

TIMES AND SEASONS

By Tim Czapiewski

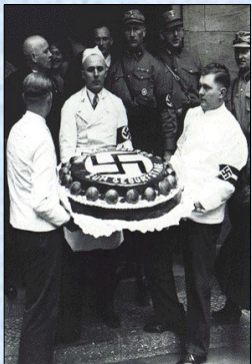


One day, a very rich old Jewish man received a pleasant visit one day from his two sons. The father felt elated as they occupied his time that day, taking him to his most favorite places throughout the city. Then, as daylight began to fade, his sons took the father back to his house. They opened

the car door and proudly escorted their aged father inside the house. Now the house was unusually dark and quiet when they entered. And as the father began to peel off his coat, all of the lights in the house flashed on! A great noise was heard all over the entire house; SURPRISE!!!

Suddenly, his children, grandchildren, friends, neighbors, and many others came out from their hiding places! But the old man seemed bewildered and confused about the purpose of the joyous event. "My sons, why have I been so honored by everyone here this day?" he asked. "You will soon see", his sons replied. They led their father into the dining area and put on their party hats. The father was led to the seat of honor at the head of the table. Then a hush fell over the room. The kitchen door opened and the celebrators began shouting, "Happy Birthday!"

The old man began to blush, yet he reluctantly stood up. The joyous crowd was hushed to hear the man of honor speak. "Friends and family, I'm a bit embarrassed to have to say this, but it seems that there has been a mistake. Today is not my birthday, my birthday is on October 27th and today's date is April 20th". But as soon as he uttered his last word, the celebrators began cheering as if they had not heard a single word the old man said. Then a cake, decorated with a Swastika, was set before him.



He stared closely at the words clearly written, - *Adolph Hitler - Born April 20th*. He trembled in shock, as he realized that they had associated his good name with the life of an evil tyrant! The crowd kept begging him to blow out the candles. But the distraught man was too appalled to allow himself to witness another moment. "This gathering is a great abomination to me!", he said as he angrily fled his house!

What a bizarre story! But we know that often times, truth can be much stranger than fiction. Think about it, what if your own children honored you one day by merging the most memorable moments of your life with the most despised man of modern times! Making it appear as if you and he were the same man. Would you feel honored or disgraced? And even after turning your back in disgust against their dishonorable celebration, what if they continued to send cards of appreciation and best wishes to you on Adolph Hitler's birthday, completely ignoring yours! Would you be at all offended? Would you feel endeared to these children? Could you bear to read their affectionate cards?

What if after barring the door of your own house, these children continued to return at the same time every year, forcing their way into your house to repeat the same celebration? Would the celebration become less offensive to you or would your pain eventually turn to rage? **"Son of man, do you see what they are doing—the utterly detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary?" (Ezekiel 8:5)**

Our Creator is drawing Ezekiel's attention to religious gatherings that are offensive to God, so offensive that He must get up and leave his own house just like the old man in the story. The Creator is expressing His true feelings regarding those who "pretend" to make celebrations in His name, **"Is it a trivial matter for the house of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here?... Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen."** (Ezekiel 8:17)

Dear reader: Do you desire to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? If so, then realize that the time **"...has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."** (John 6:23) You may be asking yourself "How do I worship God in truth? True worshipers eagerly seek to accommodate their Fathers will and not their own. **"The LORD will turn from his fierce anger...because you obey the LORD your God, keeping all his commands that I am giving you today and doing what is right in His Eyes."** (Deuteronomy 13:17-18)

"Do what is right in His eyes"

When we hold a festival to honor God, shouldn't we first consider whether He would approve of it? He is our Father isn't He? Yet while many admit the pagan origins of the festivals of the modern church, they continue to practice them their houses of worship. Do they think that by continuing these practices year after year, that our heavenly Father will eventually get used to them? On the contrary, His wrath is building to the point that He is ready to take his children out of his will forever! That thought should get our attention.

Some of those wicked children did repent of their actions and refused to participate with those who rebelled against their father. Yet strangely, they took up a new form of rebellion. They refused to appear all on the true day of celebration. So likewise, many in the modern church, many have come to realize there are special seasons that God has chosen for celebrations yet those who claim to be faithful have found other things to do. What are the father's feeling towards them? **"A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests..." But they all alike began to make excuses...The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry"** (Luke 14:15-22).

Will you be in His will?

And so what became of the father and all of those wicked children of his? How did the story finally end? As the years painfully passed, the rich old man died. As expected his children, ungrateful as they were, mourned for the loss of their father. But according to the will of the old man, his memorial service was held at a very strange hour and all of his family and friends were invited.

And so at 3:00 a.m. in the middle of the week, the service was held. Only seven of the multitudes who were invited made the effort to join together at the event. Tired as they were, they wore their best out of respect for the old man. And after many tears the eulogy was recited, and a simple prayer was said. All paid their last respects and were ready to make their way back to their homes. But just then a man rose and told the faithful to remain in their places.

It was at this time that the stranger opened his brief case, stood up and read to all present, the will of the old man who was rich beyond compare. The will stated that the old man's vast empire was to be dispersed among those who had faithfully sacrificed their time and honored him in this last act of faithfulness. While all of his disrespectful children and half hearted friends were all fast asleep, others received a reward what was beyond compare.

Yes it can be said that the modern church today mourns and weeps at the loss of God's only son. But do they faithfully come to the Father when they are summoned, even if the times and seasons appear inconvenient to them? **"To him that overcome I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying the churches"** (Revelation 3:21-22).

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