

Tis' the Season

December is the time of year when most people celebrate Christmas. Many celebrate December 25 as the birth of Christ. Thus, throughout what is considered the Christian world, religion is moved from the backburner to the forefront of thoughts and actions. Generally, individual attitudes toward the less fortunate change for the better. Television programs seem to be more family oriented. Families make time to gather for parties and good times. Yes, the Christmas season seems to have a positive influence on the lives of many individuals.

For many children, Christmas is Santa Claus bringing gifts of whatever their hearts desire at any given moment. Individuals spend much time shopping for gifts for loved ones, making the retail industry pleased with the profits gained during this time of year. The only day of the year that many businesses close and lock the doors is Christmas Day, thus giving their employees time to spend with family and friends. All government offices close on December 25 as it is considered a national holiday. For most people, Christmas is a festive fun time of year.

Many Christians ask the question, "Can a Christian celebrate Christmas and be pleasing to God?" I recently heard a Gospel preacher adamantly condemn anyone who would celebrate this holiday in any shape or form. He and his wife go on vacation during Christmas so that they "will not be caught up" in the festivities of their friends and co-workers. I also know many Gospel preachers who openly celebrate Christmas.

With these thoughts in mind, I would like to make a few observations concerning Christmas. God did not disclose what day of the year Christ was born. There is no reference in the Scriptures to celebrate or honor Jesus' birth. (We are taught to commemorate Christ's death each Lord's Day as we partake of the communion, Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.) From this information, we can conclude that it would be inappropriate for a Christian to celebrate Christmas (or any day of the year) **as the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

I was reared in a non-religious home. I had no religious training. The Bible and religion were neither taught nor discussed during my childhood years. After an extremely trying situation with an uncle, I remember my father making the statement, "Heaven and hell are what you make for yourself on earth." That is the most religious statement my father ever made, and it is the attitude my brothers, sisters and I understood.

As children, Christmas played a major role in our lives. As young children, it was a time for Santa and toys. As we grew, Christmas became a time for family, special meals, gifts of clothes and other needed items. Eventually, I understood the world's view that December 25th was the birthday of Jesus Christ and that Christmas was a celebration of that day. However, to me as a young child, it was Santa Claus, and as I matured, it was simply a national holiday. A time for gift giving, families and doing something special for the ones we love. In my mind, Christmas (December 25th) never has been and never will be the "birthday of Jesus." It never has been and never will be a true religious holiday.

I understand that the celebration of Christmas from a religious standpoint is deeply ingrained in the culture of some families. These individuals cannot separate the religious holiday from the national holiday. For them, to celebrate Christmas would violate their biblical understanding of the birth, life and death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I respect and understand their refusal to celebrate Christmas, and I honor that decision.

Religion is being removed from many aspects of our wonderful nation (USA). The Bible and prayer are not permitted in our schools, and some would like to see God removed from our money. With this attitude toward God and religion, Christmas is becoming more and more secular, and less and less of a religious holiday. The emphasis on December 25th, as the birthday of Jesus is taking a backseat to Santa Claus and the secular appeal to this holiday. Many people no longer look to Christmas as an observance of the birth of Jesus Christ; it is simply a national holiday.

As each December comes along, I welcome the good will that this season brings. I relish the family movies, songs and attitudes so prevalent this time of year. I wish this exhibition of good will toward others carried on throughout the year. We have poor families 365 days a year that need our benevolent acts of kindness at times other than December 25th.

Can a Christian celebrate Christmas? I believe it is an individual decision based on one's acknowledgement that December 25th is not a celebration of the birth of Jesus, and if celebrated as a holiday, it is a national holiday – **not** a religious holiday. I cannot make that decision for you, and you cannot make that decision for me. If you choose not to celebrate Christmas, I respect that decision, and I ask that you respect my decision to celebrate December 25th as a **national holiday with no religious implications for me.** That is the way I celebrated Christmas as a child.

As each December comes along, I also look forward to spending time with our children and grandchildren. I enjoy shopping and making gifts that each one will appreciate. I celebrate a national holiday **not** a religious holiday. **I also celebrate December 25th as my birthday!**

By Bonnie Rushmore