

Examining Judaism (4)

Jesus spoke of the "doctrines of men" taking the place of God's commandments in Matthew 15.9. The Talmud is a list of traditions developed by the Jews. It is their interpretation of and addition to God's Word. Many of the traditions mentioned in this article have evolved from popular Rabbis, not from the Word of God.

Modern day Jews no longer have the Levitical Priesthood or the daily animal sacrifices. This does not prevent them from worshipping God. Unfortunately, instead of turning to the Law of Christ, they continue to create their own system of righteousness, mixing in the Law of Moses sprinkled with new traditions. We now want to study some modern day Jewish Holidays.

Yom Kippur

The above term means, "Day of Atonement" and is observed on the 10th day of Tishri, (see Leviticus 23.26-32). This corresponds to late September or early October. Verses 27 and 30 mention an offering to be made by fire and the abstaining from working. The sacrifice was to make atonement to God for the sins committed against Him.

Jewish tradition speaks of Yom Kippur as a day of denial: no eating or drinking, washing, anointing, wearing leather, or having sexual relations. Children under the age of nine and pregnant women are not permitted to fast, and people with illnesses are encouraged to talk to a doctor before fasting.

Most of this day is spent in a synagogue in prayer. A typical Jewish prayer asking for forgiveness would be, "Forgive us the breach of positive commands and negative commands, whether or not they involve an act, whether or not they are known to us." Custom says they

should wear white, representing purity when their sins are forgiven. Leviticus 23.23-32 and Numbers 29.1-6 contain God's instructions. Included are the animal sacrifices to be offered: one young bull, one ram, and 7 lambs without blemish. This creates a problem for the modern Jew. Since the destruction of the Temple, no animal sacrifice has been permitted. Therefore, many Jews take a live chicken, move it in a clockwise direction above their heads and say, "This is my exchange, this is my substitute, this is my atonement." The chicken is a kapparat, which is a substitute. A man will take a rooster and a woman a hen. A pregnant woman will use both because the child could be a boy or girl. Jews are quick to point out, the chicken is not killed but given to a poor family for food.

What right do the Jews have to substitute a chicken for the sacrifices listed in Leviticus and Numbers? Sadly, even offering the sacrifices commanded in the Law of Moses could not and will not remove sin. "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of the sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." (Hebrews 10.3-4) The only sacrifice acceptable by God today is His Son. This is exactly the argument the Hebrew writer makes. "By that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. Now where there is remission of these (speaking of sin, D.T.) there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10.10,14,18).

Sukkot

Beginning on Tishri 15th and lasting for 7 days, Sukkot means "booths." It corresponds to the "Feast of Tabernacles" in the Bible, see Leviticus 23.33ff. This feast was to remind every generation of God bringing Israel out of Egypt and their living in tents.

A "sukkah" is to have at least three walls, be large enough to eat and sleep inside, and be made of something that grew from the ground. Tree branches, corn stalks, and bamboo reeds, are common building materials. Meals are to be eaten in the sukkah and if weather permits the family is to sleep in it.

Convenience seems to be the final word in many religious practices. If the weather is bad then the family does not have to live or eat in the tent. Why? Reading in Leviticus, I do not see God saying to observe this festival "weather permitting." Unfortunately, many religious groups want to find loopholes and change God's word when it is convenient.

Another observance related to Sukkot involves taking four plants and waving them in all directions. They specify the plants to be used. This represents the fact that God is everywhere. The Bible teaches the omnipresence of God but does not mention this ritual. -- Dennis Tucker

(To Be Continued)