

# Should We Celebrate Christmas?

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## INTRODUCTION

- A. Illustration about men going fishing instead of going Christmas shopping, *Illustrations Unlimited*, p. 86, #25.
  - 1. That accurately portrays the feelings of many at Christmas—so much to do that we don't have time to enjoy it.
  - 2. There is more depression and suicide at Christmas than at any other time in the year.
- B. But, Christmas can be a time of great joy and anticipation.
  - 1. There isn't a child who doesn't look forward to Christmas morning and seeing what Santa Claus has brought.
  - 2. For the rest of us, Christmas is a great time to be together with family and friends.
    - a. It is a time to see those family members we haven't seen in several months.
    - b. It is also a time when we get to eat and eat and eat.
- C. But, is all of this right? Is it right to celebrate Christmas?

## SOME HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- A. Christmas is not a New Testament concept.
  - 1. There is nothing in the New Testament that mentions a Christmas celebration.
  - 2. Only Mt. and Lk. begin with the birth of Jesus; Jn. and Mk. begin with Jesus as an adult.
    - a. I gather from that that the birth of Jesus isn't all that important.
    - b. Granted, it is important that he became flesh and dwelt among men, but it is far more important what he did after he became flesh than the mere fact he became flesh.
- B. Christmas was first celebrated years after Jesus ascended back to the Father.
  - 1. Christmas was first celebrated in Rome in 354, in Constantinople in 379, and in Antioch in 388.
  - 2. During the third century, the Emperor Aurelian proclaimed Dec. 25 as a special day dedicated to the sun-god, Mithra. There were several pagan holidays celebrated in December.
    - a. The Catholic Church later proclaimed Dec. 25 as the official birthday of Christ—they did so to accommodate the pagans and allow them to keep their festivals.
    - b. We know beyond any doubt that Jesus was not born on Dec. 25.
      - 1) When Jesus was born, shepherds were living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks (Lk. 2:8).
      - 2) In those days, shepherds drove their flocks forth in March and brought them in in November.
- C. "Christmas" means "Christ mass." It is a mass devoted to the birth of Jesus.
- D. Now that we know some historical perspective, we can ask, "Should we celebrate Christmas?"

## WE CANNOT CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS RELIGIOUSLY

- A. As we mentioned earlier, there is absolutely no mention of Christmas in the New Testament.
  - 1. Had God wanted us to celebrate Christmas he would have told us to do so.
    - a. The Bible teaches that God has told us everything he expects us to do.
      - 1) "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).
      - 2) God gave Scripture so that "the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17).
      - 3) We cannot think beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6).
      - 4) We are not permitted to add anything to Scripture (Rev. 22:18). Celebrating Christmas would be adding to God's Word.
    - b. Since God did not tell us to celebrate Christmas, we can safely say that he doesn't want us to

celebrate Christmas.

2. Christmas is a man-made tradition; man cannot participate in man-made traditions.
  - a. “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men” (Mk. 7:8).
    - 1) The Jews were ignoring God’s command so that they could carry out their traditions.
      - a) God commanded that children honor their parents.
      - b) Yet, the Jews said that if you gave a monetary gift to God you were no longer bound to honor your parents.
    - 2) We can do the same thing, set aside God’s law and establish our own traditions.
  - b. “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men” (Col. 2:8).
- B. Some might ask, “Why wouldn’t God want us to celebrate the birth of Jesus?”
  1. He does want us to remember a far more important event in Jesus’ life—his death and resurrection.
  2. Jesus established the Lord’s Supper so that we could remember his death.
    - a. When Jesus gave his disciples the bread at the Last Supper, he said, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me” (Lk. 22:19).
    - b. “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).
  3. We meet on the first day of the week so that we can remember Jesus’ resurrection.
    - a. Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week—”He rose early on the first day of the week” (Mk. 16:9).
    - b. The early church worshipped on the first day of the week.
      - 1) “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight” (Acts 20:7).
      - 2) “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2).
- C. What can we not do at Christmas?
  1. We dare not have some pageant at the church in which we celebrate Jesus’ birth.
    - a. We ought to say here that there is no biblical authority for any kind of pageant or performance of any kind.
      - 1) What is wrong with pageants and performances is that they make worship into entertainment for us instead of for God.
      - 2) Worship should be for God, not us; he is the audience.
        - a) In Revelation, the 24 elders fall down before God’s throne and praise him, saying, “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11).
        - b) The elders also fell before God and worshiped him (Rev. 5:14).
    - b. Pageants and performances would constitute celebrating Christmas; God has not authorized such.
  2. We dare not treat Christmas as some holy day.
    - a. We can pretend as though God is to be honored or worshiped in some special way on Christmas.
    - b. God should always be honored and worshiped, but we can’t elevate this day above any other day.
  3. We dare not elevate Christmas above God.
    - a. People do this all the time—they have to cook so they miss worship, they have family coming in so they stay home with them instead of worship, they shop long hours so they don’t have time to visit the sick or to pray.
    - b. This year Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday.
      - 1) Christmas Eve is a day that many families get together.
      - 2) But, we dare not miss worship so that we can be with our families Christmas Eve.
    - c. God is to be first in our lives—“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Mt. 6:33).

## **WE CAN CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AS A HOLIDAY**

- A. As long as we don't celebrate Christmas as the birth of Christ, there is nothing wrong with celebrating it.
- B. There is nothing wrong with celebrating holidays.
  - 1. The Bible says that we can celebrate holidays.
    - a. Rom. 14:5-6.
    - b. "Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths" (Col. 2:16).
  - 2. As long as we don't celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday, there is nothing wrong with Christmas trees, sending cards, exchanging gifts, etc.
  - 3. Celebrating Christmas in this way is no different than celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, July 4th, and other holidays.
- C. Some are troubled that Christmas has its origins in paganism.
  - 1. We need to remember that the names of the days of the week and months come from the names of pagan gods—i.e., Sunday gets its name from "Sun-day," which was a day devoted to the sun by ancient people.
  - 2. It seems to me that just because pagans celebrated a certain holiday does not mean that we can't celebrate it as long as we don't mean what the pagans meant,
- D. Illustration about two mothers having lunch to celebrate the baby's birthday, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*, #6099.
  - 1. Many say that's exactly what's happening with Christmas—we are leaving Jesus out of it.
  - 2. But, that's exactly what we should do—leave Jesus out of Christmas and celebrate it as a legal holiday, not a religious holiday!

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. There is much good about Christmas.
  - 1. It often reminds us to be considerate of those less fortunate than we.
    - a. Jesus himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
    - b. Illustration about a man watching children and giving them gifts, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*, #6104.
    - c. Such care is a good thing, but we need to have such concern all year long, not just at Christmas.
  - 2. It causes this secular world to pause and think about Jesus—that's always a good thing.
- B. God does not intend for us to remember Jesus as a baby in a manger,
  - 1. He intends for us to remember him as the crucified and resurrected Lord.
  - 2. And, he expects us to honor Jesus as the resurrected Lord—Are you honoring him as the resurrected Lord?