

Some Facts About Christmas

By, Jon Gary Williams

This season of the year is enjoyed by people everywhere. It is a time of being together with family and friends, a time of special meals, sharing cards and decorating trees. It is a time of exchanging gifts, a time when little children are enthralled with Santa. We all appreciate the closeness this holiday season brings to each of us.

However, as we enjoy the happiness this season brings, we need to remind ourselves that Christmas, to the Christian, is really nothing more than a national holiday. Though the world associates it with the birth of Jesus, the knowledgeable Christian is aware that this is not the case.

Following are some interesting facts about this time of year with which some may not be familiar. It is good to be aware of these things, for sometimes we can allow the trappings of the world to influence our thinking.

First, “Christmas” is not in the Bible. It did not originate with the apostles and was not observed by the church of the 1st century. Actually, the observance of Christmas (as the birthday of Christ) began many years later and the term “Christmas” was not coined until the 11th century.

Second, the date of Christ’s birth is unknown. Through the years, while many different dates were argued, it was not until the 5th century that December 25th came to be generally accepted.

Third, the word “Christmas” is indicative of the Catholic religion. It became a religious observance (a “mass”) in honor of Christ, or “Christ-mas.” Hence, December 25th is set aside by the Catholic Church for a special “midnight mass.”

Fourth, the observance of Christmas was influenced by pagan customs. In 313 A.D., when the Roman Emperor, Constantine, made Christianity the state religion, many pagans came into the church bringing with them some of their crude customs. One of these was the festival of “Triumph Over Darkness” honoring the Mithraic rites of the birth of the Sun which was celebrated with riot and merrymaking. To accommodate the pagans, church leaders merely changed this to a celebration of the birth of Christ whom they were told was their “True Light.”

For the above reasons, and many more, churches of Christ do not place any significance on December 25th as a “holy day” to observe the birth of Christ – such observance is of human origin. If Jesus wanted His birth to be celebrated in a special service on a special day, He would have said so. However, neither He nor the apostles said anything about such a practice. Of this, the Scriptures are completely silent.

Instead of setting aside one day a year, we should rejoice every day that Jesus was born into the world to bring salvation to lost man (Luke 19:10). This is the true spirit of being a child of God. And we must remember, the only thing Christians are told to observe is the *death of Jesus*. This is done each week as Christians gather to partake of the Lord’s supper (Matt. 26:26-28; I Cor. 11:23-26).