

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

December

26

2021

Should We Celebrate Christmas as a Religious Holiday?

By David Padfield

Since Christmas is recognized by most people as a religious Holy Day, it would be good for us to study its meaning. Considering Christmas has the word Christ in it, it should have some connection with the Lord. If there is a connection with the Lord, we should be able to turn to the New Testament and read of this observance. However, upon a careful examination, we fail to find a single reference to this day in the word of God.

When did men first start observing this special day? To answer this question, we have to go outside the New Testament. Historians tell us it was nearly three centuries after the death of Christ before a day was set aside for a special observance for His birth. "Christmas was for the first time celebrated in Rome in 354, in Constantinople in 379, and in Antioch in 388." (*Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Norval Goldenhuys, p. 102). A well known preacher during this time mentioned the late origin of Christmas.

"Chrysostom, in a Christmas sermon, A.D. 386, says, 'It is not ten years since this day was clearly known to us...'" (*Unger Bible Dictionary*, p. 196). "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church, and before the fifth century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether January 6th, March 25th, or December 25th." (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 5, p. 641).

When was Jesus born? It comes as a shock to many individuals that the Bible does not tell us when Christ was born; but we are reasonably certain He was not born in December.

Nearly everyone remembers reading about the appearance of an angel to the shepherds. In **Luke 2:8** we read, "*Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.*" This rules out the birth of Christ as a winter event. "According to this statement, Jesus cannot have been born in December, in the middle of

the rainy season, as has been since the fourth century supposed ... According to the Rabbins, the driving forth of the flocks took place in March, the bringing in of them in November..." (*Critical and Exegetical Handbook To The Gospels of Mark and Luke*, H.A.W. Meyer, p. 273).

Adam Clarke makes this observation: "It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the Passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain; during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As the Passover occurred in the spring, and the first rain began early in the month of Marchesvan, which answers to our part of October and November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of the summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the twenty-fifth of December, when no flocks were out in the fields." (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*, p. 857).

Who decided to make December 25 the birthday of Christ? This credit goes to the Roman Catholic Church. They explain it like this: "Numerous theories have been put forward through the last 2,000 years to explain Dec. 25 as Christmas Day. The most likely one, however, the one most generally accepted by scholars now, is that the birth of Christ was assigned to the date of the winter solstice. This date is Dec. 21 in our calendar, but was Dec. 25 in the Julian calendar which predated our own ... The solstice, when days begin to lengthen in the northern hemisphere, was referred to by pagans as the 'Birthday of the Unconquered Sun'. During the third century, the Emperor Aurelian proclaimed Dec. 25 as a special day dedicated to the sun-god, whose cult was very strong in Rome at that time. Even before this time, Christian writers already had begun to refer to Jesus as the Sun of Justice. It seemed quite logical, therefore,

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that as Christianity begun to dominate the religious scene in the Roman Empire, the date of the 'new-born sun' should be chosen as the birthdate of Christ. Apparently, it bothers some people that the date for Christmas has its roots in a pagan feast. Be that as it may, it's the best explanation we have for the choice of Dec. 25 to celebrate the birth of Jesus." (*The New Question Box*, p. 28-29).

This December observance originated with pagans as a feast day to their sun-god, Mithra. It was changed into a "Christian holy day" by the Roman Catholic Church.

Don't you think we need to observe the birth of Christ? People often ask this question, but I usually ask this in return, "Why should we?" **2 Peter 1:3** tells us that God has given us *"all things that pertain to life and godliness."* Everything I need to know of a religious nature has been revealed in the Bible. **1 Peter 4:11** says that if I speak, I must speak *"as the oracles of God."* If God would have wanted us to observe the birth of Christ, he most assuredly would have told us!

How should I remember Jesus? God has left three memorials to Christ -- all of which point to His death and resurrection.

- First, water baptism reminds us of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (**Romans 6:3-4**).
- Second, the Lord's supper is a constant reminder of His death. As we partake of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, we *"proclaim the Lord's death till He comes"* (**1 Corinthians 11:26**).
- Third, our worship on the Lord's day, the first day of the week, reminds us of His resurrection (**Matthew 28:1; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10**).

God does not want His Son remembered as a baby lying in a manger, but as the suffering Saviour and now resurrected Redeemer.

by David Padfield

OMG! Who am I talking to?

"Oh my God!" This must be the most often repeated phrase in America today. It is an expression used thoughtlessly. Please think with me for a moment.

These words are a call to God for His attention to some matter. In this phrase I am calling on the Lord. What a good and wonderful statement, when I sincerely, humbly, earnestly call on God for help, for deliverance, in thanksgiving, in joy and praise. Is that what I am doing when I say the words, *Oh my God...?"* It is an

honor to God when I call on His name properly and sincerely.

What happens when I call out, *"Oh my God,"* without truly thinking about Him, talking to Him, praying to Him or talking respectfully about Him? When I cry out with God's name, without any real thought about Him, His name has become a by-word, like wow or whoooweee. They are near meaningless words simply used to build up some emotion and excitement in my silly speech. The name of our Creator, Savior and God deserves better.

God said, in **Exodus 20:7**, *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."* That is simply using His name without regard for His person, using His name without truly speaking to Him or about Him.

If I am going to call out: *Oh, my God,* I had better be reverently praying to Him, or preaching about Him.

Don Bunting

TWO MEN ERR REGARDING GRACE

By Bill Hall

Two men err regarding grace. **The first man** preaches grace, but fails to recognize that God's grace is linked to human responsibility. **The second man** preaches responsibility, but seldom speaks of God's grace.

The first man believes that salvation is solely by God's grace. He contends that any required action on man's part in obedience to commands would nullify grace and would constitute meritorious salvation. "It is absurd to believe that God's grace could be linked to anything like baptism", is the way one person stated it.

The second man speaks well of the requirements of the gospel. He often preaches the necessity of baptism, faithful attendance, liberal giving, good morals, doing one's part in the activities of the local church, etc. He speaks of Jesus as our perfect example and of His full submission to the Father in His death, but rarely of Him as the propitiation for our sins. Seldom does he bring his listeners to feel their constant need for God's mercy and forgiveness and their absolute helplessness and hopelessness apart from the cleansing blood of Christ.

The first man would promise salvation without the necessary diligence in learning and doing God's will. **The second man** would place so much emphasis on learning and doing God's will that he would focus the eyes of his listeners more on themselves than upon the Lord. **The first man** needs to learn the truth of **Titus**

2:11,12, *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. The second man* needs to learn and appreciate the exhortation of **Philippians 3:1**, *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.*

We would remind **the first man** of the nature of God's grace as it is revealed throughout the ages. We would begin with God's grace as it was extended to Noah at the time of the flood. *Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6:8)* Noah, however, was given instructions to be obeyed. And Noah recognized the necessity of obedience: *Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did (Genesis 6:22).* Had Noah failed in his responsibilities, he would never have been saved from the flood by the grace of God. We would remind this man of God's grace as it was extended to Joshua in the capture of Jericho. *See! I have given Jericho into your hand (Joshua 6:2).* But God had instructions for Joshua: march, blow the trumpets, shout. When Joshua and the Israelites fulfilled their responsibilities, *the wall fell down flat. The the people went up into the city (Joshua 6:20).* We would remind this man of the blind man of **John 9** whose eyes the Lord opened (**John 9:14,17,21,26,30**) when he did what the Lord commanded. Our first man should be able to see that: 1) God's grace does not rule out instructions (law); 2) God's grace does not rule out obedience; and 3) God's grace does not rule out strict obedience.

We would remind **the second man** that good works without God's grace can never save. We would begin with the message of Ephesians. Paul in Ephesians did indeed give instructions - practical instructions, instructions that must be obeyed, concerning morals, duties of wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, masters - but not until he had firmly established God's grace as the basis of salvation (chapters 1-3) and as the motivation for obedience to God's instructions (observe the word *therefore* in **4:1**). We would remind this man of the danger of being like the Pharisees who *trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others (Luke 18:9-14).* We would remind him that when one sins he has "nothing to pay" and therefore must approach God as one who is poor in spirit, mourning, meek, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness (**Luke 7:41,42; Matthew 5:3-6**).

We would dare not say which of these teachers is the more dangerous, for they both err regarding grace. We find ourselves naturally reclining at the teaching of the first man and greatly fearing the consequences of his teaching but we never want to be guilty of the error of the second. We cannot preach grace without preaching the

responsibility, but we must not be guilty of preaching responsibility without preaching grace.

Profound Wisdom from Festus as he responded to Doc. Adams' question, **"Why don't you just learn to read?"**

"Well, fiddle! That ain't gonna do no good. Jus' supposin' I was to go to work and learn how to read writin'. How'd I know that the feller that wrote the writin' wrote it right? It may be that the feller that wrote the writin' wrote it all wrong. I'd jus' be reading wrong writin' don't you see. You probably been doin' it your whole life! Jus' a readin' wrong writin' and not even knowin'!"

(From an old black and white episode of Gunsmoke.

"I asked an elderly man once what it was like to be old and to know the majority of his life was behind him. He told me that he has been the same age his entire life. He said the voice inside of his head had never aged. He has always just been the same boy. His mother's son. He had always wondered when he would grow up and be an old man. He said he watched his body age and his faculties dull but the person he is inside never got tired. Never aged. Never changed.

Our spirits are eternal. Our souls are forever. The next time you encounter an elderly person, look at them and know they are still a child, just as you are still a child and children will always need love, attention and purpose." ~

Author Unknown

Call me, Jim Stauffer at 913-620-0563, Evangelist at the Lenexa church of Christ.

We believe in worshiping and serving the Lord as He has instructed in His word.

Things not taught in the Bible that people not believe, and foster false teaching as a result.

That there are signs that will tell us when the end of the world is to happen. See Matthew 24:36

Please call us to study the Bible. It is refreshing.

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study
Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship
Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

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AND JUDE - Ron Peck
Sunday Sermon: SELFISH OR
UNSELFISH LOVE?



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10