

Mother's Day: Is It for Christians?



Valentine's Day, May Day and Mother's Day are celebrations that many people view as "harmless." Is there any objection to a Christian's commemorating them.

The Bible does not mention any of these celebrations by name. But it contains principles that help us to determine whether celebrations of this nature are all right for Christians.

One such principle is the Bible teaching of complete separation from customs that are contrary to true worship. In his law to the nation of Israel, Jehovah God said what is recorded at **Exodus. 23:13** ("You must not mention the name of other gods. It should not be heard upon your mouth.")

This meant that the Israelites were not to refer to false gods with feelings of admiration or in a way that would credit them with any existence or power. They were to regard such false gods with contempt, as valueless and detestable.

As for any of the religious objects associated with the false worship of the Canaanites, the Israelites were instructed **Deut. 7:5, 6** ("Their altars you should pull down, and their sacred pillars you should break down, and their sacred poles you should cut down, and their graven images you should burn with fire. For you are a holy people to Jehovah your God.")

In view of such commands, Israelites who wanted to be faithful to God would obviously never have embraced the religious festivals of the Canaanites and begun celebrating them under new names. That would have meant losing their "holy" or pure standing before their God. Jehovah does not approve of practicing anything contaminated by false worship. He insists on exclusive devotion. He said to the Israelites: "I Jehovah your God am a God exacting exclusive devotion." (Ex. 20:5)

Jehovah does not tolerate any mixing of practices that originated with false gods with true worship. This can be seen by his dealings with the Israelites in the case of the golden calf, made after leaving Egypt.

When Moses was being given the 10 commandments in the mountain, the Israelites became impatient. They forced Aaron to make a golden calf for them. They didn't do this with the thought of starting to worship a false Egyptian god. They were simply taking over an Egyptian religious practice that associated their false gods with animals. **Exodus 32:1, 4**

This is evident from the fact that the religious festival held in connection with the golden calf was not intended to honor an Egyptian god but was called a "festival to Jehovah." **Exodus 32:5, 6**. But this didn't make it right; Jehovah severely punished the Israelites for unfaithfulness. **Exodus 32:19, 20, 30-35**

Jehovah is still no more tolerant of idolatrous practices today than he was in the past. First-century Christians did not share in festivities honoring false gods and goddesses from the Roman world, so would they celebrated or shunned the observance of Mother's Day, if they were alive today?

Well, what is the origin of Mother's Day? Does it have anything to do with ancient pagan gods?

On the origin of Mother's Day, the Encyclopedia Britannica states:

"It is a festival derived from the custom of mother worship in ancient Greece. Formal mother worship, with ceremonies to Rhea, the Great Mother of the Gods, were performed in the middle of March throughout parts of Asia."

Another reference work tells us that the earliest history of Mothers Day dates back to the ancient annual spring festival that the Greeks dedicated to mother goddesses. The Greeks used the occasion to honor Rhea, wife of Cronus and the mother of many gods of Greek mythology.

Ancient Romans, too, celebrated a spring festival, called Hilaria dedicated to Cybele, a mother goddess. These ceremonies in honor of Cybele began some 250 years before Christ was born. The celebration held in mid-March included making offerings in the temple of Cybele for three days, besides parades, games and parties. The celebrations were often so notorious that followers of Cybele were banished from Rome

But despite not celebrating the Mothers Day festival, we still show great kindness, respect and love for our mothers.

Prov 19:26; Lev 20:9; Exodus 20:12; Prov 6:20

(See also Awake 1974 8 February pages 27-28: "Are They Harmless observances?")

