

What About Christmas?

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What about Christmas? Most Christians celebrate Christmas whereas others insist that pagan elements associated with the day forbid the church from any observance. In other words, some refuse to celebrate Christmas insisting that the season is rooted in pagan ritual and should be avoided. There is some debate between fundamental, Bible believing, and separated Christians concerning the celebration of Christmas. There are

those who practice separation (like the early Puritans of New England) who do not acknowledge Christmas in any way. They stay very low key about the Christmas and all the festivities which surround the Christmas holiday. There are fundamental churches which choose to not associate with Christmas. They do not sing Christmas hymns or have specific messages geared around Christmas.

On the other hand, there are other separated, Bible believing, and fundamental believers who do celebrate Christmas and have no qualms about singing about Christ's birth and handing out gifts to others at this time of the season. They have no problem with putting a Christmas tree in their home and decorating it with Christmas lights. Why is there a difference of opinion among separated believers on this matter of celebrating Christmas? The reason is because of the pagan origin of this holiday.

What did people originally celebrate on the date of December 25? Historically, December 25 was originally a time of Celtic pagan celebration. The pagans knew that at this point in their calendar year the shortest day and longest night had passed, that little by little the sun would rise higher and remain longer in the sky, bringing with it the promise of spring. The pagans would worship the sun god at this time of the year as they looked

forward to spring and the new crop season. They realized that the sun god would promote good crops for the coming spring season.

Prior to this day occurred the week-long Roman feast called Saturnalia (December 17-24), held in honor of the Romans own agricultural deity called Saturn. It was known as a time of



celebration accompanied with drinking and sexual revelry. Saturn was the ancient Roman god of agriculture. Mythology says that Saturn helped usher in a period of prosperity that became known as the Golden Age. But one day Saturn vanished from the earth. At the Roman Saturnalia festival, held in his memory every December, masters and slaves shared the same table as a sign that no social divisions existed during the Golden Age. Saturn also gave his name to a planet and to the day which we call Saturday. Of course, if we want to be specific and picky about the whole paganism associated with Christmas, then in one sense we should also exclude Saturday from our calendars and fail to speak about this day of the week. Pagan roots are behind Saturday.

As we have already suggested, Saturnalia extended from December 17 to 24. And in A.D. 274, the Roman emperor Aurelian, made December 25 a feast of the invincible sun called Mithra. This was the ancient Persian God of light and truth which later became known as the sun god. Aurelian officially declared December 25th as the birthday of the unconquered sun. Evidently he bought into the Celtic pagan worship of the sun. He recognized that at this midwinter date it reaches its lowest point in the Southern sky and begins its gradual movement northward again.

The annual rebirth of the sun cycle was closely linked to the Romans new year and planting season. Therefore, houses were decorated with greenery and candles and presents were given to children and the poor in view of the new crop season. Many of our Christmas customs have their origins in Saturnalia even though it was originally a pagan observance of the birthday of the unconquered sun. As we will see later, because Christianity spread

throughout the Roman Empire, the pagan holiday was given a Christian connotation.

This Roman emperor wanted to recognize the sun god as a source of help for the new coming crop season. So, worship to the sun god was established in Rome. This is why many Christians today have problems associating with Christmas or the season surrounding it. It is because of these pagan Celtic and Roman roots which were originally associated with the date of Christmas. Many Christians feel that any association with this date would tend to associate them with paganism and become a mark of compromise in their own lives with the paganism of the past.

In spite of the paganism associated with Christmas, some historians are convinced that many Christians within the believing church community settled on December 25 as the birth of Christ even before the formal pagan festival was instituted by Emperor Aurelian in 274. But whether this occurred before or after makes no difference. The celebrations of Christmas were eventually celebrated by Bible believing Christians.

Scott Aniol, writing in the Frontline Magazine edition for November-December (2006) gives an excellent summary of some Christmas facts. "Whether the Christmas celebration or the pagan festival came first, no one can argue with the fact that the celebration of Christ's birth eventually degraded into a raucous festival of drinking and revelry. In fact, after the Protestant Reformation, many Protestant believers were so concerned with what the Christmas celebration had become that they banned the festivities altogether.

Christmas was outlawed in England in 1645 under Oliver Cromwell but was reinstated when Charles II ascended to the throne. Strong Puritans in early America outlawed Christmas from 1659 to 1681. Anyone caught celebrating was fined five shillings. This rejection of Christmas in early America actually helped the Revolutionary troops when General Washington attacked Hessian soldiers in Trenton, New Jersey, after crossing the Delaware on Christmas Day in 1776. Washington's troops surprised the German soldiers, who made a big deal of Christmas and were engaged in a drunken celebration of the event. Moreover, after the Revolutionary War,

Americans were especially suspicious of any English tradition. In fact, Congress was in session on December 25, 1789, the first Christmas under America's new Constitution.

"In 1819, American author Washington Irving published *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon*, a series of stories about the celebration of Christmas in an English manor house. In these stories, Irving literally "invented" Christmas traditions, portraying this English squire as a kind man who invited peasants into his home for a "traditional" Christmas celebration. Also during this time, English author Charles Dickens penned *A Christmas Carol*, the classic holiday story emphasizing kindness and giving to all. With these publications, Americans re-invented Christmas and transformed it from a disorderly day of drunken indulgence into a family-centered day of giving and nostalgia. These sentiments have characterized the Christmas season since that time, but unfortunately, commercialism and greed have crept in and poisoned much of the good."



What about Santa Clause? Where did this Christmas figure have his origins? The historical records suggest that Saint Nicholas was a real man, probably the bishop or overseer of the Roman Catholic churches in the Roman province of Lycia. In the Middle Ages (3rd century to about 1450 or 1500), when it

became popular for the Roman church to venerate saints, this man became highly honored for his deeds. Saint Nicholas was honored for giving many gifts to children and became the patron saint of children. Legend says that he gave gold to the daughters of a poor man so that the girls would not have to become involved in prostitution in order to earn their dowry for marriage. It was also said that he actually restored three boys back to life who had been cut up for bacon.

There are many legends associated with this man. But in all probability, Saint Nicholas did exist. He was simply promoted to a godlike status over the years. Nicholas was especially popular in Holland. It seems that it was in Holland where Saint Nicholas was first linked to the idea of Christmas.

Dutch children expected this venerated friendly saint of the children to visit them on the night of December 5. Dutch children would place their wooden shoes by the fireplace so that they would be filled with gifts on this evening. The name Santa Clause actually comes from the Dutch name Sinterklass. The day when Saint Nicholas would honor the children with these gifts was originally believed to be on December 6.

The Santa Claus observance has really become nothing more than a Roman Catholic/pagan myth. Many legends are centered around this man. The Catholic Pocket Dictionary of Saints has this to say about Saint Nicholas: "His popularity, already great, increased enormously when his relics were brought to Bari (seaport in South East Italy) in 1087, and his shrine was one of the great pilgrimage centers of medieval Europe. He is the patron of storm-beset sailors (for miraculously saving doomed mariners off the coast of Lycia), of prisoners, of children ... which led to the practice of children giving presents at Christmas in his name and the metamorphosis of his name, St. Nicholas and eventually into Santa Claus by the Dutch."

It should also be noted that the figure of Santa Claus is based on the Scandinavian god named Thor, who was associated with winter and the Yule log, and he rode on a chariot drawn by goats named Cracker and Gnasher. Saint Nicholas was somehow eventually associated with this god (Thor) and through the years has been tied to gift giving and certain miraculous happenings. Thus, we have the gift giving which surrounds the Christmas holiday of today. This all stems back to the man named Nicholas and the legends surrounding him. Santa Claus became very popular in America due to the American poet Clement Moore who wrote a most famous poem in 1822. It was published in the New York Sentinel which became immediately popular and has endured ever since. The first words in that famous poem went like this: "Twas the night before Christmas."

Once again, Scott Aniol writing in the Frontline Magazine of 2006 gives these gives us some more historical information on the figure Santa Clause.

"Certainly the most offensive Christmas tradition to many Christians is Santa Claus. Even some believers who participate in other Christmas practices have strongly negative attitudes toward Jolly Old St. Nick. Again,

some of this reaction is rooted in misunderstanding and ignorance. The original St. Nicholas was a priest in the late third and early fourth centuries in what is now modern-day Turkey. He was known for his kindness, which included giving away all of his inherited wealth and traveling the countryside helping the poor and sick. He was also a strong opponent of Arianism and was persecuted during the reign of Roman emperor Diocletian. He later found more religious liberty under the rule of Emperor Constantine the Great and attended the first Council of Nicaea in 325.

“One of the best known St. Nicholas stories of kindness is that he saved three poor sisters from being sold into slavery by providing them with a dowry so that they could be married (he left gold coins in the stockings that the girls had left by the fire to dry). People began to celebrate his kindness on December 6, the anniversary of his death. Even after the Protestant reformation, St. Nicholas was revered, especially in Holland.

“Dutch families who immigrated to America in the 1770s brought with them the tradition of honoring St. Nicholas on the anniversary of his death. The name “Santa Claus” evolved from his Dutch nickname, Sinter Klaas, a shortened form of Sint Nikolaas. The folklore surrounding this mysterious saint remained suspect for many non-Dutch Americans until the publication of a silly poem called “An Account of a Visit from St. Nickolas,” attributed to a descendant of Dutch immigrants named Henry Livingston Jr. The poem quickly grew popular and soon became known by its first line, “’Twas the Night Before Christmas.” Livingston’s poem is largely responsible for the modern image of Santa Claus, a “jolly old elf” who descends down chimneys to give gifts to children, and his miniature sleigh led by eight flying reindeer, which Livingston also named. This pleasant picture of Santa Claus was further ingrained in American culture with a series of engravings by Thomas Nast in Harper’s Weekly and a set of paintings by Haddon Sundblom that appeared in Coca-Cola ads between 1931 and 1964.”

What should be the Christian reaction to a figure like Santa clause? What should we teach our children about Santa Clause? We should simply say that he was a man who gave gifts to people out of the own kindness of his heart. We might tell them that hundreds of years ago there lived a man named Nicholas (later known as St. Nicholas) who gave to others. He was

probably born in A.D. 280, and when he was still just a boy his parents died, leaving him great wealth. Later, he gave away much of his wealth to the poor - especially to children. History tells us that when he was persecuted and imprisoned he always shared his meager provisions with the inmates.

We might give the history of Santa Clause to our children, but we should never venerate him as the world does today. We should not place him on an equal status with Christ. We must tell our children to worship and honor Christ (Matthew 2:2,11) and strive to be like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18) and not Santa Clause. Christ is our example on how to live and not Santa Clause (1 Peter 2:21). We should also uphold Christ as the real giver of good gifts (James 1:17). The danger of promoting the character of Santa Clause is that we will get our eyes off of Christ and place them on a man (Hebrews 12:2). We have never allowed our children to promote Santa Claus and the legends surrounding him and we have never had Santa's image in our home. The reason is because we will get our children to focus on a man instead of Christ.

Where did Christmas trees come from? Christmas trees probably have their origin in the ancient celebrations of the Roman festival which we previously identified as Saturnalia. The feasts were accompanied with drunken and sexual practices. It was a period of unrestrained revelry. As they worshipped the god called Saturn the Romans would decorate their pagan temples with greenery and candles. The Romans soldiers who conquered the British Isles also found that the Celtic Druid people would worship mistletoe. They also discovered that the Germanic people or Saxon people of the 3rd and 4th centuries used ivy and holly in pagan religious ceremonies.



Certain symbols originating largely from the classical Celtic and Roman paganism, such as lights, greenery, and special foods gradually became

associated with Christmas. These symbols of past pagan celebrations were incorporated in the celebration around Christ's birth. The lights that once depicted the sun god and the special foods and other items that once were used to honor Mithra, or this god of the sun, were now incorporated into the Christian holiday in Rome. They obviously took on new meaning then they previously had. Since the lights, trees, and food were not evil in and of themselves, they were incorporated into the Christmas holiday and over time were accepted by most Christians

So, the Christmas customs that we have today likely have pagan roots attached to them. Undoubtedly there is some truth to these claims, but should believers reject legitimate uses of anything that has at one time or another been worshiped by pagans? The sun, moon, and stars were worshipped by pagans, but we still enjoy their benefits and give God the glory for creating them (Ps. 19:1-3).

Martin Luther was the first to add lighted candles to a tree to recreate the beauty of stars twinkling amidst evergreens. German and English immigrants brought the Christmas tree to America. Here, too, fruits, nuts, flowers, and lighted candles adorned the first Christmas trees, but only the strongest trees could support the weight without drooping. Thus, German glassblowers began producing lightweight glass balls to replace heavier, natural decorations. These lights and decorations were symbols of the joy and light of Christmas for many.

But as mentioned above, the Puritans or pilgrims in early America rejected Christmas celebrations altogether. They deliberately worked on December 25 to disassociate themselves with any Christmas festivities. The Puritans in England actually had a law passed in 1644 which made sure that Christmas Day was an official working day.

The Puritans in England and early New England America wanted to give no recognition of this celebration because of its pagan origins. There was a time in England when it was illegal to cook plum pudding or mince pie in connection with the holiday. The Puritans in England and those who came to New England tried to abolish Christmas. Christmas was banned in 17th century England when Oliver Cromwell and his puritan followers gained

temporary rule, forbidding what was called the "heathen celebration of Christmas." However, in spite of the battles against Christmas it still survived. The move to band Christmas was unpopular and Christmas survived and has been developed commercially since the Industrial Revolution. The holiday similarly was banned for a time in colonial New England. Just for statistical interests, did you know that Christmas wasn't made a legal holiday in Massachusetts until 1856?

Another interesting fact is that the first commercially produced Christmas card was produced and sold in England by Sir Henry Cole and J. C. Horsley in 1846. These first cards outraged Christians because they portrayed a group of people drinking. It was at least 25 years after this before Christmas cards were widely used. Today Christmas cards are more than a billion-dollar industry.



Here are some more interesting statistics. The first mention of Jesus' birth on December 25 dates back to the 3rd century, when Hippolytus of Rome wrote, "The first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem, was December 25th, Wednesday" (Commentary on Daniel, tr. by Schmidt, T. C., 2010, Book 4,

23.3).

One thing is certain, Jesus was born! Some argue that the birth occurred in some other season, such as in the fall. Followers of this theory claim that the Judean winters were too cold for shepherds to be watching their flocks by night. However, history proves otherwise and there is historical evidence that unblemished lambs for the Temple sacrifice were in fact kept in the fields near Bethlehem during the winter months. Nevertheless, it is impossible to prove whether or not Jesus was born on December 25. And, ultimately, it does not matter. The Bible says He was born as the divine Christ child. One thing is clear: if God felt it was important for us to know

the exact date of the Savior's birth, He certainly would have told us in His Word.

To the best of our knowledge the apostles and their immediate successors attached no significance whatsoever to the date of Christ's birth. In fact, they could not have identified when Christ was born even if they had been asked. This is because historians did not begin to date history from Christ's birth until the sixth century, when a learned monk of Rome, Dionysius Exiguus, introduced the method. In fact, Dionysius, we now know, erred in his computations and dated Christ's birth some four or five years too late in history. That's why today's books, rather than adjusting the dates for all historical events, simply list Christ's birth at about 4 B.C. instead of at the normal number one mark.

Some other scholars have also calculated that Jesus' birth came in about 6 or 7 B.C., meaning paradoxically "Before Christ". The revised time was determined partly by the fact that Herod the Great ruled Judea when Jesus was born and history records that Herod died in 4 B.C. In what month the birth occurred or on what day has been a matter of speculation for centuries. Possible dates have been suggested: February 2, March 25, April 19, May 20, October 4, November 17.

A British physicist and astronomer, David Hughes, has calculated that the date of Christ's birth was September 17, 7 B.C. based on various scientific evidence including that of a conjunction of two planets Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation Pisces on this date. He concludes in a book that this extraordinary celestial display was the "star" seen by the distant wise men. This of course is conjecture. None the less, there are those even today who are still researching this matter. Just the other day I heard another astronomer talking about what was going on in the heavens prior to the day of Christ's birth. Whatever happened we know that it was a supernatural working of God!

The 17th century German astronomer, Johannes Kepler, similarly had calculated a three-planet conjunction including Venus as well as Jupiter and Saturn in the same constellation in 7 B.C. In any case, a variety of months and days have been used over the centuries in different parts of the world to celebrate the occasion. Some Eastern Orthodox churches still do it on

January 6. For all the conjecture, clouded chronology, and background of Christmas, the biggest mystery is still in its message.

1 Timothy 3:16 says:

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

God in the flesh had entered the human race in love for the world of lost mankind in order to become the Savior of the world (John 3:16; Luke 2:8-11).

But our study has revealed that the real background and legends of Christmas have been one of mythology and paganism adopted by Romanism. Therefore, some believers choose to not associate with this date or season of the year in any manner or fashion by invoking the doctrine of separation (2 Cor. 6:14-17). In addition, since Romanism (Roman Catholicism) is a corrupt system in and of itself, some believers chose not to associate with the date and season that this false church began to use to honor the birth of Christ.

Was Christmas originally recognized as Jesus' birthday? We do know that the actual practice of celebrating Christmas was adopted and popularized by the Roman Catholic Church. This church (not the true church) adopted this date from the timing of the pagan mid-winter solstice marking the turn of the year. The observance of Christmas within the Roman Catholic Church first began in fourth-century Rome. We must understand that the observance was timed to coincide with this midwinter pagan festival honoring the imperial army's sun god, Mithra. Christmas was a Catholic tradition which began to be celebrated on December 25 to counteract the worship of the Sun god.

It was not until the fourth century that the day of Christmas became permanently fixed on the 25th of December. Up to that time it had been irregularly observed at various times of the year - in December, April, and May, but most frequently in January. The December date (December 25) was taken over by the Roman Catholic Church to celebrate Jesus' birthday

instead of the worship of the sun god. A replacement was made for the paganism of this specific time. With the legalization and toleration of Christianity under the Roman emperor Constantine (312), both December 25 and January 6 became Christianized feasts.

In 336 the emperor Constantine declared Christ's birthday as an official holiday. In time, Catholic churches made this a holy day of their own. By A.D. 336, the Roman Catholic Church had decided that all believers should celebrate the birthday of the Lord Jesus on December 25. This is how December 25 gained its Christian emphasis. Some church leaders like Chrysostom still rebuked Christians for observing the pagan holiday. But Christmas was now fully entrenched as a Christian holiday and still survives to this day. Nevertheless, even after the official declaration of Constantine and the trend to fix December 25 as the date of Christ's birth, there were still those who were honestly searching for the proper day to celebrate Christ's birth. Some churches were continuing to celebrate Jesus' birth on January 6 in connection with the veneration of Saint Nicholas, others April 20, May 20, March 29, and September 29.

Finally, so much confusion occurred over this matter that Saint Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, about the middle of the fourth century, inquired of the Roman bishop Julius regarding the correct date. Julius wrote Cyril and reported that he personally favored December 25. Obviously refusing to accept this date as valid, Cyril and the Jerusalem church continued celebrating the event for many years on January 6. In A.D. 354, two years following the end of Saint Julius' reign, the new Roman bishop, Liberius, ordered all his people to celebrate December 25 as the correct day of Christ's birth. With the passage of time this date became the more popular and was soon adopted by most of Christendom. In fact, over time Bible believing Christians have accepted December 25 as a time to celebrate Christ's birth without compromising with the religious apostasy associated with Roman Catholicism.

In spite of all this, we must understand why some believers have chosen to not follow the seasonal Christmas celebrations. It is because of the way Roman Catholicism has tried to Christianize something that was originally pagan. It is also because they do not want to promote something that

Romanism promotes. Coupled with this fact is that the Roman Catholic Church is really following the Babylonian mother and child cult which has been carried down through the centuries of time. In Babylon, which is the fountainhead of all false religion (Rev. 17:5), there originated the story of the birth of Tammuz. Tammuz was supposedly the virgin born son of Semiramis who was the wife of Nimrod. Nimrod gathered men for the rebellion which occurred in Babylon (Genesis 10:9).

Semiramis actually was the key instigator of this cultic practice which claimed that her son was virgin born and was God incarnate. She was called the Queen of Heaven. This same mother child cult was passed down through the centuries of time. Even in later Bible history we see the people offering cakes to another god (the Babylonian God of love – Ishtar) that is given the same title as the Queen of Heaven (Jeremiah 7:16-18; 44:17-19, 25). Incidentally, Mary is also called the Queen of Heaven by the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholics worship Mary as the ancient people of Babylon once worshipped Semiramis. Other cultures began to develop this same pagan practice of worshipping the mother of a virgin born son. For instance, Ishtar (Babylonian god), Isis (Egyptian god), Aphrodite or Venus (Greek & Roman god) and many other false gods associated with pagan cultures and countries began to be tied to this mother worship.

The Roman Catholic worship of Mary is simply a continuation of a long history of paganism that surrounds this mother and child cult which originated in ancient Babylon and was passed down through the centuries. All these countries and cultures seemed to have a particular worship that centered on the woman called the Queen of Heaven who miraculously conceived a virgin born son named Tammuz. This is why we have the people weeping over the Babylonian deity called Tammuz (see Ezekiel 8:14). Roman Catholicism has simply changed the name of Tammuz to Christ but still worships Mary as the Queen of Heaven.

So, what does all of this have to do with Christmas? The point is that some fundamental and separated Christians do not associate with Christmas for the very reason that Roman Catholicism has adopted this ancient or old Babylonian cultic practice of worshipping a woman (Mary) who they have elevated to a state of godhood. Therefore, they do not want to associate

with any of the borrowed pagan customs of ancient Babylon. They do not want to seemingly identify or associate with the practice of Romanism which venerates a mother who gave birth to Christ. Therefore, the best way to not associate with the Roman Catholic Babylonian heresy of this woman worship is to not sing any Christmas hymns and not promote anything that reminds us of Christ's birth. The thinking of some Christians is that if we identify with Christ's birth then we must also in some measure identify with the worship of Mary. Therefore, some separated brethren do not associate with Christmas.

There is really a three-fold reason why some brethren choose to not promote Christmas. First, because of the Celtic and Roman paganism associated with the holiday. The Sun god and Saturn are associated with these holiday dates and would tend to promote the ways of the heathen. Some believers conclude that Roman Catholicism has Christianized the pagan holiday of the sun god and therefore we should not try to Christianize those things that are originally pagan in origin.

Second, the Roman Catholic Church has been promoting the ancient mother child cult by elevating a mother called Mary to the state of godhood. The Roman church calls her the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven. For this reason alone, some brethren choose to not associate with this season of the year.

Third, there are those believers that have nothing to do with Christmas for the very reason of the adopted name which has come to be called Christmas. The name Christmas actually comes from the Roman Catholic practice of the Mass. It is "Christ Mass" or the celebration of the Roman Catholic Mass of Christ. The name for Christmas then represents the Mass of Christ. In the Medieval or Middle Ages, the celebration of Christmas took the form of a special mass said at midnight on the eve of Christ's birth. Since this was the only time in the Catholic church year when a midnight mass was allowed, it soon became known in the Old English as Christes Masse (Christ's Mass) from which is derived Christmas.

This ceremony is a great abomination to the truth in that it represents a continual sacrifice of Christ and destroys the once and for all sacrifice of

Christ that washes away all our sins for time and eternity (Hebrews 7:27; 9:25-28; 10:10, 14). Christ is not re-offered for us today. His sacrifice is unlike the Old Testament sacrifices that could not take away sin. Christ's sacrifice is sufficient to save us forever (Hebrews 7:25). A sacrifice that must be re-offered is a sacrifice that has typically been represented in the Old Testament as a sacrifice that cannot save us!

The Catholic Catechism, 1975, says: "The sacrifice on the altar is no mere commemoration of Calvary, but a true and proper act of sacrifice, whereby Christ the high priest, by an unbloody immolation offers himself a most acceptable victim to the eternal father, as he did on the cross."

Roman Catholicism teaches that a person literally eats Christ in the Mass and receives merits or graces to help them on their way to Heaven. Eating Christ becomes a meritorious work that one must do in order to have more saving benefits conferred to their account. This system keeps the Roman Catholic from actually believing on Christ as his Savior. Instead of believing on Christ they eat Christ within the ceremony of the Mass and claim to merit a certain amount of graces necessary in their process of salvation which is based upon some kind of installment program. Nobody really knows how many masses it takes or how many graces one must receive to merit salvation! Not even the pope knows this answer.

Certain believers take their stand against Christmas, and anything associated with the name of Christmas, since the name Christmas is associated with the Roman Catholic Mass of corruption. They choose to not associate with the name of Christmas at all because of its origin and meaning adopted by Romanism.

When looking at the reasons why some believers choose to not associate with Christmas, we might wonder if every Christian should develop the same convictions as others and stop associating with this holiday. Let me clarify something at this point. I place myself in the same ranks with any separated, fundamental, and Bible believing Christian whether we agree or disagree on participating with Christmas. Biblical separation from apostasy, ecumenicalism, charismatic teaching, and worldly music is a necessity for upholding a fundamentalist position on separation. However, there are

some areas that even fundamental and separated Christians disagree on. These are non-essential areas that are not by themselves evil. They are areas which do not necessarily promote something that is intrinsically evil. I think the matter of Christmas is one of these areas.

I will not argue over this issue with any separated brother. If he has a strong conviction against Christmas there is absolutely nothing wrong with this conviction. I think we need to ask ourselves several questions about Christmas.

- Is singing Christmas hymns and honoring Christ's birth any direct violation of separated Biblical principles, even though the early church did not practice this?
- Is there anything wrong with a person bringing a tree into their home to enjoy at the Christmas holiday?
- Is there anything wrong with Christians hanging lights on a tree outside their home?
- Do Christians really associate or place their stamp of approval on the Roman Catholic Mass while honoring the birth of Christ at the Christmas season?
- Are Christians honoring the ancient sun god or the god Saturn as they promote the message of Christ's birth or use greenery around their homes at the Christmas holiday?
- Cannot Christians eat Christmas cookies without compromising with the ancient paganism of the past?
- Can a Christian truly be separated if they participate in the Christmas season?

These are the real questions that confront us today. In the remainder of this study, we want to address these types of questions in a practical and biblical fashion. I do not believe we must necessarily reject every social

custom or tradition of the Christmas season while maintaining our separatist position. We must examine every social custom by the Word of God. God's people are warned to beware of philosophy, the tradition of men, and the rudiments (fundamental principles) of the world which are not after Christ (Col. 2:8).

Of course, when we start venerating Santa Clause and placing emphasis on a man other than Christ, then we become entrenched in the "tradition" of men. When we allow materialism to override the Christmas holiday and take control of our heart, then we have allowed the "world" to gain a foothold in our life (1 John 2:15-17). When we allow mankind to tell us that the true meaning of Christmas is something other than Christ and the salvation that He came to bring to mankind, then we have followed the "philosophy" of man.

We must simply understand that there is nothing inherently wrong with putting greens around your house or a tree in your home. Many of us bring trees into our home throughout the year to decorate. There is nothing wrong with this. In Rome during the 4th century any tree or plant brought into the home after Christmas was a way of expressing honor to the sun god. However, this certainly is not true in the day in which we live. This pagan custom or practice has long been abandoned. Today lights are just lights and greens are always greens. Trees are always trees.

Nevertheless, some believers may claim that other Christians are associating with the paganism of the past when they celebrate Christ's birth in any way or fashion. They may also conclude that another believer is violating certain Scriptural principles which deal with wrong association (1 Thess. 5:22) when they participate in gift giving, the hanging of lights, the erection of Christmas trees within their homes which are all rooted in paganism.

In response to these concerns, we might conclude that since the Christmas season was Christianized in the history of the church and is now accepted by most Bible-believing Christians, it would seem appropriate to assume that the symbols that pagans once used to honor the sun god (Saturn) have lost their significance and meaning. The symbols that were at one time

used for pagan purposes have lost their meaning over the centuries. Therefore, if the believer uses lights and trees, there is no danger of any wicked associations with the past.

Ron Bigalke comments:

“Apparently, the early church began celebrating Jesus’ incarnation on 25 December as a declaration against the pagan deity that the unbelievers worshiped. When the Apostle Paul spoke in the midst of the Areopagus, he faulted the Athenians for worshiping an “UNKNOWN GOD . . . in ignorance” (Acts 17:22-23). Seizing the opportunity to proclaim Jesus as Lord God and Savior, the apostle used an established pagan altar to demonstrate the true worship of God. Historically, the early church adopted a similar practice with regard to Christmas.”

In other words, God can override the paganism of the past and produce something good in its place. Over time, many within the true church have grown to celebrate Christ’s birth, making it a joyous occasion, when remembering Christ’s incarnation into the world and reflecting upon the true reason why He came to earth.

I am a separatist who wants to uphold holy and Biblical standards. I am also fully aware that separated Christians must be extremely careful about all of their associations in the world in view of the Scriptural truth about Bible separation (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 10:20; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 1 Thess. 5:22). However, as a separated and Bible believing pastor, I personally have not found any commands or principles in the Bible that would lead me to conclude that it is wrong to remember Christ’s birth during the Christmas season.

Others will be quick to note that separated believers are promoting Roman Catholicism and their blasphemous practice of the Mass when celebrating Christmas. They conclude that the word for Christmas actually means Christ in the Mass. Since this is true, we must “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22) and have nothing to do with the word Christmas. However, I find no valid reason to assume that when a separated believer sings Christmas hymns about Christ or hangs festive Christmas lights during the

holiday season that they are putting their stamp of approval on the Catholic Mass. This in my opinion seems to be a stretch of the imagination.

Someone once said:

“It is not always impossible to abstain from everything which may appear evil to a narrow and foolish mind.”

The word “Christmas” to most Christians has nothing to do with the mass but a celebration of Christ’s entrance into the world. The “mass” aspect found in this word is meaningless and senseless from a doctrinal perspective (1 Tim. 1:10; Titus 2:1) and when invoking this word Christians are not giving their approval of it in any way. Christmas to them is only associated with Christ’s entrance into the world – not in the pagan re-sacrifice of Christ in the Roman Catholic mass. The same is true when using the word Easter. Christians are not associating with the pagan history associated with Easter when using this word in relation to Christ’s resurrection.

We must always use common sense when making accusations regarding the principle of wrong associations. Don’t misunderstand me, there are plenty of wrong associations. If I were to attend an ecumenical rally where Roman Catholics were directly involved, then I would come into a wrong religious association with the system of Romanism and be promoting her ideas and philosophies (1 Cor. 10:20). I would also be disobedient to the clear Biblical mandate for separation (2 Cor. 6:17).

We can fellowship with error and evil by religious association. However, I do not believe this occurs when we simply want to promote Christmas hymns centered on Christ in a separated fundamental church. We draw no religious ties to Romanism and ancient Babylonianism when doing this. Furthermore, we can certainly place a Christmas tree in our home without compromising with the ancient paganism or the Roman Catholic Mass. There really is no outright religious compromise and approval of Romanism when a Christian decides to celebrate Christmas. It seems that the entire celebration of Christmas is an area of Christian liberty even though Christians might disagree over the holiday (Romans 14 & 1 Cor. 8).

I am a firm separatist who denounces any involvement with Romanism. I once had a three-week series entitled "The claims of Pope John Paul." I lost several people in the church over these messages and had several people walk out who were perhaps visiting Romans Catholics. But I make no apologies for preaching truth and exposing error. I will continue to do this uncompromisingly until the Lord returns.

But what about learning the heathen customs?

Jeremiah 10:2 says:

"Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them."

We must understand what the book of Jeremiah was forbidding. Jeremiah was concluding that we should never engage in idolatry. This is the way of the heathen that so many engage in today. Even heathen do things that are not sinful. However, when they begin to carve out idols and worship other gods, then we must learn not to worship these idols. In other words, we are not to copy the system of the world that promotes idolatry.

Jeremiah 10:3-4 goes on to say:

"For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth 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."

Some have wrongly used this verse when associating it with Christmas trees. They conclude that Jeremiah is giving a prophecy about Christmas trees! However, Jeremiah is referencing cutting down trees to create idols that the people would worship. This is not a prophecy against Christmas trees. It speaks about idol worship. We are not worshipping a tree when we bring it inside our home and make it pretty. We are simply enjoying the tree. There is a vast difference between enjoyment and idolatry.

Once we understand the true interpretation of this passage, we might be able apply these verses to the Christmas holiday in another way. In these days angels are venerated and worshipped at the holiday season. People

today are fascinated with angels. We have what I call “angelolatry” being promoted. Worshipping angels is wrong. Angels have become idols to many people, and this clearly violates this Scripture (Col. 2:18; 1 John 5:21). Be careful that you do not venerate angels and find yourself being fascinated with them more than Christ. Only Christ is to be worshipped at the Christmas season and throughout the year.

Some sincere believers will also conclude that Christmas has nothing to do with the Bible. I must agree with them wholeheartedly. It is true that Christmas is not a teaching in the Bible. Christmas is not Christ's day. The first day of the week is the Lord's Day, the day of His resurrection, and it is the only special day that God has given to Christians. We are specifically told to meet on the first day of the week to commemorate Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 16:2). However, a person does not violate any biblical command when honoring the birth of Christ and His great humility and condescension when He entered this world. For “great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh...” (1 Timothy 3:16). Something that is so great as His incarnation can be honored without it being evil. In fact, every time a preacher teaches on the incarnation of Christ he is honoring His birth. There is absolutely nothing wrong with commemorating the birth of Christ any more than we honor Christ's resurrection.

Think of this. There are other things that we do today within the church which are not specifically recorded in the Bible. For instance, we have a Sunday school program for children and choirs in the church today which were not recorded as being a part of the early church practice. We also have Bible Schools and camp ministries. None of these things are wrong. They do not violate any Bible commands or principles. Here is my point. Just because the early church did not participate in a specific custom does not deem the practice or custom as being wrong. The overall message and meaning of Christmas does not violate scriptural commands.

I simply do not believe it is wrong to honor Christ during the Christmas season. Where in the Bible does it honestly say that we cannot sing Christmas hymns to honor the great incarnation and birth of Christ? Where in the Bible does it say that we cannot bring a Christmas tree into our home so we can enjoy its beauty? Where in the Bible does it say that we cannot

enjoy lights? If within the providence of God there would have never been an official declaration to Christianize the Christmas holiday and change its meaning, then I would choose to not associate with the Christmas season. However, since the course of church history cannot be changed and Christmas has become a Christianized holiday, then I see no reason why I cannot associate with the season in order to honor Christ.

Of course, there is another holiday such as Halloween that has never been Christianized. The celebration of Halloween was so evil that the church never tried to re-use the symbolism associated with this holiday and incorporate these customs into Christianity. The symbols of Halloween are still Satanic in their connotation and to this day still point to occultic practices and the evil workings of the underworld (Deut. 18:9-12). Through the years the symbols associated with Halloween have maintained their evil significance and connotations. Christians who associate with this holiday are associating with the demonism and occultic symbolism that is still attached to the holiday. Halloween is the devil's day whereas Christmas is made to be Christ's day since the church celebrates Christ's birth during this season.

The difference between the two holidays (Halloween and Christmas) is a night and day difference. The same can be said regarding the difference between Halloween versus Easter which also has pagan roots, but Easter has become a symbol of Christ's resurrection. In fact, there are Christians who commemorate the resurrection of Christ at the Easter holiday while not commemorating Christmas. But actually, both have pagan origins, and yet somehow within God's providence they have become holidays today that truly do honor Christ.

Arguments against celebrating Christmas or at least eliminating certain Christmas practices abound. Some will say that since Scripture doesn't explicitly authorize such a celebration, Christians shouldn't participate. But such logic carried consistently would prohibit other modern church practices, including, for instance, the celebration of Thanksgiving.

When should a Christian separate from various practices, customs, symbols, and holidays?

- When the customs, symbols, and holidays still represent darkness (Eph. 5:11).
- When the customs, symbols, and holidays still represent paganism (Jer. 10:2).
- When the customs, symbols, and holidays still represent unrighteousness and Satanism (2 Cor. 6:14-17).
- When the customs, symbols, and holidays still promote worldly behavior (Rom. 12:2).

I do not for one moment believe we are honoring the sun god as pagan Rome did when we celebrate Christmas. We are no longer honoring the god of Saturn. By bringing trees into our home or plants or anything green around the Christmas holiday, or over the winter months for that matter, does not indicate that we are looking forward to the sun god blessing our crops in the spring. These Roman paganistic beliefs have lost their significance. These symbols no longer are tied to paganism. Therefore, I believe we can honor the birth of Christ and season of Christmas without compromise.

We can use amoral things like lights and trees to beautify the Christmas holiday without compromising with the paganism of the past since these symbols have long lost their meaning. In fact, we can use these things, such as lights, to remind us of Christ who is the light of the Word (John 8:12) and of His personal beauty (Psalms 90:17). I know that this might sound rather canned and wishy washy to some of you who are reading this study, but it really is true in my own personal life!

Of course, I don't enjoy all the commercialism associated with Christmas, but I personally enjoy looking at the Christmas lights and listening to good, God honoring, Christmas music. Oh yes, I also enjoy eating Christmas cookies! God pity the Christian who cannot enjoy those Christmas cookies with a glass of cold milk or hot coffee! Forgive me for overreacting, but cookies are my weakness.

Why can't the Christian celebrate the birth of Christ if they celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ? I don't think we need to be so closed about Christmas.

Warren Wiersbe stated:

“To advise people to pay no attention to Christmas is like telling a dying man to ignore the doctor, to a hungry man to ignore food on the table, or a wandering man to ignore the guide who came to lead him to safety. God invaded our planet; this is a fact of history. Nobody can safely ignore it.”

I am aware that some separated brethren will disagree with me on this matter of celebrating Christmas. Whenever you write on a subject like this there will be those who disagree. It is not my intention to cause controversy but to try and honestly evaluate why some separated brethren do not participate in Christmas and others do participate in this holiday. I am simply reminded of the Scriptural truth spoken about in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 10:31 says:

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

As I investigate the way that Christmas has been changed from its pagan roots and brought over to celebrate the birth of Christ, I can without reservation sing Christmas hymns to the glory of God. I can sing about Christ’s birth and honestly do it to the glory of God. Is not God glorified when we sing about His only son and how He humbled Himself to become a baby? Cannot God be glorified when we take Scriptural truth about His beloved Son and sing about it within the church? I cannot conceive how God can really be dishonored with such a practice as this. In any event, for those sincere brethren who still have trouble identifying with Christmas, I want to leave with you a good verse to claim for your feelings of reservation and position on this holiday.

Romans 14:5-6

“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.”

There was disagreement in the early days of the church over the particular day to worship the Lord. Jewish brethren who had come from Judaism had a hard time dismissing themselves from Saturday worship. Gentile brethren worshipped on Sunday without any reservations. The early church practiced Sunday worship in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ and this was to be God's design for the succeeding church generations (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev.1:10). Initially, there was much disagreement about this particular day of worship and even some of the other Sabbath days in Israel's past history of worship. Paul solved the problem when he writes how the believers must learn to understand their difference of opinion over these days and not make a mountain out of a molehill. In other words, these days were not the real issues!

In a similar fashion, the day of Christmas is not the real issue. The day of Christmas is not part of the real issues of separation among separated and fundamental believers today. We may have the tendency to fight over this particular day of celebration, but we are not going to get anywhere doing it. We must focus on the real issues of compromise and worldliness such as ecumenicalism, New Evangelicalism, apostasy, worldly music, and carnality in the local churches.

It's these areas (not Christmas) that are causing serious spiritual erosion in the local churches and are destroying the once separated stand of the church. As fundamental and separated believers, we are in the fight together (2 Tim. 4:7). We cannot allow these petty disagreements about Christmas to divide and deter us from our true goal which is to stress the holiness of God in the lives of God's people (1 Pet. 1:16).

Beloved, we must learn to accept our differences of opinion on celebrating Christmas which is actually a non-essential matter when it comes to living a godly and separated life that honors God (Titus 2:11-12). We must not let the trivial matters about Christmas divide us as true separatists. We must not allow the day of Christmas to destroy the true work of God among separated and fundamental believers (Romans 14:20). Our united position against the true compromise of New Evangelical worldliness in the modern church is desperately needed in these last days.

Romans 14:3 is a timely reminder to all the brethren who are holding fast until the Lord returns: “Let not him that eateth (*celebrates Christmas*) despise him that eateth not (*chooses to not celebrate Christmas*); and let not him which eateth not (*chooses to not celebrate Christmas*) judge him that eateth (*celebrates Christmas*): for God hath received him.”

Scott Aniol concludes by saying:

“The celebration of Christmas is an issue of legitimate Christian liberty. Christians should look to the principles of Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8–10 when deciding how they will participate in Christmas customs. Every believer must be convinced in his own mind (Rom. 14:5), and he must not judge others who come to different conclusions on the matter (Rom. 14:3, 4, 13). There is nothing inherently wrong with celebrating Christmas or with a tree, presents, Santa Claus, or other traditions. Any one of them could be used for evil, but a person’s attitude and motives in their use determines their value.

“Therefore, a believer can legitimately decide to do away with any observation of Christmas, or he can limit his observation to explicitly “religious” activities, or he can participate in all or some of the Christmas traditions and use them for wholesome purposes. Whatever one decides, he must not judge others who come to different conclusions.”

I agree with this reasoned and conclusion. On the other hand, there is no biblical requirement to celebrate Christmas. We should not insist that all brethren in Christ celebrate Christmas (Col. 2:16-17). Christians should be careful not to view celebrating Christmas as a prescribed religious duty or a necessity for holiness. Furthermore, Christians should guard against the rampant commercialism, greed, and materialism that dominates the modern Christmas season (Eph. 5:3).

The Christmas season can be a wonderful time for remembering Christ’s birth and the reason for His entrance into the world. While the Bible does not explicitly command believers to celebrate the birth of Christ, there is certainly nothing wrong with doing so. In fact, Christmas can be a time to refocus one’s mind on Christ and the reason for His coming. The Christmas season can also be a time for evangelistic opportunities in reaching people

for Christ. After all, Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). This is the reason for the season.