

Is He The Reason For The Season?

- Bill Brandstatter -

Many in the denominational world will be celebrating the 25th of December as the birthday of Jesus Christ. Manger scenes will abound around many church buildings. Songs about Jesus in the manger, the shepherds, and the wise men will be heard during the Christmas season. Signs outside some church buildings may be seen stating such as: "HE'S THE REASON FOR THE SEASON," or "LET'S KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS." Christ, however, is not the reason for the season, man is. The Bible is void of references to any celebration of the birth of Christ. Man invented the holiday we know as Christmas, God didn't.

The term "Christmas" is not found in Holy Writ. There is no mention of even the principle found. There is no indication of setting a date for Christ's birth. To pick a date and celebrate it as Christ's birthday amounts to the same as trying to determine the date of Christ's second coming. Although man is fond of celebrating birthdays, such does not make the celebration of Christ's birthday as the right thing to do. Isaiah wrote in the long ago, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). Any date set by man is pure speculation. The term "Christmas" according to history was coined from the 12th century for Christes Masse or Mass of Christ. The earliest evidence for a celebration of Christ's birth comes from the time of the Roman emperor Commodus around A.D. 188.

The feast of Christ's birth was first found in Rome at the time of "bishop" Liberius. It was made official by decree of Liberius in A.D. 354. So, for many years the world had never heard of such a celebration. For over 200 years such was unknown to the church. Now such is almost commonplace among many in today's religious world.

If God wanted Jesus' birth celebrated He would have told us (Deut. 29:29). To add a religious connotation to the birth of Christ is adding to God's word, and is therefore sinful (Rev. 22:18; Gal. 1:6-9). We have all things that pertain to life and godliness, so we do not need any additions (2 Peter 1:3). Paul wrote, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17). The phrase "in the name of" means by the authority of Jesus. We have no authority to celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday. Such a celebration is sinful and not in accordance with New Testament teaching.

- Beacon, Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, FL -

Holiday and New Year's Blessings! Peace, Joy, Love, Hope.

News & Notes

NOTICE OF TIME CHANGE FOR EVENING SERVICES:
TODAY (Christmas Eve) 2:00 p.m.
NEXT Sunday, Dec. 31st (New Year's Eve) 2:00 p.m.
NO Fellowship Meal today or next Sunday

PANTRY: Sauerkraut

NEW YEAR'S DAY BREAKFAST: Jan. 1st, 9:00 a.m. at the Fellowship Building. Our Brothers will be cooking & serving. Plan to start the New Year in fellowship with your church family. Sign-up sheet in the foyer.

MALAWI PROJECT: Give voluntary monetary donations to purchase items to make the Birthing Kits to MaClay Toomey. Donate cash or checks made out to the church.

SICK & SHUT-IN: At Home: Dean Spencer, Peggy Linger, Glenn McMahan, Gary & Marlene Evans, Claudette Miller, Melissa Rosohac, Nancy Cox, Barbara DeLong, David Strum, Cheryl Renfro Walker. **Fox - Chester:** Mary Johnson (Lois Hissom's sister). **In Ohio: Herman McHan**, 7401 Elmwood Drive, Lisbon, OH 44432. **Lori Stocks** (Karen Strum's niece), 115 Springbrook Drive, Findlay, OH 45840. Lori is undergoing treatment for lung cancer.

HOW TO HANDLE "THE HOLIDAY BLUES"

One of the songs of the season says, "It's the most wonderful time of the year...it's the hap-happiest season of all." However, such is not the case for everyone. Christmas is a wonderful season of unusual joy, but it is also a time of depression and discouragement for others. Some become "blue" because children are no longer at home and will not be coming home. Then there is the widow (or widower) alone for the first time during the holidays. Sometimes the holiday blues are brought on because there is too little money to fulfill ever increasing expectations. And then there is even the post-holiday letdown that sometimes comes.

What are some Biblical principles to help one get through the slumps of the season? First, remember that, although there are a number of innocent seasonal customs in which one can participate, if he is so inclined, such falls within the realm of personal judgment. Secondly, celebrating Christmas as a church holy day is outside the parameters of scriptural authority and puts an unscriptural burden on those who practice such (cf. Col. 2:16-23). Such should never become a part of the work and worship of the church.

Remember, the Lord is the ultimate source of joy (Phil. 4:4). Long after the tinsel and trappings fade, there is the peace which is available in season and out of season (Phil. 4:6-7). If you wish, enjoy the pleasant customs of this beautiful season. Reach down and make a child happy. Spread some good will and cheer. However, above all, be thankful for the strengthening power of Christ who enables us to rise above the blues knowing that God will supply all our needs in every season of life) Phil. 4:13, 19).

- Charles C. Pugh III, Vienna, WV -