

'WHILE WE WAIT'
(Ready or Not, Jesus is Coming!)
Studies in 2 Thessalonians

Valentine's Day
(secular holidays)

The myths and legends abound regarding the *sweet heart* of all holidays. Although there is virtually no trustworthy history about some ancient Roman Catholic saint named Valentine and his match-maker role in medieval times, the holiday has taken a life of its own as a day to express love and romance to others. More of a commercial holiday than a spiritual one – flowers, candy, jewelry, and cards abound, renewing the gift-giving spirit after Christmas. Regardless of the spurious history, it really is nice to highlight love and romance, even if it is just for a day, now and then.

Ash Wednesday
(religious holidays)

This year Valentine's Day comes on the same day as Roman Catholicism's *Ash Wednesday*. This unbiblical religious tradition is the second of a three-part religious ritual of Catholicism leading up to Resurrection Day (named 'Easter' by the RCC). *Shrove Tuesday* (also called *Fat Tuesday*) is a *sin fest* blow-out, prior to 40-day period of self-denial and good works until Easter, earning mercy and favor from God (called *Lent*). Ash Wednesday is the RCC period between *Mardi Gras* (French for 'Fat Tuesday') and *Lent* (Old English for 'spring'). On Ash Wednesday, Roman Catholics, and some Protestant denominations, take the ashes from burned up palm fronds of the previous Palm Sunday and let clergy smear a sign of the cross on their foreheads. They say it is a reminder of their fallible, finite humanity for the 40-days leading to Easter (an 'ashes to ashes' philosophy of life). All of this is totally unbiblical and unnecessary for born-again New Testament Christians (*1 Timothy 4:7*). Scripture never commands having a holiday to *get sin out of your system by indulging in it*. Nor does the Bible teach that putting symbolic dirt on your forehead and temporarily denying self of some trivial sacrifice, has anything to do with pleasing God.

Christians & Holidays
(biblical holidays)

Biblical Christianity commands true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ to abstain from adding to or taking away from what is written in Scripture (*Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6, Revelation 22:18-19*). This includes traditions, rituals, and holidays. However, it is good and right to express love and appreciation to others God has brought into your life (*1 Thessalonians 4:9-10*), without the mythical fables attached to a particular calendar day. It's absolutely wrong and flagrantly disobedient to participate in unbiblical religious rituals, days, or seasons that are totally fabricated in false religion to deal with sin and attempt to placate God in ways contrary to Scripture and contradictory to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (*Galatians 4:9-10*). Those who really love the Lord follow the **Great Commandment** of loving God and the people in their life, all the time, not just on February 14th (*Matthew 22:37-39*).

Those who really want to get sin out of their system and have changed lives, don't need *Mardi Gras, Ash Wednesday, and Lent* – God's elect repent of sin (*not vent it*), admit they are sinners to God (*not a human priest*), believe in Christ's sacrifice on the cross with all their heart (*not a smeared dirt symbol on their forehead*), and they give up sinful living forever (*not just some small thing for Lent for 40-days*) (*2 Corinthians 5:17-21*). The only two biblical New Testament holy days disciples of Christ are commanded to obey are baptism (*Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 10:48*) and the Lord's table (*Acts 2:42, 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32*). These celebrate our love for God through public identification with Him in baptism, and our commitment to serve Him sacrificially in all we say and do, in communion. Although Resurrection Day and Christmas are not mandatory Scriptural holidays, they are seasonal opportunities for appreciation of and focus upon the Lord's incarnation and resurrection as evangelistic outreach to non-Christians, but they are not holy days with sacred value before God (*Romans 14:5-6*). PtL

‘Worthwhile Waiting’
(Establishing ‘Faith, Hope & Love’ While You Wait)
2 Thessalonians 2:15-3:19

Get Established in ‘The Faith’
(Confirmation in God’s Word)

“...Therefore, brethren beloved, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” 2:15

Get Established in ‘Hope’
(Consolation in God’s grace)

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, Who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” 2:16-17

Get Established in ‘God’s Love’
(Connection in God’s care)

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it was with you and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But **the Lord is faithful, Who will establish you and guard you from the evil one** ... we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.” 3:1-5