

Should Christians Celebrate Christmas?

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INTRODUCTION

Having been a pastor for 30 years, from year to year I am confronted with the question of why are there Christians who do not celebrate or partake of the festivities of Christmas. It seems unimaginable that a professor in Jesus Christ could find fault with Christmas: an apparent unique opportunity to present the coming of our Lord into this world as it's Saviour. Why would anyone want to oppose the undeniable recognition given to Him by the world that he came to redeem? Could there be a negative aspect so strong as to override the tradition that could stir up an animosity against its observance from a true believer? To protest the commercialization or a worldly reveling and such like seem understandable, but to totally reject any association at all with the holiday seems to be unrealistic for any real Christian. Yet, there are those who don't just let December 25th pass in quiet protest of inobservance, but rather openly express an attitude of intolerance as to write, preach and even suffer family disunity in their opposition of its observance. What is it about December 25th that affects some Christians in this matter? Is it fanaticism? Is there a reasonable cause behind their actions? Does the Word of God say anything that would provoke this minority's views toward Christmas? This pamphlet is intended to help answer these questions.

ROMAN CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION

The first thing to be considered is found within the title of this holiday itself. Christmas is a compound word derived from two words: Christ and Mass that reveal a religious association with the Roman Catholic Church. The institution of Christmas, therefore, is associated with a Roman Catholic Sacrament. It should not be strange then, that Protestants or other Christian churches that do not believe in or practice masses could not be offended with associating Christ with what they consider unscriptural practices. Those who would be opposed to Catholic doctrines, such as observing sacraments to obtain righteousness, would naturally be the ones, to some degree, that would be the most likely to disassociate themselves with this tradition. Therefore, in most cases, although not all, those who have strong feelings against the Catholic Church and her doctrines will be the most likely ones to oppose this tradition.

HOW GOD IS TO BE WORSHIPPED

Another very important point to consider in assessing this matter is the fact that some Christians take the Bible literally when it comes to its revelation of what pleases God, and what doesn't please Him, concerning how he is to be worshiped. They believe the Bible to be a true revelation of the

desires of a benevolent God that reveals, though His word, His will. Tradition to them must have a sound, biblical reason for its acceptance. Areas where tradition would contradict the Word of God would not be considered a light thing to these Christians. To impose a method or time of observance to honor Him that He himself has not requested or commanded is presumptuous. Did not Israel, in Exodus 32:1-35, sin in the same manner when they made the golden calf? Did not David, in 2 Samuel 6:1-11, transgress in the same manner when he tried to bring the ark up to Jerusalem? When David followed the manner of the Philistines in his effort to honor God, rather than the due order revealed in God's word, it caused death and confusion rather than joy and fellowship with God (1 Chronicles 15:1-29). Does not 1 Corinthians 10:1-14 warn us that we, in the same manner, can be displeasing unto God if we are not careful in this manner? When Jesus said, **“they that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:24), was that not a revelation of His will? If Christmas is not the true birthday of His Son, how can God be pleased with its observance? If Christmas is a day of our making for our pleasure, yeah, even a day mixed with error and things which He has revealed to be unpleasing to Him, why would any real Christian think it is pleasing God?

PAGAN ROOTS OF DECEMBER 25TH

Let me explain, according to all reliable sources, if there's any day which we can reasonably be sure that Christ was not born on, it would be December 25th. Without question, the majority of all Bible scholars and historical writers testify that the Western Church's (Roman Catholic) purpose of using December 25th as the birthday of Jesus Christ was to facilitate the converting of Pagans to Christianity beginning at the latter part of the Fourth Century. There is no historical reference that the birth of Jesus Christ was celebrated before this time by any professing Christians. Furthermore, church history reveals that making December 25th the birthday of our Saviour was to assist the heathen's acceptance of Jesus Christ as the "Sun of Righteousness," because of their deification of the Sun, and its worship.

The Encyclopedia Americana states, *the reason for establishing December 25th as Christmas is somewhat obscured, but it is usually held that the day was chosen to correspond to pagan festivals that took place around the winter solstice, when the days begin to lengthen, to celebrate the 'rebirth of the sun'. Northern European tribes celebrated their chief festival of Yule at the winter solstice to commemorate the rebirth of the sun as the giver of light and warmth. The Roman Saturnalia (a festival dedicated to Saturn, the god of agriculture, and to the renewed power of the sun), also took place at this time, and some Christmas customs are thought to be rooted in this ancient pagan celebration. It is held by some scholars that the birth of Christ as the 'Light of the World' was made analogous to the 'rebirth of the sun' in order to make Christianity more meaningful to pagan converts.*

The Encyclopedia Britannica, on page 528 states, *“the first mention of December 25th as the birth date of Jesus occurred in A.D. 336 in an early Roman calendar. The celebration of this day as Jesus’ birth date was probably influenced by pagan (unchristian) festivals held at that time. The ancient Romans held year-end celebrations to honor Saturn, their harvest god; and Mithras, the god of light. Various peoples in northern Europe held festivals in mid-December to celebrate the end of the harvest season. As part of all these celebrations, the people prepared special foods, decorated their homes with greenery, and joined in singing and gift giving. These customs gradually became part of the Christmas celebration.”*

Alexander Hislop’s The Two Babylon’s, on pages 91-93 states, *“The festivals of Rome are innumerable; but five of the most important may be singled out for elucidation-viz., Christmas-day, Lady-day, Easter, the Nativity of St. John, and the Feast of the Assumption. Each and all of these can be proved to be Babylonian. And first, as to the festival in honour of the birth of Christ, or Christmas. How comes it that that festival was connected with the 25th of December? There is not a word in the Scriptures about the precise day of his birth, or the time of the year when He was born. What is recorded there implies that at what time so ever his birth took place, it could not have on the 25th of December. At the time that the angel announced his birth to the shepherds of Bethlehem, they were feeding their flocks by night in the open fields. Now, no doubt, the climate of Palestine is not so severe as the climate of this country; but even there, though the heat of the day be considerable, the cold of the night, from December to February, is very piercing, and it was not the custom for the shepherds of Judea to watch their flocks in the open fields later than about the end of October. It is in the last degree incredible, then, that the birth of Christ could have taken place at the end of December. There is great unanimity among commentators on this point. Besides Barnes, Doddridge, Lightfoot, Joseph Scaliger, and Jennings, in his “Jewish Antiquities,” “who are all of opinion that December 25th could not be the right time of our Lord’s nativity, the celebrated Joseph Mede pronounced a very decisive opinion to the same effect. After a long and careful disquisition on the subject, among other arguments he adduces the following: “At the birth of Christ every woman and child was to go to be taxed at the city whereto they belonged, whither some had long journeys; but the middle of winter was not fitting for such a business, especially for women with child, and children to travel in. Therefore, Christ could not be born in the depth of winter. Again, at the time of Christ’s birth, the shepherds lay abroad watching with their flocks in the night time; but this was not likely to be the middle of winter. And if any shall think the winter wind was not so extreme in these parts, let him remember the words of Christ in the gospel. ‘Pray that your flight be not in the winter.’ If the winter was too bad a time to flee in, it seems no fit time for shepherds to lie in the fields in, and women and children to travel in.” Indeed, it is admitted by the most learned and candid writers of all parties that the day of our Lord’s birth cannot be determined, and that within the Christian Church no such festival as Christmas was ever heard of till the third century, and that not till the fourth century was far advanced did it gain much observance. How, then, did the Romish Church fix on December 25th as Christmas-day? Why, thus: Long before the fourth century, and long before the Christian era*

itself, a festival was celebrated among the heathen, at that precise time of the year, in honour of the birth of the son of the Babylonian queen of heaven; and it may fairly be presumed that, in order to conciliate the heathen and to swell the number of the nominal adherents of Christianity, the same festival was adopted by the Roman Church, giving it only the name of Christ. This tendency on the part of Christians to meet Paganism half-way was very early developed; and we find Tertullian, even in his day, about the year 230, bitterly lamenting the inconsistency of the disciples of Christ in this respect, and contrasting it with the strict fidelity of the Pagans to their own superstition. "By us, "says he, "who are strangers to Sabbaths, and new moons, and festivals, once acceptable to God, the Saturnalia, the feasts of January, the Brumalia, and Matronalia, are now frequented; gifts are carried to and fro, new year's day presents are made with din, and sports and banquets are celebrated with uproar; oh, how much more faithful are the heathen to their religion, who take special care to adopt no solemnity from the Christians." Upright men strove to stem the tide, but in spite of all their efforts, the apostasy went on, till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan superstition. That Christmas was originally a Pagan festival is beyond all doubt. The time of the year, and the ceremonies with which it is still celebrated, prove its origin."

The Encyclopedia Americana under the title Development of Customs says, "*The English adapted many older folk festivals to their Christmas. In the middle ages, English Christmases were times of great hilarity and good cheer, and vast banquets and pageantry celebrated the occasion. Burning the Yule log was adapted to English custom from the ancient Scandinavian practice of kindling huge bonfires in honor of the winter solstice. The idea of using evergreens at Christmas time also came to England from pre-Christian northern European beliefs. Celtic and Teutonic tribes honored these plants at their winter solstice festivals as symbolic of eternal life, and the druids ascribed magical properties to the mistletoe.*"

DOES SCRIPTURE ALLOW MIXING TRADITION WITH TRUTH?

What about the story of Christmas? When we read the scriptures we do not find "three" wise men, although we do find three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh; which typify of Christ being Prophet, Priest, and King (Mathew 2:11). The wise men do not worship a babe in a manger, but worship a young child who is residing in a house (Mathew 2:11-15). We know that Christ is approximately 2 years old at this time, because Herod diligently inquired of the young child's age in Mathew 2:7-8, and then he acted upon the time given by the wise men whom he had asked! (Mathew 2:16)

We know the date of our Saviour's death was on the 14th day of Niacin, which coincides with our March/April. From knowing the Lord's ministry was for 42 months according to Daniel 9, it can

be conceded that six months preceding could not be the month of December, but rather, September/October, which would coincide with the Jewish month of the Feast of Tabernacles. The most logical conclusion a Christian could come to, if he was looking for the birth date of our Lord, would not be December, but September/October. It should be a point of interest that our bodies are referred to as tabernacles in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5. Taking this to be so, it would complete the fulfillment of the Jewish Feasts as such: Christ our Passover being sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7) we are therefore now keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread (1 Corinthians 5:8), waiting for the Feast of Trumpets which signifies the in gathering of the harvest (1 Thessalonians 4:16), when Christ shall gather us unto Himself (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Isn't it strange that we have adopted the same methods of Christ worship in our day as the Lord warned Israel not to adopt in their day? The only difference being, Israel changing a tree into the image of God and we're changing the image of God into a tree.

“Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.” (Jeremiah 10:1-5)

As Israel entered into a vain worship of God the Father, we have now entered into a vain worship of the Son through like methods of tradition. Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of his day, in Matthew 15:1-9 for making the word of God of none effect by their tradition, saying, that with their mouths they honor God but their hearts were far from him. Shall we not be just as guilty as them, if we adopt pagan customs and transform them into Christian traditions, unconcerned about what Paul has written to us in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”**

What about the words of 1 Corinthians 10:1-14? **“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through**

the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lasted Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.”

Aren't we mixing Christ with Belial when we knowingly mix him with pagan customs? Are we not partaking of idolatry when we involve ourselves in the worldliness and revelry of the world's celebration of a self-appointed birthday of Christ?

HISTORICAL OPPOSITION TO CHRISTMAS

What is the answer to these things? Historically Christians of every generation have tried to oppose this marriage of Christianity with Paganism, but the weight of the multitudes have prevailed to make the minority to look uncharitable or fanatic to a degree of such proportions to judge them as unworthy of notice or to downright rejection. It has not always been so. In the past, many prominent Christians tried to stem the tide of this transition from truth to traditional supremacy.

The Encyclopedia Britannica states, “*not until the late 300's did Christianity become the official religion of the Roman Empire. Through its expansion (Roman Catholic) by 1600 A.D. Christmas became the most important religious festival in Europe. This popularity of Christmas grew until the Reformation, a religious movement of the 1500's. This movement gave birth to Protestantism. During the reformation, many Christians began to consider Christmas a pagan celebration because it included non-religious customs During the sixteen hundreds, because of these feelings Christmas was outlawed in England and in parts of the English colonies in America. The old customs of feasting and decorating, however, soon reappeared and blended with the more Christian aspects of the celebration.*”

The Encyclopedia Americana states, “*Christmas was not celebrated by the puritans or the Calvinist. When the puritans came to power in England under Oliver Cromwell ‘in 1642, Christmas celebrations were banded as evidences of anti-religious, royalist, sentiment. Penalties were exacted for celebrating Christmas and for staying home from work on Christmas day. The Puritan tradition was brought to New England, where Christmas did not become a legal holiday until 1856 In Europe, on the other hand, Christmas was being traditionally accepted as the papacy grew in influence. Even so, preachers of Leonia still preached against its observance and effect upon the protestant body of believers.*”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon of London, who preached to thousands each Sunday in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, in his message on December 24, 1881, preached against Christmas as, “*a religious superstitious event that no Christian should celebrate because it is of no divine origin or commandment. That, no doubt all of its observance and inception is of Pagan origin.*”

SHOULD A CHRISTIAN CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS?

Considering the facts shown, can a Christian, in good conscience allow themselves to fellowship with such a worldly corruption or custom that perverts God’s person or violates scripture to this degree? Should we profane all that is holy to the level of commercialization and worldly observance as Christmas has done to the name of Jesus Christ? Hasn’t Santa Claus taken the place of God and corrupted his holy person to a level of blasphemy?

What do trees, reindeer, and elves have to do with the coming of our Lord? No more than Easter eggs and rabbits have to do with his resurrection! They are nothing but tale-tale signs of the apostasy that Paul forewarned us about that would precede the world’s appointment of the man of sin, as their God (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

Is there a day our Lord desires to remember him by? If not his birthday, is he pleased to recognize him for any day? Yes, as a matter of fact, there is a day our Lord told us to remember him by! As his disciples, he has given us an ordinance of the day to remember him on, and it is, his death till he comes. **“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come. Should we not keep his commandment rather than to enjoin ourselves to the tradition of men? Would it not please our Lord better when we submit ourselves to his desires?”** (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

DOES THE BIBLE JUSTIFY CELEBRATING PAGAN FEASTS?

It is argued by some, that Romans 14, especially in reference to verse 5, justify their celebration of Christmas as a Christian holiday, so long as they are doing it “unto the Lord.” But, is this not perverting the word of God to justify idolatry? Shall Romans 14:5 nullify 2 Corinthians 6:14-7 or 1 Corinthians 10:1-11? Have they not taken a verse out of context because of a pretext? Romans 14:5 is not speaking of pagan practices in its worship of their gods being accepted by God, it is in the context of a converted Jew who recognized the days and ceremonial laws of eating and drinking as was given him under the law of God. The context is a Jewish believer which was still weak in the faith (v.1) and was still having a problem transitioning over to the new covenant as far as eating any meats or drinking without guilt of conscience (v.14-23)! Peter had this problem in Acts 10:9-16, when the Lord revealed it to him. The “**weak**” of Romans 14 is not a pagan worshipping God in idolatry! God commands us to repent of these vanities (Acts 14:8-18; Acts 17:22-31; 1 Corinthians 10:1-14). Romans cannot justify Christmas any more than 1 Timothy 5:23 justifies social drinking.

THE GREAT APOSTACY

Christmas is a deeply ingrained tradition in the lives of so many and to cease from its celebration no doubt will bring division and sometimes persecution from family and friends. But, where shall we draw the line before the Lord is no longer identifiable in the Word, much less the world. If tradition is going to have such precedence that can override the truth, how long will it be before we digress to the state of the Athenians, and our devotions be steeped in superstition rather than truth (Acts 17:16-31). How long before we who are supposed to be “**children of light**” are transformed back to the image that we came from? Whereas, before we knew we were living in darkness, now we are calling it light! We knew there was a devil, but now have allowed him to transform himself into that angel of light he desires to be (2 Corinthians 11:14)!

Isn't it strange how some Christians are not offended that the world is corrupting the things of God so badly for their covetous motives, and yet if a brother or sister in Christ cease to partake of it, they are seen as more evil than them. Maybe it's about time to take warning of the words of our Lord in Revelation 18:1-5. **“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying,**

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”

CONCLUSION

This information is for those who seek an answer to why some Christians have chosen to cease from the celebration of Christmas, it no doubt, will be opposed, rejected and in some cases abhorred. Yet, it is not intended to offend anyone; it is intended to inform everyone who would desire a sincere answer to a question of honest inquiry. Here it is, reject it if you please, receive it if you will, but be assured of this one thing; every one of us shall give account of himself unto God, to answer for the things we have done in his flesh, whether it be good or bad (Romans 14:11-12 and 2 Corinthians 5:9-10), saved or lost.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit.

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