

MAY CHRISTIANS OBSERVE CHRISTMAS?

November 30, 2011

We are entering the time of year when children of all ages begin to daydream about the presents they hope to see on Christmas morning. The whole atmosphere surrounding this holiday is one that brings back joyful memories of childhood. The trimming of the tree, the placing of packages and gifts, the stockings hung with anticipation, and don't forget leaving cookies and milk beside the fireplace; all these traditions bring joy to the heart of the whole family.

However, one might remind us that this particular holiday is shrouded in religious overtones and it is inappropriate to observe it. We will be reminded that almost the whole world will observe Christ's birth on this "special" day. Of course, any faithful Christian would not want to participate in or observe any day, religiously, that is not authorized by God. One might respond, "I do not observe Christmas as a religious holiday, only as a traditional and secular one."

The origin of any particular event or observance may have begun under different circumstances but, over time, lost the significance it once had. This may be troublesome to some, but we do have Biblical authority on how to handle these situations.

During the time of Paul and the other apostles, many practiced eating meat that had been used in idol sacrifice. The practice would include: an animal sacrifice being made to an idol. After a portion of the sacrifice was consumed in the flame, the rest would be sold in the open market. Then this controversy followed: is the meat eaten, that was previously a sacrifice, contaminated in some way because of its connection to the ritual?

Paul answered in the negative (1 Cor. 8:1-13). If one has the "knowledge" that the idol is "nothing" then his conscience is not offended, then he may eat the meat. However, if one does not possess this "knowledge," he is referring to a mature knowledge, and their conscience is offended, then they should not eat the meat. This brother or sister would not be able to partake of the meat without constantly thinking that it had been offered to an idol.

Paul also addresses this to the Roman brethren, where, in chapter 14, he explains there will be different levels of knowledge among the brethren. Some, out of conviction, choose not to eat meats, while others see nothing wrong with doing so. However, he explains that no person can make a law in regards to personal choice and expect others to abide by it.

If one is sensitive to certain traditional practices, such as the observance of Christmas, they should not participate in that particular observance. But, we cannot make spiritual laws for others that God has not made. Like eating meat offered to an idol, one may observe Christmas as long as it is not done religiously.