

## The Christmas Question

(Part 2 – Implications and Exhortations)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. In part 1 of this lesson, we considered the biblical and historical problems...
  - A. Related to the claim that Jesus was *born on December 25*.
    - i. We considered that biblical evidence is against a wintertime birth for Jesus, as well as the fact that it does not give us any calendar date for His birth.
    - ii. We looked at how there is no historical evidence for a December 25 birth. For, as early as 200 A.D. there was *confusion* over when Jesus was born, with no one thinking it was December 25. It was only accepted much later based on tradition rather than fact.
  - B. Related to the actual *celebration* of Jesus' birth.
    - i. We saw that there is no biblical command or instruction for the local church or individual Christians to celebrate Christ's birth.
    - ii. We saw there is no historical evidence of early Christians celebrating Christ's birthday. That didn't begin until at least the 4<sup>th</sup> century.
2. Today I would like for us to consider some of the implications and exhortations related to what we learned last week in hopes that each of us will examine the prevailing thoughts and practices concerning this day and season to be sure we are being faithful to the Lord in what we do.

### BODY:

#### **I. The implications:**

- A. Since there is no scripture (or early history) to back up the belief that Christ was born on December 25, or for the observance of this day in honor of His birth...
  1. **Insisting** that Christmas be observed as Christ's birthday *cannot be done in faith*.
    - a. Actions of faith are actions based on God's will, His revealed word (Rom. 10:17 – "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.").
    - b. Since there is no command, example, or necessary inference not for Christ's birthday to be observed and/or celebrated on December 25, it cannot be preached in faith.
  2. Those who *insist* that it must be celebrated *as such* elevate human tradition to doctrinal status (Matt. 15:8-9 – "These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, **teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**").
    - a. To insist that we "Keep Christ in Christmas" is to elevate man-made commandments to the status of divine doctrine.
    - b. So, it doesn't matter whether people say, "Happy Holidays" or "Season's greetings" instead of "Merry Christmas."
  3. By what authority do people decry the commercialization of Christmas?
    - a. Since Christmas was born of human tradition and has evolved in its celebration and trimmings through the centuries, who is to say that its commercialization is *wrong*?
      - i. What is the product of human tradition cannot carry the weight of divine command!
      - ii. Thus, there are really no official rules for celebrating this day or season.
      - iii. I am glad businesses and the economy are benefited by Christmas, seeing many enjoy buying and giving gifts, which God is not against (Luke 11:13 – "If you then, being evil, know how to **give good gifts** to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!").
    - b. Yet, upon saying that I would warn all against materialism and covetousness (Lk. 12:15 – "And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.").
- B. If Christmas must be observed as Christ's birth, why is there no insisting on *biblical accuracy* in depicting this event?
  1. Churches and individuals everywhere put out nativity scenes that have three wise men bringing gifts to Jesus who in in a manger, which is not what the Bible says happened.

- a. It was **shepherds** in the field, not the wise men, that came to the **manger** (Lk. 2:15-16 – “So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the **shepherds** said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.”<sup>16</sup> And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the **Babe lying in a manger.**”).
  - b. The **wise men**, on the other hand, came to a **house** (Matt. 2:1-2, 10-11 – “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,<sup>2</sup> saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”...<sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.<sup>11</sup> And when they had come into the **house**, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”)
  - c. Why is there **three** wise men, when the Bible does not say how many wise men came? It only says that they brought *gifts* of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt. 2:11)?
2. So, if religious observance of Christmas is so important, why is it no problem that it is universally incorrectly depicted by churches and individuals everywhere?
- C. God ol’ S.C. (I purposefully use S.C. to avoid reprisals):
1. Some people have problems with this character’s part in this holiday season.
  2. What people forget is that S.C. is a *character* that has *evolved like the rest of the Christmas tradition*. **To reject one is to reject the other.**
  3. For those who claim S.C. takes the focus of Christmas off Jesus...
    - a. Remember God didn’t make Jesus the reason for the season, man did.
    - b. Jesus isn’t the center of Christmas, He is center of everything (Col. 1:16-17 – “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created **through Him** and **for Him**.<sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him **all things consist.**”).
    - c. People can enjoy the stories, movies, etc., about S.C. without it being a problem.
  4. Of course, as parents in Christ we have the responsibility of being truthful (Eph. 4:25 – “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another.”). You must decide what you will do with that!

## II. Must Christmas be rejected in any form?

- A. Objection: Christmas is a *religious holiday* with its *roots* in the apostate church.
  1. Christmas is a *man-made holiday* that can be observed *however one chooses*, including doing so in secular, non-religious, fashion.
  2. While growing up and in my own house, Christmas has never been observed as anything other than a time for family and fun together!
  3. Its origin no more affected that than does the fact that the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrates our revolution means that enjoying a day off with family, etc., supports rebellion against the governing powers, which God forbids (Rom. 13:1ff.)
- B. Objection: If you observe December 25<sup>th</sup> in any form, others will think you believe and honor it as Christ’s birthday.
  1. Paul said Christians could buy and eat meat that may have been offered to idols *without asking questions* (1 Cor. 10:25-27 – “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience’ sake;<sup>26</sup> for “the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness.”<sup>27</sup> If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience’ sake.”).
    - a. This means that even if those selling the meat or the neighbor providing this meat may **think** that you are eating it in honor of an idol, you can still eat it!
    - b. If nothing is said about it, what people **may think** doesn’t have to change our actions.

2. Even if someone in the world thinks a Christian is observing Christmas as Christ's birthday, they would not think *evil* of it.
    - a. We make the mistake of thinking that the world, even the religious world, thinks like we do! But, they do not and would likely think nothing about it either way.
    - b. Yet, as a Christian I would have to refrain from any public Christmas activity that is held in honor of Christ's birth (1 Cor. 8:9-13 – "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. <sup>10</sup> For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? <sup>11</sup> And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? <sup>12</sup> But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."").
      - i. Going to the trouble to participate in such an event would make a statement to others that personal observance of putting up lights or a Santa figure in your yard do not!
      - ii. This "statement" is the difference in eating meat in an idol's temple and individually eating meat without asking questions.
      - iii. Therefore, I could never in clear conscience participate in a feast/gathering planned and offered at Christmas to honor the birth of Christ.
- C. Objection: Christmas cannot be observed by Christians because its roots are *pagan*.
1. Although the roots of an activity should be considered, many non-objectionable things in life have objectional roots.
    - a. For instance, the names of the days of the week have their roots in pagan worship (i.e., Sun god, Moon god, Thor, etc.).
    - b. We all use these names without thought or consequence despite their origin.
    - c. If we can use these names without honoring these gods, and we do, then the roots of a practice do not in and of itself make it sinful.
  2. Though many believe December 25th was chosen to counter the heathen celebration of the winter solstice, that is not firmly established.
    - a. Some *firmly* state it true, as does James Frazer in book *The Golden Bough*, who says: "The heathen origin of Christmas is plainly hinted at, if not tacitly admitted, by Augustine when he exhorts his Christian brethren not to celebrate that solemn day like the heathen on account of the sun, but on account of him who made the sun." (p. 416-17).
    - b. Others, however, argue against this (*How December 25<sup>th</sup> Became Christmas*, [www.biblicalarchaeology.org](http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org)).
      - i. This theory is not found in any ancient Christian writings, although some "Christian authors" of the 4<sup>th</sup> century mention a connection between observing Jesus' birth and the solstice.
      - ii. This theory was never firmly suggested until the 12<sup>th</sup> Century in a manuscript by Dionysius bar-Salibi who states that "in ancient times the Christmas holiday was actually shifted from January 6 to December 25 so that it fell on the same date as the pagan Sol Invictus holiday." (see Talley, *Origins*, pp. 101–102.)
      - iii. All that can truly be said about it is that they moved the celebration day of Christ's birth to December 25, where there was already a pagan holiday.
        - 1) Why would that make any celebration of it pagan?
        - 2) Is giving valentines or candy on Valentine's day truly honoring St. Valentine or the St. Valentine's day massacre that happened that day? If not, why not?
      - iv. Evidence indicates that for the first few centuries Christians were very opposed to incorporating heathen days of worship and practices into their culture.
    - c. So, although this theory may be true, to dogmatically argue that the celebration of Christmas on December 25<sup>th</sup> came from a *pagan celebration day* would be wrong.

## CONCLUSION:

1. I hope this has given you some food for thought as well as some guidelines concerning your observance of this holiday and others like it.
2. God's word is always the answer to every question concerning such matters and I hope I have provided the proper biblical observations and answers.
3. With that said, I am glad Jesus was born in the world, but I am even more glad that He lived a sinless life and chose to die on the cross that my sins might be forgiven and I might be saved eternally!
  - A. Would you like to have that forgiveness and hope of eternal life provided through Jesus?
  - B. You must believe, repent, confess Christ, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins that you might be raised up with Christ to a hope of eternal life in Christ!