

SHOULD CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AS A RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY?

Rom 14:1-12

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Almost whole world celebrates Dec 25 as Jesus' birthday (just finished what our society calls "black Friday")
- B. Must be considered from Scriptural perspective
- C. Many different churches will be having special services on this day and many will be in attendance this day that are not in attendance at any other day
- D. But has the Bible set aside this day as one for religious observance by the child of God

DISCUSSION:

I. ALMOST THE WHOLE WORLD CONSIDERS IT SUCH

- A. Webster defines "Christmas" as a Christian feast on Dec. 25 or among the Armenians on Jan 6 that commemorates the birth of Christ and is usually observed as a legal holiday
 - 1. Day set by men (Bishop of Rome in 354 AD) Bible does not reveal Christ's birthday
 - 2. Man has set it at virtually every month of the year
 - 3. Not likely in Winter because of shepherds in fields
 - 4. Yet men continue to attach religious significance to it
- B. Common manger scene is not really as Bible records
 - 1. Angels did herald Christ' birth to shepherds, but went away into heaven before shepherds went to Bethlehem
 - 2. Shepherds found Jesus in manger not wise men
 - 3. Wise men found Jesus in a house Matt 2:11 and the number of wise men is not revealed
 - 4. Comparing Lk 2(v.22) and Matt 2 (v.11) Jesus may have been about two months old when wise men came and may even have been in Jerusalem and not in Bethlehem when they arrived from the east (Persia or Arabia could have been 200 to 400 miles)
 - 5. Scene first introduced by Saint Francis in 1224 AD
- C. Santa Claus is of religious origin
 - 1. Originated from St. Nicholas the patron saint of children - a Catholic Bishop on the 4th century
 - 2. Children prayed to this saint for gifts - origin of letters to Santa
- D. Tree, yule log, Mistletoe, etc all had their origins in Paganism and were then incorporated in the Catholic observance of Christmas, which literally means the "Mass of Christ" (a perversion of the Lord's Supper)

II. DOES THE BIBLE AUTHORIZE THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTHDAY OF CHRIST IN ANY FASHION

- A. We must observe all things Christ commanded Matt 28:20; must have authority Col 3:17
- B. Authority established by:
 - 1. Command - there is none
 - 2. Approved apostolic example - there is none
 - 3. Necessary inference - there is none
- C. Birth of Christ was heralded when it took place and as far as Bible records, never again - no record of the early church celebrating Christ's birthday in any way

III. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THIS DAY

- A. We can view it as a secular holiday and not religious
 - 1. Meaning of "holiday" Webster: holy + day - 1. a day or series of days observed in Judaism with commemorative ceremonies and practices. 2. a day on which one is exempt from work; especially a day marked by a general suspension of work in commemoration of an event. 3. A period of relaxation; vacation
 - 2. Meaning of "holy" Webster: that which is set apart from a common to a sacred use; hallow or sanctify. (God hallowed or made holy the Sabbath day Ex 20:11 - Hallowed or Holy is God's name Matt 6:9
 - 3. We use other words that have religious beginnings such as: days of week Tuesday = god of war; Wednesday = god of Germanic mythology; Thursday = god of sky (thunder day); Friday = goddess of love. Months: January = Roman god of gates or beginnings; May = Roman goddess. Halloween = all hallow even (hallow = to respect greatly; to set apart for holy use)
- B. Principles that should guide us in these matters
 - 1. Gal 4:10,11; Col 2:16 "I am afraid" Let no man require you to observe ("judge" sometime = rule)
 - 2. 1Cor 8:1-13 Our knowledge must not cause to fall
 - 3. Rom 14:1-23 Same thought as 1Cor 8:1-13
- C. Are the practices I engage in sinful in and of themselves if no religious significance is attached? such as tree, gifts, family gatherings, food, etc
- D. Do these practices, if not sinful in and of themselves offend or cause one to stumble?

CONCLUSION:

- A. Just because something had religious significance in the past or does now, to someone else, does not necessarily make it wrong for me
- B. However, as a religious observance, for a practice to be right it must be authorized, and Christmas as a religious day is not authorized, therefore Christians cannot observe it as such.
- C. Whatever observance we make of this holiday season, we must make sure that we attach no religious significance to it and that we do not violate our own conscience or cause someone else to stumble because of our actions.