

## Is Jesus Really The Reason For The Season? By Thomas Thornhill

Christians have always sought to be truthful in telling of Jesus' birth. We cannot (and should not) isolate Jesus' birth from the rest of His work as our Redeemer, nor should we overemphasize it. Jesus is not the reason for the season (Christmas), He is the reason for our salvation. No one actually knows the time when Jesus was born and we should not go along with the idea that "Jesus is the reason for the season." Jesus is not the reason for the institutionalized, merchandized and materialistic season. Jesus would not claim any responsibility for all the false concepts a materialistic, pseudo-religious culture has developed for this time of year. Despite the colorful lights, tinsel, colorfully wrapped gifts and the good wishes people utter, many are still lonely and miserable. Despite the attention, songs, hype and commercialism of Christmas at this time of year the country is still riddled with ungodliness, greediness, parental and child abuse, social injustice and religious indifference. Despite the pious attention that churches give to the story of Jesus' birth, the pews are filled with members who are superficial, insincere and fun-loving, taught by ambitious preachers writing their own gospels. Such religious sectarianism offers vain worship, led by vain men, seeking God in their own way.

No one knows precisely how and when the annual observance of "Christmas" began, but two things are certain. 1. It originated with man, not God. 2. The writers of the NT do not reveal the date when Jesus was born nor do they give any instructions regarding a special observance of his birth. It was many years after the first century AD that men began to place more emphasis on the time of Jesus' birth than God revealed. All we know about the birth of Jesus from the NT is found in the gospels, Matt.1-2; Lk.1-2. Mark and John do not mention it at all. "Christmas" as a holy day, later a national holiday, started out under the misguided influences of people who blindly used various dates through the centuries before finally settling on Dec.25 as the proper time to celebrate the birth of Christ. This religious origin of "Christmas" can be traced back to early Roman Catholicism. They adapted their "Mass" (their sacramental version of the Lord's Supper) to coincide with an earlier pagan festival, thus the term "Christ-Mass." The Protestants did not want to observe the Catholic Christ-Mass but wanted to keep the concept of celebrating Jesus' birth. They didn't mind the term "Christ-Mass" as long as they didn't actually observe the Catholic "Mass." So they adjusted the term with a different connotation and called it "Christmas." Today some get upset that people want to leave "Christ" out of Christmas, but they do not want to confess that a "Mass" is built into the term. They don't want the "Mass" so they simply ignore it and make the word "Christmas" mean what they prefer it to mean. But, it is inconsistent to demand that people "keep Christ in Christmas" while not demanding people to "keep the Mass in Christmas." In reality, both are pagan ideas and both are unscriptural. Christ was never in Christmas, nor the Mass. Man invented both ideas according to their own will.

God's people should celebrate Jesus regardless of the calendar of any man-made holiday. It is true that Jesus had to be born as a man in order to fulfill His Father's will – and so we are truly grateful that He was born, and amazed by its unique and supernatural circumstances – but we must not make more of this than is necessary. Let's celebrate not only His birth, but also His life, ministry, death, resurrection,

ascension to the right hand of the Father Acts 2:33. The world makes too much of His birth at an incorrect time of year, and too little of His death which provides the salvation of mankind through a consistent and persistent faith in Him. The Lord has commanded us to memorialize His death, not His birth 1.Cor.11:17 ff. He has even told us the day to do so, each first day of the week Acts 20:7; 1.Cor.16:1-2. So, as we do as God has instructed, to observe the Lord's Supper 1.Cor.11:23-26 we remember not only the price of our redemption but also "proclaim His death until He comes." The instructions, "Do This in remembrance of Me" were centered on His death, not His birth. Yet the religious world ignores these clear instructions while inconsistently insisting on a yearly human tradition to be observed, His birth, and that on the wrong day. God never intended that Christ's atoning sacrifice be celebrated by holiday carols, decorated trees, twinkling lights and nativity scenes, but through the simple elements of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, eaten as the Lord's Supper by Christians on the first day of every week.

Some might argue that we can observe Christmas annually in a religious way because it is designed to honor Jesus and draw attention to Him as our Savior. But we need to remember that traditional religion and bible religion are poles apart. Let's ask two questions: 1. Do we have a right to decide what is pleasing to God? Jesus condemned those who professed to do religious things in an unauthorized way Matt.7:21-23. Remember whatever we do, whether in word or deed, must be done in the name of the Lord Col.3:17. 2. Will God accept honor and praise that has been devised by man? Jesus condemned the Pharisees for doing this Mk.7:7-9. We must "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire" Heb.12:28.

I don't like the idea of godless men seeking to remove references to God, Christ, the Bible from public displays and I defend the right of people to confess and profess the name of Jesus anywhere scripturally. But I also want people to know that God is not pleased when men hypocritically adapt His name to a pagan holiday. No, Jesus is not the reason for the season, but He is the reason any of us have any hope. Let's put Him where He belongs and deserves to be, in our hearts. Only then will He be truly honored.

Humbug!

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." (2Cor. 11:13-15)

A group of students at Harvard once tried to fool Agassiz, the famous professor of zoology. They took parts from a number of different bugs and with great skill attached them together to make a creature they were sure would baffle their teacher. On the chosen day they brought it to him and asked that he identify it. As he inspected it with great care, the students grew more and more sure they had tricked this genius. Finally, Professor Agassiz straightened up and said, "I have identified it." Scarcely able to control their amusement, they asked its name. Agassiz replied, "It is a humbug." (From Bible Illustrator) A person who knows the truth will be able to detect a counterfeit when it presents itself.

## A Moments Wisdom

Dwelling on the negative simply contributes to its power.

God never built a Christian strong enough to carry today's duties with tomorrow's anxieties piled on the top of them.

The man who tries to do something and fails is infinitely better than he who tries to do nothing and succeeds.

We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same.

You cannot smile with a clenched jaw. You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.

No matter how bad things get, you have got to go on living, even if it kills you.