

IS JESUS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON?

December 21, 2014

We just concluded 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 of this beloved 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 those traditions bring joy to the hearts of each family member.

However, some will remind us that this particular holiday is shrouded in religious overtones and it is inappropriate to celebrate it, because 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. Those of us that do observe this secular holiday do so only in a traditional sense and not a religious one.

Though the origin of any particular event or observance may have begun under different circumstances, it often, over time, loses the significance it once had. Even though that is the case, it may still be troublesome to some. The good news is that we do have Biblical authority and examples of how to handle those situations.

During Paul's day, and those of the other apostles, many practiced eating meat that had been used in idol sacrifices. After a portion of the sacrifice had been consumed in the flame, the rest would be sold in the open market. Often a controversy followed: was the meat eaten that was previously a sacrifice contaminated in some way because of its connection to the ritual?

Paul said, "no" (1 Cor. 8:1-13). If one has the "knowledge" that the idol is "nothing," then his conscience is not offended, and he may eat the meat. However, if one does not possess that "knowledge," he is referring to a mature knowledge, and their conscience is offended, then they should not eat the meat. That 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 addressed this issue in his letter to the church of Christ in Rome; in chapter 14, he explained there were and are 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 explained 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. However, one 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.

The question then is, "Why can Christmas not be observed as a religious holiday?" First, we have not been told what day or month in which the Christ was born. When we read about the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus, we learn that the shepherds were sleeping in the fields with the flocks, to protect the herds (Lk. 2:8-11). It is clear that it was not during the cold season when the angel told them about the birth of Jesus, and it was most likely in the spring of the year.

Secondly, we must only practice religious rites that have been commanded by God and not add to those in any way (Rev. 22:18-19). Paul also commanded, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Col. 2:16-17). Under the Old Law, the Jews observed holy days, but Paul taught them that, under the New Law, they were not to observe those days any longer because they were a shadow that pointed to the New Law of Christ. Therefore, the only days that we are authorized to observe, in a religious sense, is the first day of the week when Christians come together to worship God in prescribed manners (Acts 20:7).

If any Christian chooses to celebrate Christmas as a secular and traditional holiday, he has every right to do that, but no one has any right to keep holy days beyond what God has authorized. Contrary to the popular sentiment Jesus is not the reason for the Christmas season.

- * Much of this material came from research done by Brother Wayne Jackson. (<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/316-may-christians-observe-holidays>).