***‘Getting to Know Pastor Joe’ Columns #16***

**“Do you know about the ancestral rite?”**

Many people think that honoring ancestors, including deceased parents, is a deep-rooted tradition in the East. However, this is not entirely true. Ancestral rites originated from Confucianism, which was systematized by Confucius around 500 B.C. Although Confucius was an excellent thinker who developed Confucianism to include family ethics and political theory, he adopted traditional shamanism to address the issues of life and death. Therefore, ancestral rites have their roots in shamanism.

Even though ancestral rites came from Confucianism, today, many Buddhists also perform these rites. However, it's important to understand that the concept of ancestral rites is fundamentally flawed in Buddhism. Buddhism was founded in the 6th century B.C. by Siddhartha, who was born a prince in a country in India, the home of Hinduism. Witnessing the human rights abuses caused by the caste system and feeling disillusioned by the pessimism of Hinduism, Siddhartha renounced his royal status and established Buddhism.

As a result, while Hinduism created the caste system, Buddhism advocated for the equality of all people. While Hinduism enslaved people with over 330 million gods, Buddhism rejected the notion of gods entirely. Though modern Buddhism venerates Buddha as a deity and includes many gods, this was not part of the original teachings of Buddhism.

The core of Buddhist philosophy is that the real world does not exist. While the real world doesn't exist, this non-existent state is not separate from the real world. "Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form." Therefore, there's no need to claim that something exists or doesn't exist. For example, bubbles on water exist but do not actually exist; they appear real but are not. The self is the same. The concept of 'I' does not exist, but we claim our existence based on consciousness, experiences, and memories, leading to all suffering. Liberation is the enlightenment to accept things as they are, without claiming their existence or non-existence.

In Buddhism, logically, there should be no concept of an afterlife. However, Siddhartha accepted the Hindu belief in reincarnation, likely because it could not be resolved through enlightenment. But reincarnation contradicts Buddhist teachings, as there is no self or entity to be reborn according to Buddhist philosophy. Thus, the idea of reincarnation is inherently contradictory in Buddhism.

According to the belief in reincarnation, a person is reborn into something else after seven days of death. If they do not receive new conditions for rebirth, they will be reborn after another seven days. This cycle can repeat up to seven times, totaling 49 days. The 49-day ritual is to pray for the deceased to be reborn into a good existence during this period. After 49 days, the person no longer exists in their previous form. Therefore, while it's meaningful to remember and honor the deceased, preparing food for them is contradictory, as they would be living as a different entity elsewhere. Thus, the practice of ancestral rites is inherently contradictory for Buddhists.

Ultimately, the importance of ancestral rites stems from a deep thirst for answers about life after death and the inability to accept eternal separation from loved ones. However, as we have seen, ancestral rites do not provide a solution. But we do have a way. By having our loved ones believe in Jesus and become children of God, we can reunite in heaven. In heaven, where the problem of sin is resolved, we will meet again in perfect form, without any scars. Given this perfect solution, isn't it sadder to be deceived by false traditions and reject eternal life?

**“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”” (John 14:6)**