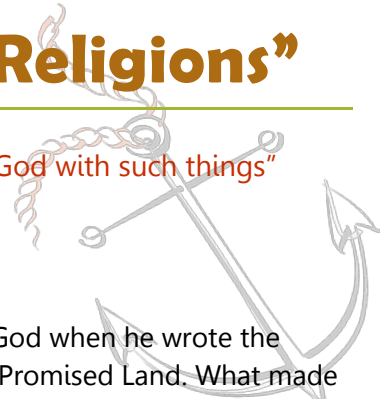




“The Danger of Religions”

“You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things”
(Deut. 12:4).



MOSES was nearing the end of his life’s journey with the people of God when he wrote the book of Deuteronomy. It was a long, hard road from Egypt to the Promised Land. What made this task so difficult was not necessarily the distance to traverse and the supplies needed to make the trip. Though it was no small undertaking, God would supply His people with food and water. These things were a training ground for humility, but Moses reminded them that God had so intervened and cared for their state that even their feet did not swell and their clothing had not worn out (Deut. 8:4; Neh. 9:21). Neither was it the enemies which they faced. Though some were colossal in stature, they would be defeated by the Lord’s power—and not so much by Israel’s. Moses along with Joshua and Caleb knew this well (Num. 13:30; 14:6–10; Deut. 9:1–3).

What made this journey into a hard, forty-year trial was sin—unbelief and disobedience. A rebellious chord is what they danced to since they left Egypt. Moses reminded them that it was not because of their righteousness, but because of the wickedness of the nations who stood before them, as to why they would gain success in overcoming their enemies (Deut. 9:4–6). Sadly, Moses described them in Deuteronomy 9:24:

“You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.”

Disobedience was a recurring scene that plagued progress over those four decades since leaving Egypt, by which Moses had to constantly serve as a disciplinarian, a judge, and even a mediator. Deuteronomy recounts much of that journey, reminds the people of their past failures, warns against future rebellion, and provides the solution for this nation to progress in God’s favor. Going onward, the great enemies which Israel faced had not changed much. It was not the military strength of the Canaanites and their fortified cities, but rather, it was Israel’s pride, self-will, and the influence of false religion upon their hearts. We may take for granted how often false religion and worship ensnared the people of God.

In Deuteronomy 12, Israel was commanded to be careful to observe the statutes of the Lord and to diligently eradicate the places and pillars, the images and altars, and even the names of Gentile gods. Even the inquiry of the history of this kind of worship could ensnare and entice them (Deut. 12:29–31). Rather than these abominations, God would provide them the right place to worship His name, and they were to follow the carefully-prescribed pattern of true worship. They were not to follow “whatever is right in [their] own eyes,” but rather to “be careful to observe [God’s law]; you shall not add to it nor take away from it” (Deut. 12:8, 32). Nothing could be more fitting to remind the people of God today if we want success in reaching our Rest! Unfortunately, it seems that many are enticed and puffed up by the thinking of the world and the practices of denominational idol-worship. Let’s listen to the warning of Scripture and take care to worship Him “in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24; Col. 3:17).



—Steven J. Wallace