

What About Christmas ??

Int.

1. Aim: To show some facts about this holiday and our reaction to it.
2. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows" Matt. 1:18 The account of the birth of Christ is found in Matthew 1 -2 and Luke 1 - 2
3. This is the time of the year that is known as the Christmas season when the world celebrates December 25th as the birthday of Christ.
4. The American "Christmas Season" is filled with many enjoyable and worthwhile customs.
 - a. It is a happy time of year. The attitudes that are especially noticeable - love, good will, peace, joy, giving - are what God intended for men to exhibit year around.
 - b. The exchanging of gifts, laughter, and love rekindles our spirits and strengthens our families.
 - c. Everybody but Scrooge loves Christmas.
 - d. We often hear that "Jesus is the reason for the season" and "let's put Christ back in Christmas."
 - e. Christians ask, "How should I celebrate Christmas?" or "Should I celebrate it at all?"
5. Since we should be "...ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh" (1 Peter 3:15) this topic deserves consideration. What does the Bible say about Christmas?

Discussion**I. SOME OBSERVATIONS**

- A. No proof that December 25th was the birth date of Christ
1. But it is a fact that he was born as our Savior
 2. Luke 2:1-14
 3. The exact day he was born is not revealed to us and is not really important
 4. Dec. 25th was adopted in the 3rd or 4th century by the Roman Catholic church. It was a national holiday of the Roman empire honoring the sun.
- B. CHRISTIANS MAY ENJOY THIS SEASON AS A NATIONAL HOLIDAY.
1. Christians do not have to cease to be happy in Jesus at "Christmas" just to be different from others.
 2. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always" - Philippians 4:4
 3. He also wrote, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice" - Romans 12:15
 4. This would include Dec. 25th or Christmas day as much as any other day.
 - a. There is not enough happiness in the world anyway.
 - b. We may give and receive gifts as easily on this day as any other.
 - c. This is a good time to teach our children that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
 5. Christians observe many non-religious holidays (July 4; Labor Day; Memorial Day, Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving, Veterans Day), and can celebrate "Christmas" in this sense (unless it violates the conscience, Rom. 14:23).

- a. Romans 14:23 NKJV "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."
- b. This falls into the area of Christian liberty - Rom. 14:3-6
- c. Since most of our jobs give us time off, it's a blessing for our homes.
- d. If there was ever a need for strengthening families, it is now.
- e. It gives parents time to teach children and spouses time to strengthen relationships
 - (1) Deut. 6:6-7
 - (2) Eph. 5:25-29; 6:4

II. CHRISTIANS MUST NOT CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AS A HOLY DAY

- A. The word Christmas is not found in the Bible.
 1. It originated with the Catholic church ("Christ Mass") to commemorate Christ's birth and was practiced in the Fourth Century.
 2. It was not practiced by Christians in Bible times.
 3. There is no command, example, or implication that one should celebrate Christmas in the Bible, In fact the opposite is the case.
 4. Rev. 22:18-19 - No additions allowed
- B. Paul addressed this issue (in principle) with the Galatian church: "Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor on you in vain" - Gal. 4:10-11

- C. The Colossian church faced those who wanted them to celebrate religious days and were told, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" - Col. 2:16-17
- D. God expects Christians to strictly follow the Bible
1. "Observe all things that I have commanded," Matthew 28:20;
 2. "Speak as the oracles of God...," 1 Peter 4:11
 3. We must not "go beyond what is written," 1 Cor. 4:6 ASV
- E. Therefore, we observe only what God has commanded - Sunday -
1. Acts 20:7a "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, "
 2. God set this day apart to memorialize, not His Son's birth, but His death -
1 Corinthians 11:20-24
 3. Christians rejoice in this "unspeakable gift" fifty-two times a year!
- F. People cannot actually celebrate Christ's birth anyway because God did not reveal the birth date - perhaps because He knew people would celebrate it
1. Before the fourth century A.D., there were three guesses as to His birth -
January 6, March 25, Jan. 10, May 20 and December 25
 2. December 25 was ordered as the day in A.D. 357 by Liberius, Bishop of Rome (Britannica Encyclopedia).

3. World Book Encyclopedia says that day was chosen probably "...because the feast of the sun, or winter solstice, was a familiar Roman feast celebrating the victory of light over darkness"
 4. Thus Christmas began as a Catholic compromise with paganism.
- G. The evidence points to an autumn, or perhaps spring, date because shepherds are not in the fields from mid-October until mid-March in Palestine - Luke 2:8
1. Albert Barnes (Presbyterian) notes that Judean shepherds take flocks to the mountains in winter and only during summer months would they spend the nights with their flocks.
 2. It does not really matter when He was born, only that He was born - Matthew 1:21-25

III. WHAT WE DO KNOW

- A. It occurred during the reign of Caesar Augustus
- B. His mother was a virgin who was pledged to be married to a man by the name of Joseph, son of Jacob - Matthew 1:1-25
- C. The birth occurred in Bethlehem of Judea, during the first census of governor Quirinius, and shepherds were told by an angel that the birth had occurred - Luke 2:1-20
- D. Likewise, Magi, wise men from the east were led by a star to worship the infant king Matthew 2:1-12
- E. In this, the fullness of time, the incarnate son of God came to earth to redeem mankind Galatians 4:4-7

F. What day was he born? We do not know.

G. Christ's physical birth did not mark His beginning.

1. In the case of ordinary humans, God forms their spirit with the formation of their body - Zech. 12:1
2. This was not the case with Jesus. His spirit preexisted His body. He was "in the beginning with God" Jn. 1:1-3
3. Though John the baptizer was 6 months older than Christ in physical age, yet Jesus preexisted John, and was eternally older than John - Jn. 1:30 "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me."
4. The same was true of Abraham. Though Abraham lived 2000 years before Christ, Jesus preexisted Abraham by eternity - Jn. 8:58 "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."
5. There was a priest/king named Melchizedek who lived in days of Abraham.
6. The Hebrew writer compared him to the Son of God by saying he "had neither beginning of days, nor yet end of years" - Heb. 7:3
7. You see friend, Jesus has always existed and is always the same - Heb. 13:8 "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

- H. His physical birth did not bring Him into existence, it merely provided shape to His preexistent and intrinsic form.
1. That birth gave Jesus the likeness and appearance of a man - Phil. 2:6-8
 2. Though the Bible does call it a "birth," yet that birth was so very different from normal human births that it stands in its own separate classification: the class of incarnation! God became enveloped in flesh
 - a. Jn. 1:14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Incarnation = God became flesh
 - b. Matt. 1:18-23 Emmanuel = God with us
 3. Birthdays celebrate one's beginning: Christ had no beginning.
 4. By focusing upon Christ's alleged "birthday," as religious Christmas observers do, they detract from Christ's deity and exalt His transient physical nature.
 5. They ignore what the Bible teaches about Christ's real purpose for coming to the earth.

CONCLUSION

1. The introduction of a "Christmas" service into the church would definitely be sinful because it would be unauthorized by scripture.
2. On the other hand, Christians should not feel guilty if they wish to be kind and benevolent at this time of the year nor should they shun thinking about the Lord's birth at this time of the year.

3. A word of caution is in order. In all areas of personal liberty we must be careful not to cause others to stumble. We should be willing to limit our liberty at such time that it may not cause others to sin.
 4. It is proof of the divinity of Christ to find Him so popular in the world nineteen hundred years after His birth that the civilized world wants to celebrate His birth, whether it knows the date or not.
 - a. Thank God for our Lord and His coming into the world, regardless of the exact date of His arrival by virgin birth.
 - b. We shall, therefore, go on teaching His truth, whatever is proper and fitting, regardless of "Christmas."
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Sermon by Arthur Pigman - Sunday Morning Dec. 20, 2009
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