



November 29, 2024

Coming before God with an Attitude of Thanksgiving

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

This week, (yesterday in fact) we celebrated the Day of Thanksgiving here in the United States. I hope all who observed the day had a blessed Thanksgiving Day celebration!

As one ages, he or she usually begins to consider many things that we all often take for granted when we are younger.

I think about this each Thanksgiving that rolls around, year by year. How many will pause to give thanks to the Source of the blessing we still enjoy? We are experiencing an increasingly troubled world. We see conditions that could be described as "wars and rumors of wars." The nation is deeply divided even after the recent elections. However, we still continue to have much to be thankful for both physically and spiritually! We are still able to worship online and/or meet at Sabbath services in peace and freedom. We have an abundance of physical things to enjoy.

I realize that there is a place for enjoying a turkey dinner and viewing and rooting for a favorite football team. However, far too many in the U.S. focus on every other "thing" except giving thanks to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, & Joseph, who owns everything and has bestowed upon us unusual favor and blessings because of his grace and promises to our patriarchal fathers.

I thought this would be a good time to briefly review some of the prophecies pertaining to Abraham found in Genesis 17 and 22, and especially the promises made to the descendants of Joseph and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, found in Genesis 48:14-19 and Genesis 49:22-26.

These prophecies proclaimed that the descendants of Joseph would be unusually blessed in the future. The descendants of Ephraim would grow into a company or multitude of nations, and the descendants of Manasseh would become a people and a single great nation (Genesis 28:3; 35:11).

It seems that part of the way God blessed these peoples is the eventual connection of some of the leaders of these peoples to the God of Israel and to the laws given to Israel. "*Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.*" (Psalm 33:12)

The history of those who came to the shores of this new land of North America to seek religious freedom is important to review. There is some evidence to support some of these freedom seekers were seventh day Sabbath keepers who brought this truth to the New World.

The history of the United States Thanksgiving takes us back to England, and the time of the enforcement of the State Church. There was only one church approved by the English rulers. Everyone was required to attend that church - and ONLY that church - every week. Two major groups of Bible believers emerged who disagreed with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England.

One group wanted to stay in the church body, but hoped to change its forms of worship: This group was called "Puritan" because they wanted to "purify" the church. The other group was associated at first with the Puritans, but they came to see and believe that the state church could NOT be changed: This group was called "Separatist" because they wanted to separate completely from the Church of England.

The Separatists demanded a complete separation from the Church of England. They wanted to worship in a very simple manner without all of the ritual and symbols which were used in the state Anglican Church. In their study of the Bible they had decided the original church in New Testament times had been a simple church and they wished to follow that example in their own worship. They believed there were so many changes needed to be made in the Anglican Church that it could not be accomplished to their satisfaction. Therefore, the only possibility for them was to "separate" completely from the state church.

In September of 1620, the small group Pilgrims numbering 102 men, women, and children set off for the New World – “America” in their small but sturdy ship, the Mayflower. Of this number only 41 were members of the Leiden church and Separatists. The remainder of the passengers were hired men, paid servants, or "strangers" who wanted to make a new life in America. The Mayflower landed off Cape Cod of present day Massachusetts in November of 1620 to face the stresses and trials of winter. My wife and I had the privilege many years ago to visit this location.

These courageous freedom seekers made it to Plymouth Rock and in spite of various trials and loss of life that first winter, they continued on, looking to God to deliver them and guide them.

Whether or not one celebrates the U.S. holiday, giving thanks and coming before God with an attitude of thanksgiving is an important component of worshipping God and even celebrating God's Sabbath.

Our personal and private prayers should include expressions of thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2) Notice the instructions in Psalm 95:2. "*Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*" It's a blessing that we can come before our Father in prayer at any time through the work of Jesus our High Priest.

We come before Him in a formal way on His holy convocations including the weekly Sabbath. The assembly of the people on the Sabbath and holy days seems to be alluded to in Psalm 100:2-4. *"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name."*

Even in a world of turmoil, division and increasing lawlessness, we can be thankful for the positive and encouraging hope of the coming kingdom of God! God will bring peace, blessings, and prosperity to all who humbly obey Him and commit to live by His covenant laws and commandments.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Scott Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

T. Scott Hoefker

Senior Pastor, CGM

Church of God Ministries (CGM)/(Minister iOS de la Iglesias de Dios)

tshoefker@cogministries.org / www.cogministries.org

P.O. Box 983, Daphne, AL, 36526-0983 / 251-930-1797 Offices