

Is Christmas A Biblical Observance?

"Put the Savior back in Christmas," people cry. But was He ever there in the first place? By far the most important celebration in the Western world today is Christmas. Billions of dollars will be spent this year on gifts, gift wrapping, candy, decorations, and greeting cards in a gigantic, annual spending spree that starts in earnest right after Hallowe'en—and shifts into overdrive the day after Thanksgiving.

Merchants hinging their hopes for the entire sales year on Christmas profits keep the momentum at a fever pitch. A nonstop flood of advertisements and promotions entice an exploitable public to continue spending themselves into debt at this time each year.

The more religiously disposed object to the commercialization of the "Savior's birthday." They can see that this annual celebration has little in common with any Biblical observance. On the contrary. Christmas today is little more than a mandatory ritual of gift exchanging done under the guise of family togetherness and pleasing children.

But the Bible believer must stop to ask himself, am I pleasing my Heavenly Father by my Christmas observance? If this is what He wants me to do, then surely I can find in His very Word—the Bible—at least one passage telling me to keep this holiday.

Shocking as it may be, you cannot find even one command in the entire Bible to keep this supposed birthday of the Savior! Furthermore, nowhere in the New Testament is there a single instance where someone observed Christmas. Not one of the Apostles observed December 25, nor did any of them ever in the Savior's 33 years on this earth throw Him a birthday party. Nowhere do we find His disciples giving a gift to Him on December 25. Nor did anyone else. Not even to one another.

Unhappy Birthdays

One authority notes, "There is no historical evidence that our [Savior's] birthday was celebrated during the apostolic or early post-apostolic times," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, "Christmas," p. 47.

Another writer makes this surprising statement, "The day was not one of the early feasts of the Christian church. In fact the observance of birthdays was condemned as a heathen custom repugnant to Christians," *The American Book of Days*, George W. Douglas, p. 658.

As the early believers realized, observing of birthdays is not a Bible practice. In all three instances where birthdays are mentioned in the Scriptures, someone died:

1. The chief baker was hanged during Pharaoh's birthday party in Genesis 40;
2. Job's sons died from a windstorm while birthday partying in Job 1:19, and
3. John the Baptist was beheaded at Herod's birthday celebration in Matthew 14:6-10.

The message is quite clear about birthday celebrations. A man who was formerly into devil worship once commented that the individual's birthday is a witch's most important day.

Christmas as a celebration of the Savior's birthday was not widely observed for at least 300 years after His birth. With no Biblical support for it, one needs a good imagination to base this observance on Scripture! If it were a Scriptural commemoration, why doesn't the Bible at least tell us which **month**, let alone which **day**, to keep it?

The Savior most likely was born in the fall, not in the dead of winter, when flocks of sheep were still abiding in the field, along with the shepherds who guarded them, Luke 2:8. Most Bible scholars realize this.

A Modern Saturnalia

Christmas as a pagan holiday is another story altogether. The rites of this observance trace back thousands of years before the Messiah Yahshua to a place called Babylon. Springing from that ancient birthplace of paganism are many of the peculiar customs that make Christmas what it is today. A good share of these practices came to us directly through the Roman Saturnalia festival.

"Christmas" is a contraction for "Christ's Mass," a Roman Catholic observance designed as a compromise with the heathen Roman feast of Saturnalia. The Saturnalia was a seven-day festival in honor of the deity Saturn. It began on December 17. At the Saturnalia "all classes exchanged gifts, the commonest being waxed tapers [candles] and clay dolls. These dolls were especially given to children. Varro thought these dolls represented original sacrifices of human beings to the infernal god," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th Ed., vol. 24, p. 231.

Being that no one knew when the Savior was born, "in [C.E.] 354, Bishop Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun. Christians honored Chr-st instead of Saturn, as the Light of the world," *The World Book Encyclopedia* (1962), "Christmas," p. 416.

We learn, then, that Christmas represents a thinly veiled compromise with the profane worship of pagan peoples, which is why we see so many heathen trappings associated with this winter holiday.

Ask yourself, what do evergreen trees, Yule logs, candles, bells, mistletoe, holly wreaths, ham, cookies, tinsel, lights, and wassail bowls have to do with the birth of the Savior? Each of these Christmas customs has a non-Biblical source. Most are rooted in fertility rites or in sun worship from a pagan past.

Leave the Darkness

If this were the Savior's birthday and acceptable to Yahweh, then why do people give gifts to one another and not to Him? Why does Santa Claus get all the glory and attention? Who gave Santa Yahweh's right to decide who is naughty and who is nice? Clearly the rituals of the Saturnalia, as well as pure human traditions, are alive and well each December 25.

Paul wrote in 2Corinthians 6:14 and 17: "*Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness? Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says Yahweh, and touch not the unclean [thing]; and I will receive you.*"

Some will argue that Christmas is a harmless holiday for the enjoyment of children. If there is no Creator in heaven, that point may be justified. But the Yahweh of the Bible is very particular about how we must worship Him and He has no tolerance for heathen traditions or man's own ways of worship.

He tells us through the prophet,

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? says Yahweh...When you come to appear before me, who has required this [human way of worship] at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations..." Isaiah 1:11-13.

Almighty Yahweh thunders in the Book of Jeremiah not to observe practices like Christmas tree worship: "*Learn not the way of the heathen... For the customs of the people are vain: for one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not,*" Jeremiah 10:2-4.

Here is what Yahweh thinks about man-made celebrations: "*I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell (accept) in your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them,*" Amos 5:21-22.

If we want to please our Creator, who has the power over our eternal lives, then we will give up man-made holidays that He rejects, and we will follow the observances He **does** command in His Word.

For information on the celebrations found in the Bible and commanded for us today, write for the 60-page booklet, ***Biblical Holy Days***. No charge.

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