

## The Oddity of Human Holidays

Human holidays can be a bit weird. Some cultures celebrate “The Day of the Dead” wherein they celebrate dead ancestors by dressing up like a dead person, dancing and celebrating by eating candy shaped like human skulls (yes, really... look it up!). Weird huh?

One of our odder holidays in western cultures is happening this week. It’s quite friendly, even romantic but the *origins* of Valentine’s Day are not so sweet. There were several Christian martyrs named “Valentine” the most notable was Valentine of Rome who was killed for his faith by the Roman government in 269 A.D. His skull is decorated with flowers and has become an object of worship in the Catholic church. Another person named Valentine was martyred 273 A.D. The Catholic Encyclopedia says there was a third, but there are few details about him.

As is common among humans (or at least some odd ones), some have taken the murder of early Christians, added chubby little baby angels with magic arrows (that make people fall in love when skewered by one) added red hearts (which are not shaped like hearts) and peppered the holiday with exchanges of candy and other gifts. I can’t help but wonder what the martyred Christians would think of the celebration of the death in this modern way! Remember, of course, the holiday has somewhat of a religious flair with the addition of “Saint” added. “Saint Valentine’s Day” is, like most holidays, quite commercialized for the sale of millions of dollars’ worth of cards and candy - even in grade schools where each kid in the class gives “valentines” to each of the others.

I suppose most of this man-made holiday is fairly innocuous, especially since it has become more of a cultural day of kindness and romance rather than memories of martyrs. But the whole thing does bring up a good question, “How do all of these oddities come to be?” Without going into long, detailed histories, suffice it to say, man strays from real history constantly. Whether by intention or by accident and imagination, man strays from reality quite often.

That’s where written record comes in. The written record of martyrs named “Valentine” gives us a permanent history that does not change. Odd but true: ink on a page is more trustworthy than human memories and cultural ideas.

That’s where scripture comes in. In God’s infinite wisdom, he chose ink on a page, first from the pens of the apostles and early scribes, then from the plates of a printing press. There, locked on the unchangeable pages of God’s word, are the messages from His heart to ours. There are truths of God to the ears and minds of men... the very “Testament” which Jesus died to ratify (see Hebrews chapter 9). Therein are the truths that set us free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). Therein are the words of eternal life (John 6:68, 69).

Man will always have his man-made frivolities, some innocuous, some rather odd! But we will always have Jesus’ words life. God’s truths will not fade away like the grass but will endure forever (Isaiah 40:6-8).

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