

IS OBSERVING
CHRISTMAS
PAGAN?



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IS OBSERVING CHRISTMAS PAGAN?

In browsing the Internet I've discovered a number of churches and sects who believe that observing Christmas is pagan. It appears by their pronouncements that to observe Christmas in any form or manner is unchristian and pagan. I believe that the arguments used to condemn remembering, honoring and observing our Lord's birth are **superficial**. Some of the reasons given for not observing Christmas include:

- ◆ the date of Christ's actual birth is not December 25th;
- ◆ observing Christmas is of pagan origin;
- ◆ Christmas stems from Catholicism;
- ◆ there is no command in Scripture to observe the birth of Yeshua (Jesus);
- ◆ the early churches did not observe Christmas;
- ◆ the Christmas tree is pagan;
- ◆ Christmas is strictly a secular and materialistic observance therefore, Christians should not observe it.

In this folder I can only briefly respond to the above arguments and offer an **alternative view**. Those who oppose observing Christmas I am sure are sincere. I am not condemning them but simply taking a different approach. Before proceeding any further let me state my credentials. **Firstly**, I am a Christian having received Christ into my life as my Savior and Lord when I was 15 years old. **Secondly**, I look to the New Testament as my authority in matters relating to faith, doctrine and practice. I've been a pastor, preacher and Bible teacher for nearly my entire lifetime. I am now retired, in my mid-seventies and living in the rural mountain community of Strawberry in central Arizona.

THE DATE OF OUR LORD'S BIRTH

It is true that we do not know the actual date when our Lord was uniquely conceived and born of the virgin in Bethlehem. It is very doubtful that it was December 25th. Whenever He was born is **secondary** to the fact that He came into this world to become one with us.

OF PAGAN ORIGIN?



It is also true that the date when most Christians celebrate our Lord's birth was a focal point in the pagan observance of the winter solace. However, what better way to **overshadow** a pagan observance than by replacing it with a Christian observance?

FROM ROMAN CATHOLICISM?

I've never been able to totally figure out why so many Protestants, at least those of the theological conservative stripe, insist on *'throwing the baby out with the bath water!'* Whatever is deemed **'Catholic'** by these Christians is dismissed as having no value, hence must be rejected. **Why?** Though I personally am not a Roman Catholic, yet I accept the fact that **not everything** promoted by Catholicism is contrary to Scripture. In fact, as a Christian I, with all authentic Christians regardless of brand or label, am part of the Body of Christ which is "catholic" or universal made up of all believers regardless of their sect, church or denomination.

NO COMMAND IN SCRIPTURE

There is **no express command** in Scripture to observe our Lord's birth. In like manner there are **no commands** in the New Testament that Christians erect buildings to assemble in, become church members, sing out of hymnals or to words projected on an overhead screen,

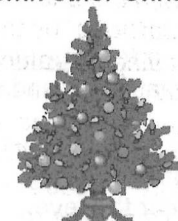
have a solitary pastor leading the congregation, and I could go on and on. Christians do many, many things that are not necessarily spelled out in the New Testament. Providing that Scripture is not deliberately violated, **Christians are free in Christ**. I believe that the principle of **adiaphora** makes sense. **Adiaphora** is the principle that **unless** a belief or practice is condemned in Scripture, Christians are **not obligated** to reject it.

NO EXAMPLE OF EARLY CHURCHES

The earliest churches of New Testament days were in the process of developing. It took time to develop and get things in order. For instance, the Canon of the New Testament developed over a period of time. Such basic doctrines as the Trinity and Christology were not fine-tuned until some time had passed. Yet, Christians are in accord that the Bible is God's uniquely written Word as well as united in their understanding of Christology and the Trinity.

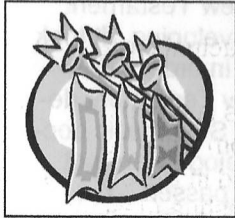
THE CHRISTMAS TREE

I cannot begin to tell you how often I've heard preachers condemn other Christians for having a Christmas tree. Again, **why?** Those opposed to Christmas usually quote from prophet Jeremiah and prove that Jeremiah was referring to what has become the Christmas tree. **Hardly!** **Jeremiah was condemning** a pagan practice common in his day. I do not worship nor do I know any Christian who make an idol out of the Christmas tree. I personally find enjoyment in the warmth and joy that it brings during this special season when emphasis is on our Lord's nativity i.e., **that He came to be born as one of us being God in human flesh**. We Christians refer to this as **"the Incarnation."**



I am always puzzled by those Christians

who seem to abhor **fun and laughter**. An austere joyless puritanical view has influenced many Christians. I believe that the Christian life should be one that is filled with laughter, fun, and joy. Christians, of all people, **should be enjoying life**, not simply enduring it and certainly not out to make other people unhappy. I am impressed by the approach to life that many of our Jewish friends display in enjoying life. **It is not sin** for Christians to enjoy life.



Rather than getting hung up on **the do's and don'ts** of Christmas observance **why not** use it in a positive way? I am well aware that the world has used secularism and materialism **to rob** God's

people of the blessing that this observance can and should have. Yet, **why** should we Christians allow the world to rob us? As followers of Jesus Christ why shouldn't we **take back** from the world that which rightfully belongs to the Body of Christ?

Here are **a few suggestions** for making Christmas what it can and should be:

* **Emphasize Christ!** This should go without saying. However, I fear that even among some Christians **busyness** is allowed to overshadow the real and true meaning of this season. Remember . . .



* **Evangelism.** What greater opportunity is there for Christians to witness of our faith in Christ than during the Christmas Season?

* **Use the Carols.** Many people in our society still know some of the traditional carols. Listen

to the words, especially past the first stanzas. Many of the carols are filled with the Gospel. We can and should use carol singing to our advantage by presenting Christ to the world.

* **Extend hospitality.** Christians should be known for their hospitality to one another and to the world at large. **What better time** of the year than to extend **Christian hospitality** to others? As friends, relatives and neighbors come into our homes and see Christian joy, what an effective witness this can be.

* **Saint Nicholas was a real live person!**

He was a godly pastor who lived in what is today Turkey. He suffered for his faith in Christ. We are told that he ministered as known for his gift giving. Our friends about the **las** who God and a Christ.



He suffered for Christ. We are told that he ministered as known for his gift giving. Our friends about the **las** who God and a Christ.

symbolizes a positive aspect of the season.

Why not plan on making this Christmas Season a special time **by lifting up Christ?** Be sure to assemble together with a company of Christians as you remember and honor our Lord's birth.

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