
*Why Do We Embrace the Celebration of the Christmas Season?
Some Reflections
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As believers we need the discernment and the wisdom of God to determine when and how to say what. In this era of blatant anti-God and anti-Christ sentiment, it is more important than ever to capitalize upon any opportunity that we have to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, God in human flesh, Who literally came to the earth to save mankind from its sin.

Perhaps there was a time when Christians could afford to abstain from the observance of this period because of these legitimate concerns:

- a) The fact that the Scriptures do not tell us explicitly when Jesus was born, and they do not command the celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ
- b) The fact that the season now celebrated as Christmas was originally a time of a pagan festival,
- c) The fact that materialism and greed “in the name of God” often dominate the observance.

The responses are as follows:

People are materialistic and greedy all year long. Whether one observes Christmas or not, greed is a reality. What the believer must do is to be careful not to have the same attitudes as the world, so that the world can see the difference between the spirit of giving, which is of God (all year long), and the spirit of selfish getting, which is not of God (all year long). Jesus teaches that unselfish giving is the highest expression of love: “For God so loved the world, that He gave....”

The Bible does not tell us specifically when Jesus was born, this is true (although by means of the prophecies of Daniel, the typology of the Feasts of God, and the details given by the Gospel writers, we can generally determine the time of His Birth). There are scholars on both sides of the argument as to whether Jesus was born in December, based upon the weather patterns in Palestine, the culture at the time of Jesus’ birth, and Biblical typology.

Nevertheless, the truth is that He WAS born. Even if it is a fact that no one can prove that He was born on the December 25th, that fact logically implies that no one can prove that He was not born on December 25th either. If the entire world pauses at any moment during the year and allows the mention of the Christ that many forbid mentioning for the rest of the year, why would the church not take advantage of this time as an opportunity to lift Him up?

The Bible does not tell us to observe the Birthday of Jesus (or anyone else’s birthday for that matter). But neither does it forbid us from doing so. We find in the life of Jesus that there was at least one feast that was explicitly observed during the time of Christ which God did not give to Moses as a command in the Law; its institution (unlike Purim) is not even mentioned in our Old or New Testament, yet it was kept. Jesus Himself did not repudiate it. It was the Feast of Dedication (also known as Hanukkah) - John 10:22-23, coincidentally, a winter feast.

Simply put, *anything* that glorifies God and (consequently) does not contradict His Word, is worthy of consideration. The question is, "Is my Christmas observance about Jesus, or is it just about myself?"

It is true that pagans celebrated the end of the year as the birth of their sun god. It appears that the Church of that day took advantage of a situation where false worship was going on, in an attempt to re-direct the heathen people's devotions.

The scripture tells us to "learn not the ways of the heathen...", Jeremiah 10:16. This text begins to describe pagan worship involving a decorated tree. The tree was worshipped, as an idol. The fact that the heathen worshipped decorated trees does not necessitate the conclusion that anyone who decorates a tree today is a worshipper of that tree. Those who choose to have a tree (or any other decoration) or who choose not to have one --- may do so according to their personal convictions. However, and forever, to worship anything or anyone other than God, is clearly sin: blasphemy, idolatry, sacrilege, and any other applicable term. God's Image is Christ (II Cor. 4:4, Hebrews 1:1-3). To that Image alone we should bow. Nevertheless, a creative or artistic display that honors God --- not advances myths --- may very well touch someone's heart for God who will not enter a house of worship.

Halloween comes from the heathen. It celebrates death and demons. It is followed by "All Hallows Day" or "All Saints Day". Celebrating the contribution of all the saints may be of God; however, clearly expecting the manifestation of demons, being fearful of the devil, attempting to interact with the dead, and soliciting their intervention is strictly forbidden in Scriptural precept and by the example of Jesus. Nevertheless, it is possible to redeem the concept of costuming, family gathering, and wholesome fun, in the Name of the Lord, without resorting to the demonic, the Satanic.

Furthermore, we generally refer to the planets of this solar system by pagan gods' names, with the possible exception of earth. The days of the week and the months of the year: every time we say those names, we are calling the name of a pagan god. To be scripturally correct, according to the "totally non-pagan" rule, we should only refer to the months by their Hebrew names, and refer to the days by number. By this reasoning, only this would please God and make us holy. We would also have to examine the names of people, cities, objects, etc. and thoroughly purge them out, so as not to be "tainted" with paganism.

However, the fact that paganism has tainted some aspect of life is not necessarily a mandate to discard that thing, if the thing can be redeemed. Remember that the earth, and all that is therein, belong to God. The devil owns nothing. He is not a creator. He simply perverts what God created. Days, seasons, the celestial bodies --- all those things belong to God, who created all things by Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:9).

Finally, the Scripture tells us that to regard or not to regard a day is left to our own discretion, as long as our motive is to glorify God. Romans 14:5-8,17

What we say is this: He is Lord all year long. We know it all year long. If this time of year is the one when the rest of the world finally catches up and wants to sing about Him, talk about Him, and bless others in His Name --- let's get out front and lead the way! This is a time when militant atheism, postmodernism, false religions, and other destructive ideologies are on the rise. Let us not slam shut a window of opportunity to speak into the heart of this culture. Will they, the masses of unbelievers, trust the "Baby Jesus" to be the "Grown-up King" of their lives because of Christmas? Some will; some will not. However, it is guaranteed that if faith comes by hearing, this is a time when they can hear, particularly if we are careful not to exalt materialism, or lies about a jolly old elf who visits all the houses in the world in one night.

Which leads to another salient point: we don't have to lie to our children to bless them. They will lose nothing to understand that there was once a wonderful man of God who was a bishop, named Nicholas (meaning: victory) who was known to be a consecrated man, one who loved people, who gave to needy people, and was used of God. He did not live at the North Pole; he lived in a place called Myra, and he is dead. His memory lives on as a symbol of love and generosity, in the Name of the Lord. (Even the

bishop's scarlet and white vestments have been re-configured into a "suit" worn by a "sleigh-driver". Saint Nicholas was a real man: Santa Claus is a mythical character derived from the real man. Nicholas was real; he worshipped and served Jesus, and Jesus is real.

If our children keep Santa, and Rudolph, and Frosty, and all the rest, in the same mental category where they should keep Bugs Bunny, Sam, Superman, and the Incredible Hulk --- they are safe. But they should not believe in or worship these imaginary characters and symbols. Let them know that they must worship only God, our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who "knows if you are sleeping...knows when you're awake...knows if you've been bad or good..." So be good --- for Jesus' sake.

But can we bless our children, our families during this time? Yes, during this time, and throughout the year we should take special time with our loved ones; however, we should be teaching our young that giving and receiving should be from the heart, and that the greatest giving is to give to those who have nothing to give in return. Luke 14:12-14 For Jesus said that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35 We should minister to the underprivileged at every opportunity, but often it is during the Christmas season that the world (saints and sinners) is reminded to slow down and do just that.

In conclusion, let us take advantage of every opportunity to...

LIFT UP JESUS!

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