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godliness.” Everything we need to know of a religious nature has been revealed in the Bible. 1 Peter 4:11 says that if we speak, we must speak “as the oracles of God.” If God had wanted us to observe the birth of Christ, He most assuredly would have told us! Some people say, “But we need to observe the birth of Christ!” Why should we observe any day unless God authorizes it? Did God forget to tell us how to observe the birth of Christ? If He wants us to keep a special day for His birth, when is it?

**What Should My Attitude Be Towards Christmas?** Everyone I know observes Christmas in some way—it might be just getting the day off work, watching a few football or basketball games, or going out to see the pretty lights. I do not observe any religious holy day, but I celebrate many secular holidays—such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Veteran’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and, if the mood strikes me, Groundhog Day. God prohibits *the church* from establishing holy days (Gal 4:9–11). However, God does not prohibit *you* from reading the calendar or observing traditions and customs that are a part of our culture.

Some preachers leave you with the impression that if you smile during December, you have somehow sinned—and heaven help you if you say, “Happy Holidays.” Christmas is a civil holiday, not a religious holy day. In our home we celebrate many civil holidays—if you don’t that is fine, but mind your own business and leave me alone! We must regard Christmas as we do any other civil holiday.

**How should I remember Jesus?** God has left three memorials to Christ—all of which point to His death and resurrection.

First, *water baptism* reminds us of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom 6:3–4).

Second, the *Lord’s supper* is a reminder of His death. As we partake of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, we “proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor 11:26).

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Third, our *worship on the Lord’s day*, the first day of the week, reminds us of His resurrection (Matt 28:1; Acts 20:7; Rev 1:10).

Christmas as a *religious holy day* is unknown to the Scriptures. As a sacred holy day, it is unauthorized by God. Unauthorized celebrations make our worship vain (Matt 15:9). Christians love to read about the birth of Christ—the entrance of God’s Son into the world—but we dare not seek to honor Him in a way that He Himself says *dishonors* Him, i.e., by keeping the doctrines and commandments of men.

Some will claim that we deny the virgin birth since we don’t observe Christmas as a religious holy day—and that is a lie! I believe in the virgin birth (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:18–23; Luke 1:27). God does not want His Son remembered as a baby lying in a manger, but as the suffering Savior and now resurrected Redeemer. 📖

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“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11)

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# Should I Celebrate Christmas?



David Padfield

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# Should I Celebrate Christmas?

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Around the first of November, you can hear some people say that we need to “Put Christ back into Christmas.” People everywhere claim Christmas is too commercialized and say that we are overlooking the real meaning of Christmas. Some preachers will ask, “What are you going to give Christ on His birthday?” Most churches will organize Christmas plays, cantatas, and programs.

Since most people recognize Christmas as a religious Holy Day, it would be good for us to study its meaning. Considering *Christmas* contains the word *Christ*, it should have some connection with the Lord. If there is a connection with the Lord, we should turn to the New Testament and read of this observance. However, upon a careful examination, we fail to find a single reference to this day in the word of God. Most people are totally shocked when they find out that the New Testament church did not celebrate the birth of Christ as a religious holy day.

**When did men first start observing this special day?** To answer this question, we have to go outside the New Testament. Historians tell us it was nearly three centuries after the death of Christ before a day was set aside for a special observance for His birth. The *Holman Bible Dictionary* says, “In the early part of the fourth century, Christians in Rome began to celebrate the birth of Christ. The practice spread widely and rapidly, so that most parts of the Christian world observed the new festival by the end of the century.” Norval Geldenhuys, in his commentary on the gospel of Luke, says, “Christmas was for the first time celebrated in Rome in 354, in Constantinople in 379, and in

Antioch in 388.” (Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*)

Chrysostom, a well-known preacher during this time mentioned the late origin of Christmas. “Chrysostom, in a Christmas sermon, A.D. 386, says, ‘It is not ten years since this day was clearly known to us...’” (*Unger Bible Dictionary*).

**When was Jesus born?** The *date* of our Lord’s birth has been fixed at many times throughout the year. We cannot say for sure what day of the year our Lord was born on. Several dates have been suggested, including March 25, April 2, May 20, November 8, December 25, and January 6. Most Protestants in America, and Roman Catholics throughout the world, observe our Lord’s birth on December 25. However, Eastern Orthodox and Armenian churches celebrate Christ’s birth either on December 25 or January 6.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says, “Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church... there is no month in the year to which respectable authorities have not assigned Christ’s birth.”

**What about the three wise men?** In nearly every city in America, you can see a nativity scene with the shepherds, Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, and the “three wise men.” I do not know how many wise men there were, but I am certain they were never at the manger! Matthew tells us when they found Jesus, they went “into the house” (Matt 2:1-11). No mention is made of the manger. “They came to Jerusalem after Jesus had been presented in the temple, and taken back to Bethlehem, and, therefore, when the infant Jesus was more than

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forty days old. They must have come at least forty days before Herod’s death, for he spent the last forty days of his life at Jericho and the baths of Callirrhoe; the wise men found him still at Jerusalem. Jesus must, therefore, have been at least eighty days old when Herod died.” (J. W. McGarvey, *The Fourfold Gospel*)

**Who decided to make December 25 the birthday of Christ?** This credit goes to the Roman Catholic Church. They explain it like this: “Numerous theories have been put forward through the last 2,000 years to explain Dec. 25 as Christmas Day. The most likely one, however, the one most generally accepted by scholars now, is that the birth of Christ was assigned to the date of the winter solstice. This date is Dec. 21 in our calendar, but was Dec. 25 in the Julian calendar which predated our own ... The solstice, when days begin to lengthen in the northern hemisphere, was referred to by pagans as the ‘Birthday of the Unconquered Sun’. During the third century, the Emperor Aurelian proclaimed Dec. 25 as a special day dedicated to the sun-god, whose cult was very strong in Rome at that time. Even before this time, Christian writers already had begun to refer to Jesus as the Sun of Justice. It seemed quite logical, therefore, that as Christianity began to dominate the religious scene in the Roman Empire, the date of the ‘new-born sun’ should be chosen as the birthdate of Christ. Apparently, it bothers some people that the date for Christmas has its roots in a pagan feast. Be that as it may, it’s the best explanation we have for the choice of Dec. 25 to celebrate the birth of Jesus.” (*The New Question Box*)

This December observance originated with pagans as a feast day to their sun-god, Mithra. It was changed into a “Christian holy day” by the Roman Catholic Church.

**Don’t you think we need to observe the birth of Christ?** People often ask this question, but I usually ask this in return, “Why should we?” 2 Peter 1:3 tells us that God has given us “all things that pertain to life and

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