

The False Religion of Convenience

By Roelf L. Ruffner

“Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (1 Kings 12:28).

About 950 B.C. God caused the kingdom of ancient Israel to be divided into two parts: the Northern Kingdom, known as Israel, later Samaria, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was made king of the Judah and Jeroboam I became king of Israel.

Jeroboam I turned against the promises of God concerning his kingdom (cf. 1 Kings 11:29-38) and schemed to separate the people from Jerusalem, the center of the worship of Jehovah. He knew that the temple in Jerusalem was the center of Hebrew worship: rituals, feast days, the priesthood, the Ark of the Covenant, animal sacrifices, offerings, etc. He set up in his own devious mind a man-made religion – the worship of the golden image of a calf – in the cities of Dan and Bethel. He even proclaimed a new feast day for the apostate religion which followed one month after the Feast of Tabernacles which had been ordained by the Law of Moses (Lev. 23:33-43). He reason for all this was CONVENIENCE. Why go uphill to Jerusalem to worship when you could go to nearby Dan or Bethel?

Convenience in the God-ordain religion of Christianity is the mother of apostasy. Consider the following hypothetical statements:

“It is more convenient for us to sprinkle or pour water on the head of someone rather than to immerse them.” The root of the anglicized word “baptize” is “to immerse, submerge, or to dip.” (Vines, p.50). In New Testament times all penitent sinners who desired forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:37) and to enter the kingdom (John 3:3,5) were “buried” with Jesus Christ in the waters of baptism (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12) for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Sprinkling or pouring came along much later in history to fulfill man’s desire to make baptism “convenient” for infants and the dying.

“It is more convenient for us to partake of the Lord’s Supper once a quarter rather than every Sunday.” Many denominations use this excuse in not partaking of the Lord’s Supper every Sunday. The Lord Jesus commanded His followers to

remember His death by the observance of this act of worship (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:18-26). The Holy Spirit and Luke, M.D., recorded an approved example of the early church partaking of the Lord's Supper on Sunday in the New Testament (Acts 20:7). They met every Sunday and did this act of worship along with other acts of worship. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come" (NASB, 1 Cor. 16:2 – emphasis mine RLR).

But did the early Christians understand that they were to partake every Sunday? Under the Law of Moses the Hebrews understood that they were to observe the Sabbath every week, not once a quarter or even once a month. They correctly inferred as much from the Fourth Commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). It may not seem convenient to the fleshly man for the church of Christ to remember the Lord's death every Sunday. Yet it was also not convenient for our Lord to die for our sins on the cross. But His love for the Father and us compelled Him to do so. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17).

"It is more convenient for me to attend a church nearby (Even an apostate one!), than to drive to a sound one miles away." As I recall the Ethiopian treasurer traveled over 1,000 miles one way to worship God in Jerusalem. He could have cut his trip by one third the distance by worshipping at the polytheistic Jewish temple on Elephantine Island in Egypt. But he chose the inconvenient. God blessed him by sending him the evangelist Philip to preach unto him "Jesus" (Acts 8:35).

Many brethren today know that the congregation they attend is apostate but they "hang on" because of CONVENIENCE. Their worship is not "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). It is "vain" or useless worship (Mat. 15:9). Brethren, the salvation of our souls cost Christ His own life. What has it cost us to be faithful to Him? "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22 – Paul & Barnabas).

"It is more convenient to fellowship someone in religious error than to teach them the truth." This may not be an exact wording but it shows us the ungodly sentiment many brethren have toward the Gospel. Some brethren openly fellowship

those in denominations and their false teachers; acting like sinners are fellow saints though they know better (Mat. 7:21; 2 John 9-11). Others rub elbows with sinners every day in their daily lives (jobs, sporting activities, clubs, school activities, etc.), acting like nothing is amiss in these lives and failing to use this God-given opportunity to show them from the Bible the Truth. This is sin! “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). And, brethren, I must confess that in the past I have been as guilty as anyone else of committing this later sin. The false religion of CONVENIENCE touches us all. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15).

Vines’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Editors: W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Under, William White Jr., Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1985.