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Refusing Profane & Old Wives Fables

The first century was much like the time in which we live. There was a belief in God but there was also a great deal of embellishment on the nature of spiritual things. Superstition was prevalent as can be seen in some examples that we have from the New Testament. Some of this is understandable since there was a history of miracles and great prophets who had visited them in the past as messengers of God. At the time that John and Christ appeared in the land, there had been nothing like the old prophets for over four hundred years. In the absence of this there was a lot of “filling in the blanks” that had been done. In our day and time there has been no revelation nor miracles since the time of the apostles. There are those who claim that these things have happened but such events are shrouded in obscurity and generally not verifiable. In the first century the miracles that were performed were public and visible. In the absence of such things there are those who believe that they have been empowered by God through his Holy Spirit. There is a growing segment of the population who, without formal religious ties in many cases, have adopted a belief in spiritual interventions, visitations and other things based on their own personal experiences and the writings of others, both religious and secular, who have had similar events in their lives. The recent tsunami that struck Southeast Asia and other disasters have brought some “closer to God” in that they believe that they have been spared for a greater purpose and now have a greater appreciation for life and its fragility. Anyone who has had a similar experience may agree that it certainly changes the perspective that we have on how precious life really is. The danger of these events is when those who have survived begin to reinforce religious ideas that are not found in the scriptures. Over time these ideas become accepted as true in spite of the fact that there is no proof of their credibility. Paul dealt with this in his instructions to Timothy. **“But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.” (1 Tim 4.7).** In this context, Paul is speaking specifically about the dietary and other restrictions that would be put in place later on as part of a great apostasy that was to occur. The same apostasy that Paul warned the Thessalonians about as well (**2 Thess 2.3-8**). In this falling away was the fact that men’s doctrines, their opinions, would replace the word of God. The way to counter this in the present world is to follow the instructions of Paul to **“...exercise thyself rather unto godliness.”** We are imaginative and creative creatures. These are attributes that God has blessed us with and another characteristic of being created in His image, since God is a creator as well. The problem is that in the absence of revelation we allow our curiosity to get the better of us. Curiosity is the seed of imagination and innovation, and, as the old saying goes, will kill the car, or in this case the soul. It is interesting that those who hold to certain ideas that are proliferating, such as intervention by angels, speaking to the departed and other signs and omens have an aversion to studying the Bible and will generally shy away from scripture when it is introduced. It seems that our minds betray us and we fall into the hands of the deceiver who wishes to rob us of an eternal home (**2 Cor 4.4**). Paul instructed Timothy, **“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.” (2 Tim 2.16).** Human opinion and ideas that are created to try to understand why things happen, lay the groundwork for false doctrine and set the stage for rejection of God and His word. That is what the devil wants us to do. If Satan is able to lead us astray in this manner then he has won and we will be lost. We must reject those things that conflict with what the scriptures teach, holding only to that which has been revealed. This is a struggle at times as we try to reach for confirmation that there is a God and that He loves and cares for us. The best time to do this is when tragedy and disaster have not touched us. When times are favorable we must look to God’s word and exercise ourselves to true spirituality by learning the things that He would have us know and to do them. Once other events begin to occur we then have the comfort of the scriptures and a true frame of reference to understand the need for faithfulness and service to God so that we can be prepared to leave this life should we die or suffer the loss of those dear to us. Preparation begins with knowledge, and that comes from the revealed word, not the bestseller list.

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