands just like the golden calf in the desert.

The Cargo Cults and the Athenians were not the only superstitious ones. The Hebrews developed superstitions as well. In addition to the event with the golden calf, there is the incident with the Ark of the Covenant in **1 Samuel 4**. Here the Hebrews went to battle against the Philistines and lost. They reasoned that they needed a sure-fire way to win and that was to bring the Ark of the Covenant into battle.

Notice **1 Samuel 4:3** (ESV):

³ And when the people came to the camp, the elders of Israel said, “Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD here from Shiloh, that it [or He] may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.”

Did you catch what was going on? They weren't in a close relationship with God. If they had been, He would have told them what to do. He would have either led them to victory or told them not to fight. Instead they tried to use the Ark as a “good luck charm,” thinking with it they would win the war. Instead, they lost and they lost the Ark to the Philistines so that the “*Glory Departed*,” the meaning of the name, **Ichabod**.

It is urgently important that we develop a relationship with God if we don't have one. Jesus came to us in the flesh (**John 1:14**) to show us how to live and how to have a close relationship with His Father.

He showed us the right way, truth, and life (**John 14:6**). He also lived it out – on our behalf. We must trust HIM for our forgiveness and for our eternity. In **2 Corinthians 5:21** (ESV) we read:

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We can't make ourselves 100% righteous no matter what we do. However, we can be made righteous by Him. This doesn't come by trusting traditions or rituals. It comes by trusting Him. If we are not careful, we can make the commands of God into a superstition much like the Hebrews carrying the Ark into battle with the Philistines. They knew right things but their trust was in an object and away from Him.

Even in something as simple, important, and controversial as baptism, our focus must be on Jesus. It shouldn't be on a work of which we can boast (**Ephesians 2:8-10**). In baptism, with our focus on Him and His authority (**Matthew 28:18-20**), we experience our spiritual death with Him to sin, our symbolic burial with Him in a grave of water, and our figurative resurrection, again, with Him (**Romans 6:1-4**). It all focuses on HIM!

It is important that we get back to the basics with God. We can develop a close relationship with Him through trust and love. As we develop that relationship, we can love our neighbor as ourselves. Isn't this why Jesus came?

Keep The Light of Our Basic Trust in God Burning!