

Where Did Christmas Originate & Who Authorized It?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to go outside the New Testament. The Encyclopedia Americana says, "The Christmas celebration was not observed in the first centuries of the church." The Catholic Encyclopedia says, "Christmas was not among the early festivals of the church." Now notice this: If we cannot find the Christmas observance in the New Testament, and a secular encyclopedia says that it was not observed in the first centuries of the church, and a religious encyclopedia says that it was nonexistent in the early church, then we must conclude that it did not originate with the apostles.

By whose authority did this December observance originate? Colliers Encyclopedia tells us that Lyberius, the Bishop of Rome, whom the Catholics regard as one of the early Popes, ordered in 354 A.D. that "December 25th be observed as the birthday of Christ." December 25th had formerly been used by the Romans as a feast day for their Sun-God, Mithra. The Roman Saturnalia (riotous festival of Saturn) also came at this time. "The indications are that the church in this way grasped an opportunity to turn the people away from a purely pagan observance of the winter solstice to a day of adoration of Christ the Lord. Both Saint Cyprian and Saint John Chrysostom allude to this thought in their writings." (Colliers Encyclopedia) "December 25th was already a festive day for the sun god, Mithra, and appealed to the Christians as an appropriate day to commemorate the birth of Jesus, the light of the world." (Lincoln Library of Essential Information)

From these statements by reliable sources it is easy to see that the date of Christmas had its origin in a pre-Christian age among the pagans. It was adopted into a so-called "christian" holiday by the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, the word "christmas" is of Catholic origin. The word is derived from the medieval "Christes Masse," the mass of Christ, which is a corruption of the Lord's Supper. On December 25th, even until this day, the Catholics hold a special Mass for Christ. In time, "Christes Masse" came to be shortened to "Christmas."

Christmas, then, had its origin and authority in the Roman Catholic church, making it a Catholic Holy Day.

- by David Padfield

What about the Salvation Army?

It is more than a benevolent organization. It is also a religious human institution which teaches doctrines opposed to the word of God. It was started by William Booth in 1899 when he left the Methodist Church. Some of their beliefs, taken from the Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine: Total Hereditary Depravity, Direct operation of the Holy

Spirit, they administer no baptism, they do not observe the Lord's Supper, they use instrumental music in worship, they have women preachers.

The Bible forbids a Christian to give any sort of encouragement or assistance to a false teacher (2 Jn 6-11).

- David Padfield

What about Christmas?

It is not the giving of gifts that is challenged. It is not the happy associations we may have with our families and friends. Such things can be right at any time of the year (or we could make them wrong at any time of the year). We are not questioning these things. Our point is simply this: The Bible does not inform us as to the birthday of Christ, nor does the Bible authorize us to make a religious observance of the birthday of Christ. Hence, to attempt such is to go beyond the limits of divine authority.

- by Paul C. Keller

Notes about the RELIGIOUS Observance of Christmas:

a.. "Christmas was for the first time celebrated in Rome in 354, In Constantinople in 379, and in Antioch in 388." (Commentary on Luke, N. Geldenhuys, p. 102)

b.. "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church, and before the fifth century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether January 6th, March 25th, or December 25th." (Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 5, p. 641)

c.. "The observance of Christmas is not of divine appointment, nor is it of New Testament origin. The day of Christ's birth cannot be ascertained from the New Testament, or indeed, from any other source. Christians of the first three centuries do not speak of any special observance of the nativity of Christ." (McClintock and Strong, vol. 2, p. 276)

Christmas - IN REVERSE!!!

It has been frequently noted that the Scriptures do not authorize any religious observance of the day that men call "Christmas". There is simply no mention of any such observance in the Bible, and we know from historical accounts that the significance attached to this day originated hundreds of years after the church began in the first century. We do not even know the birthday of Jesus. In fact, we can be almost certain it was NOT December 25th. Any attempt to make this a day of special religious significance is without Biblical authority and should be avoided (Col. 3:17).

It is sad, but many in the Lord's church who would defend the statements made above are guilty of a sort of "reverse" observance of Christmas. While condemning the denominational folks for their practice of making a "holy" day which the Bible does not mention, they allow this day - and the season which surrounds it - to crowd God completely out of their lives.

Special activities associated with family and friends, school events, special performances, traveling, entertaining, visiting, partying, etc., are all conducted at a frantic pace this time of year. Many Christians allow these secular activities to push God out of His place (Matt. 6:33). Assemblies of the church are missed, Bible study is neglected, personal work and other efforts of the local church are abandoned. Verbally we denounce the religious observance of Christmas but, in practice, we have established a kind of "reverse" observance. In December we become LESS religious!

So, Christian, as you go through your busy schedule at this time of year, we hope you will stop to realize the things that are most important. Do not allow this man-made day to crowd God and His service out of the picture. Keep working and growing. Keep on keeping on.

- by Greg Gwin