

Christmas, Christian or Pagan?

Why December 25th?

It is quite clear from a brief study that the birth of Christ did not happen near the time of December. The bible certainly never gives an indication that it was in the wintertime. Why then do Christians celebrate the time of Christ's birth on December 25th?

Well the short answer is that the celebration of Christ's birth on December 25th was instituted by Bishop Liberius of Rome in 354 A.D. There seems to be some disagreement about whether it was actually instituted in the 4th or 5th Century A.D., but it is clear that it was instituted by a Roman authority at least 1500 yrs ago. Since that time it has become a Christian tradition to celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25th.

Many have spoken about the "pagan origin" of this date and its association with the pagan celebrations of Sun worship and the winter solstice which happened for many long centuries before the 4th century. There is *no question* that this date is in fact related to the winter solstice and that the pagan tradition of Sun worship was celebrated on or near this date. They also therefore draw the conclusion that if this date was instituted by Romans, and has these associations noted above, that this makes the Christian celebration of Christmas "sacrilegious", or at best a tremendous compromise of pure and holy faith.

Christmas trees, Yule logs and the Winter Solstice

Again, when we closely examine the traditions celebrated at Christmas, we see no biblical precedence for many of them. The origin of the Christmas Tree and what it was originally used for is also disputed, but it is obvious that it began many centuries ago. It is also related to other traditions like the Yule Log, a practice of setting a large log to burn throughout the night on the fireplace in the home. When you add this to the fact that the date of Christmas is related to the winter solstice, it is clear to see that the claims of the secular origin of these traditions, *is quite true*.

There is *no biblical precedence* for celebrating the birth of Christ or the rituals and traditions related to it. Then you add to it all the materialism and hype of the secular world at Christmas. Many have understood this information and have therefore concluded that celebrating Christmas is a sinful and God dishonoring thing to do. For many years, I have heard Christians condemn other Christians in a condescending manner for celebrating Christmas. This began the first year I became a Christian, 14 years ago, and I have heard many times in many ways since then. Unfortunately, I have never actually read an intelligent critique of celebrating Christmas *which used the scripture* to tell us why this is a sinful practice, nor have I been instructed verbally *from the scripture* as to why this is true. Although there is no biblical precedence for doing it, there is also no biblical prohibition either.

Christmas, Pure or Defiled

So what is it about the celebration of Christmas which certain Christians claim to be sinful? When I have heard complaints about the practice, it is typically related to the origin of the Winter Solstice or Christmas Trees and their pagan association or the sinful materialism of the secular commercial world.

Sin is *defined* as a transgression of the character or law of God.

1 John 3:4 - 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and **sin is lawlessness**.NASB
This could either be a sin of commission(doing something we are commanded NOT to do) or a sin of omission(not doing something we are commanded TO do).

Since there is no prohibition in the Word of God for celebrating Christmas, it would be false to try and say that the practice is sinful. Someone may ask, well, if we celebrate the birth of Christ on the same day as a pagan holiday or ritual, isn't that polluting our worship, or doesn't that mean that we have adopted the pagan practices(such as Sun Worship) which takes place on those days? God forbid! We have adopted the practice of Sun Worship if we worship the Sun, but NOT if we celebrate the incarnation of God on a corresponding day with those who worship the Sun. We don't partake in fertility rituals of immorality by putting an evergreen tree in our home, but we do this only if we do indeed practice immoral fertility rituals. The amazing thing to me is, why does this have to be said? Why are Christians accused of adopting pagan practices if they do not partake in those practices? This is divisive and foolish! What I mean to say is, if Christians are somehow transgressing the law or character of God specifically by what they do with their thoughts, words, or deeds, than we have ample reason to bring reproof and seek to restore them from such sins.

If I worship the Sun, Moon and Stars, I am a lawbreaking idolater. ***If I worship the Son of God, I am fulfilling the purpose for which I was made!*** Why should I be condemned for doing the very thing God has commanded me to do? Why should anyone be viewed with contempt for worshipping the Son of God, anytime on any day? Is this not the fulfillment of the great commandment?

Does the DATE of origin of a certain practice by itself, make something right or wrong? Of course not. It is much like a pastor friend of mine who recently started meeting for worship services in a building which used to be a drinking saloon. Is their worship now corrupted because they meet where the heathen once blasphemed God? Ridiculous! ***In this God has made a public spectacle of His grace for the whole world to see!*** Is my worship of Christ now corrupted because I do it on a day when the heathen once provoked God by their idolatry! Foolishness! If the pagans put a Yule log on the fire and worship the Sun, God will judge them and they will die. If I put a Yule log on the fire and praise God for sending His glorious Son into the world, God will be pleased and I will glory in Christ Jesus the King! Indeed I could not sincerely do such a thing unless I was motivated by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:3 - 3 Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and **no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit**. NASB
Whatever I do from a pure heart honors God(except for sin as defined above), because I am in Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Whatever a heathen does in unbelief provokes God to anger and he defiles himself.

Titus 1:15-16 - 15 **To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.** 16 They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed. NASB

This is because he is not regenerate and his heart is not purified by faith in obedience to the gospel. Everything he does is defiled because he abides in the flesh and does not know God(Rom 8:5-8). Whatever the Christian does by faith(except for sin as defined above of course) honors God and is sanctified by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

At Christmas time in my home, family and church we sing the praises of God and honor the Son of God for His incarnation. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ by reading the

Word of God and singing hymns which glory in the advent of Christ. At my home we exult in the glory of the gospel and all that God has done for us in Christ. We thank God that he has reconciled us unto Himself, that He has given us eternal life and joy and peace in the Lord Jesus. We celebrate God's indescribable gift of His Son by giving gifts to one another. We reunite with family and friends, and discuss how good God has been to us, being careful to give Him the glory for everything we have and all that He is to us! Now does this sound like pagan worship to you? Have we adopted the worship of the Sun and some heathen form of immorality? Not hardly! Such an accusation is offensive!

Why do you judge?

Here is an issue of greater importance than whether or not Christmas is an acceptable practice among Christians. Christmas is at best a *disputable* matter. But Christian unity is a central issue of great importance. We are to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:2-3 - 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, 3 **being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** NASB

Here we are given clear biblical commandments on how to conduct ourselves in the household of God. We are specifically told *not to pass judgment on one another in regard to matters of practice and opinion which are not sinful matters*. More than that, the scripture speaks specifically about passing judgment on one another in regard to days which we consider "holy days" or "holidays." We are told to be fully convinced in our own minds about which day we observe, or what we eat or drink, being very careful how we worship the Lord. Consider;

Romans 14:1-6 - 14:1 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but **not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.** 2 One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. 3 Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. 4 **Who are you to judge the servant of another?** To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5 **One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.** 6 **He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord,** and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. NASB

As a matter of fact, if you do not want to celebrate Christmas in your home, that is your prerogative and that is your conviction before God and *it is holy*. I rejoice in the fact that you have this conviction and I thank God for it and for you, if you are in Christ Jesus! Praise the Lord that you love Him in this devoted way! But if you try and place this as a burden on my back, you are no longer acting in love. If that is your conviction, fine, but when you try to force it on me it becomes *legalism*. When you try to force it on me it does not lead to peace and mutual edification, but drives a wedge of disunity among us! This grieves the Holy Spirit! Why do you cause me to stumble over what I consider to be holy? And when you speak to me in a condescending manner and regard me with contempt about this disputable matter, you sin against God! Consider;

Romans 14:10-13 - 10 **But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt?** For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. 11 For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." 12 So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 **Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this — not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.** NASB

More than that, I have an obligation according to scripture, NOT to allow you to judge me in this matter. The Holy Spirit lives in me and I am a child of God. This is God's doing and not my own. I am the righteousness of God in Christ because I have been sanctified by belief in the truth and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit of God. When I worship the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, I honor and glorify God and this is the purpose for which I exist! I will not be accused by anyone of a sacrilegious form of worship without ample biblical evidence of such. I do not say this out of arrogance, but in sincere Christian love and obedience to the following commandments of God! Consider;

Colossians 2:16-17 - 16 **Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day** — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. NASB

Romans 14:16-19 - 16 **Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;** 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then **let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.**

When the scripture says "let no one act as your judge in respect to a festival" it means, you are not obligated to submit to their teaching or authority in regard to this matter. We should rather spend out time seeking after those things which are of great importance and lead to peace and the building up of one another such as obedience to the clear commandments of scripture, mercy, justice and humility.

Conclusion

If there be some commandment of scripture which I transgress, which is not clear to me, please point this out to me so that I may not dishonor my Lord. If there is some pagan ritual which I unknowingly practice in my celebration, please point that out to me that I may not offend my God or my brother!

Until I see some biblical evidence that what I am doing in celebrating Christmas is somehow *sinful or idolatrous*, which I have yet to see, I will not be swayed in my firm conviction, and my holy and happy festival of worshipping God and His Son Jesus Christ, and this on the traditional day of December 25th.

If I have a brother who wants to divide with me over this matter, at that point I may consider ceasing from my celebration of Christmas, as this *could* be the proper thing to do, all things considered and through much prayer. I do not desire to destroy my brother for the sake of my celebration.

Romans 15:1-3 - 1 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and **not just please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.** 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee fell upon Me." NASB

May the great name of our Lord Jesus Christ be hailed and honored by all who love His Kingdom and appearing! May we with one voice shout the high praises of our God, both now and forever!

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