

Keep Christ in Christmas?

Have you thought about the current religious and social scene in America, especially during this time of year – Christmas? Religion has once again been forced to the forefront of the news with groups fighting over whether to have a “Nativity Scene” in the public square. Others are debating about using the word “Christmas” in their sales ads, and then, we hear schools are not going on “Christmas break” but instead on “Winter Break.”

In our changing society, I wonder if anyone of us has stopped to ask what did God intend by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth? What does God think about current Christmas traditions here in America? Would Joseph and Mary have put a “Nativity Scene” in their yard? Would the apostle Paul have worn a “Keep Christ in Christmas” pin while on his missionary journeys? Would Peter go to court if his children came home from school and told him they were not going to have “Christmas Break” but “Winter Break”? Did God intend people to celebrate His Son’s birth with “Merry Christmas” and “Nativity Scenes”?

There is another dilemma, however, in the debate over having a “Nativity Scene” and whether or not to use the word “Christmas.” These are symptoms of a greater problem. We live in a society that is pushing for the removal of Christ from the public eye; it is just not about Christmas, but it is also about the Christian faith as a whole. Realize that often one cannot pray in school, before a game or before a government meeting as people once did in this country. One cannot read his Bible or promote the Bible over another faith or belief in a public way. Too often, the battle cry of the atheists and the secularist is the “separation of church and state” and “let’s be fair.” About this time of year, a school, a business, a city park or a government building wants to put a “Nativity Scene” on display, and then, the battle drums begin to beat. There are petitions and media coverage, and in some cases, judges and courts get involved.

With whom do we side? Should we side with those who cry to “Keep Christ in Christmas” or with those who cry for “separation of church and state”? Neither side represents what God intended.

I believe in the virgin born birth of Jesus. I believe Jesus was born of Mary in the city of Bethlehem. I believe that the angels appeared to the shepherds and announced the birth of Christ. I believe Jesus was born in a stable, and He was laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn. I believe Joseph was Jesus’ earthly stepfather. I believe the wise men came to Jesus within two years of His birth and gave Him gold, frankincense and myrrh.

I believe that Jesus Christ was born, but probably not on December 25; the Bible doesn’t tell us the date. I believe Jesus is the reason for every season, not only this season. I believe in worshiping Christ not just for His birth but also for His death, burial, and resurrection on each Lord’s Day as I have the opportunity to assemble with the saints (Hebrews 10:25). Yes, I have read Romans 14:5, which says, “One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” I am of the conviction that all days are unto the Lord.

I believe Christ should be celebrated, glorified and honored, but maybe not with a plastic made in China figurine in my yard. Neither is Jesus Christ glorified with bitterness or rage. Further, I am not allowed to use a non-biblical word to express my faith. My faith is not demonstrated by a halfhearted, just for show so called once a year worship service, which reminds us more of the money changers at the Temple than of New Testament worship. I believe that I can be a Christian whether I say Merry Christmas or not. Remember, the great confession of the Christian is, “I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16), not Merry Christmas. I believe Jesus is Lord, and I believe He is the Savior of the world (John 8:24).

So, if the atheists have their way with the courts and take the “Nativity Scene” from the public square, if the department stores have a “Winter Sale” instead of a “Christmas Sale” and if my children do not have a “Christmas Break” but have a “Winter Break,” it is okay because my faith is not based upon these traditions. Instead, my faith is built on the solid Rock, the living and resurrected Jesus Christ. If the government comes and tells me that I cannot worship and serve my Lord, then I can say like Peter and the apostles, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Therefore, should we keep Christ in Christmas? The answer is, “Yes,” and we should keep Christ in our New Year’s Day, our Valentine’s Day, our St. Patrick’s Day, Easter and every day that ends in “Y.” Christ needs to be our beginning and end, the first and the last, as we live on planet earth!

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