



Merry Christmas?

By Pastor Mike Taylor

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Note: "This is a message I posted on Rapture Ready, years ago, but since we just passed the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, and I had not published this on this website, I thought I would do so now. I hope it opens your eyes to the truth of Jesus coming to our earth to save us from our sins. "

Ahh, it is the Christmas season, again. A time of joy about the birth of our Savior, a time of good will toward men, and family getting together to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Many Christians view this time as a most holy time when Jesus Christ

was born in a manger, as God in the flesh, and was announced to the world via shepherds tending their flocks in the fields, by night.

Many centuries ago, the Roman Catholic Church in all its religious and dictatorial desire to give honor to the Savior, imposed a set date of December 25th as the date that Jesus was born. I wish to take an historical position, and foremost and more importantly, a biblical position on this most human of traditions that comes in the winter every year of our modern times.

THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT

Is there anything that we can look to that determines what day exactly, that Jesus Christ was born? No, not exactly. But we can come close to the month and season of His birth from scripture and it wasn't in December. How do I know? Scripture gives an account based on the birth of John the Baptist and its relationship of Mary being with child. Let's start with the father of John the Baptist. John, who was the second cousin of Jesus Christ, had as his father a member of the priesthood called by the name, Zacharias. . Zacharias was given the priestly duties before the Lord at set dates in the course of 24 priest that performed their duties at set times of the year. Zacharias duties fell on the course of Abijah, as we find in Luke chapter 1

1:5 THERE was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

1:6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

1:7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

1:8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

1:9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

From the time of King David, there were 24 courses of priests assigned to the Temple, and the course of Abijah was the 8th course as a permanent assignment. Each course of priests served for 7 days (1

Chronicles 9:25), twice a year. Their week long service at the Temple began and ended on the Sabbath (2 Chronicles 23:8).

We know from studying scripture and knowing how the course fell that Zacharias was given these duties during the 10 week of the Jewish year, or about Sivan 12-18, which falls on our calendar in the month of May/June.

We can read about the encounter that Zacharias had with the angel Gabriel in the subsequent verses that speak of the proclamation that Zecharias and Elisabeth would have a child and his name was to be John. But to pinpoint the near date of the conception of John the Baptist we look to these verses in that same passage of Luke:

1:23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

1:24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

1:25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

So by taking this scripture, we can determine that John the Baptist was conceived in June sometime, and Elisabeth hid herself for 5 months.

How does this relate to the birth of Jesus? We read further down in Luke and we come to the angel now appearing to Mary, the earthly mother of our Savior.

1:26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, (emphasis mine)

1:27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

1:28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

1:29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

1:30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

Luke makes a pointed effort to show that in the “sixth month” meaning from the time of John the Baptist being conceived, an angel also came to Mary and she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit with Jesus.

1:36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

By taking this biblical account of the conception of John the Baptist, who would be born 9 months later, we find that John was born sometime in the spring, or sometime in March or early April in our calendar, and in the Jewish calendar, the month of Nisan, around Passover time. Simple math allows us to calculate the approximate time of the birth of Jesus by taking the time of Mary coming to Elisabeth who was 6 months pregnant, and Mary having just conceived shows that Jesus would be born 6 months after John's birth, around the time of the fall, or approximately, during the Feast of Tabernacles celebration in the month of September or early October. Which makes a lot of sense, as the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles is "God with us." God came to live amongst us as a living, breathing human being during this time.

There are many more clues that people overlook when they embrace the birth of our Lord. It is noted that the angels came to the shepherds who were tending their flocks in the fields around Bethlehem. We know that the weather there is similar to ours, as it is on the same latitude as we are in the Midwest, so the winter, if it were in December, could be very cold and snowy with no grass growing on the hills. Also, these sheep or lambs were being tended, possibly for the temple sacrifices that would begin in the fall during the Day of Atonement and they wouldn't risk the death of fragile lambs to cold weather.

Another clue is that Joseph was commanded to go to his place of birth to be counted for taxes by the census of Quirinius, as taxes would be leveled when the farmers had the proceeds from their crops and were full of money. Also, they would naturally gather to celebrate a festival during this time, or the Feast of Tabernacles, so the town was packed with feast observers, hence Mary and Joseph could find no room at the Inn for lodging.

Why is this all important? It was commanded by Jesus to observe His death and resurrection, but nowhere is there a commandment to observe His birth. Then why do we do it? Simply, it is tradition that was started by the ruling theocracy, or the Roman Catholic Church. Is there anything wrong with observing the birth of Jesus Christ? No, not in itself, as we are joyous and thankful that He did come, as a child and grow into a man, full of grace and truth with one mission, to save the world of its sins. But for some reason, men find no threat coming from a cute little baby lying in a manger, but have a hard time acknowledging the risen Savior who will come back as a ruling and reigning Warrior King with a rod of iron to put down all sin and rebellion found on this earth.

THE HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF CHRISTMAS

"One prolific writer in the early church fathers was Irenaeus, the bishop over all the churches of Asia Minor. He was designated a saint by the Roman Catholic Church, and was the bishop following John the apostle and Polycarp. Irenaeus was bishop in about 170-180 AD, and wrote about all the church observances. Nowhere is Christmas mentioned or the observance of a day for the supposed birth of Yeshua. You can read Irenaeus' writings in English at the Wheaton University website, and check it out for yourself.

The Catholic encyclopedia states that shortly after the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, a pope assigned December 25th as the day for observing the birth of Yeshua. Then in the 5th century AD, another pope made it church law, that all Christians would observe December 25 as Christmas, forever. Think about it, the date of December 25 was chosen over 300 years after the death of Yeshua, as the date of His birth; and 400 years afterwards it was institutionalized as a mandatory church observance." (Paganism in Christmas, Reinhold.)

Oh how people love to participate in all the man-made aspects of Christmas; the glittering lights, the evergreen tree, the giving of presents, and the entire merchant push for their biggest sales period of the year. While some Christians will say that "we ought not to commercialize Christmas", or "let's put Christ back in Christmas", those are just slogans to perpetuate what is historically, a pagan festival. Jesus Christ is NOT in Christmas, as the day proclaims. Are you shocked? Let's see what this time in history is really about, and how Jesus our Savior was added to this celebration.

As mentioned, three hundred years after the resurrection of our Lord, the Roman Catholic Church by edict proclaimed the date of December 25th as the official date of the birth of Jesus. Years later, the Emperor Constantine designated and approved this date by stating the following:

"On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations, the bounty of heaven should be lost."

I'm going to reveal some details that most Christians do not understand or realize where these traditions came from. The popes ordered Christmas to be instituted on the birthday of Sol the sun-god, because the Roman pagans already observed Sunday to honor Sol and the winter solstice period was already observed as Sol's birthday. This was an overt means to convince the people that Sol and Jesus was the same person. The winter solstice occurs on December 21, and Saturnalia was kept from December 17-24. Then on December 25, Brumalia was the celebration of the rebirth of the sun-god. This is called Mithraism.

To get a secular definition of the meaning of this tradition, all one has to do is look at any dictionary, or online at Wikipedia at the following URL:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas>

The tradition is historical, and has nothing to do with Christianity as a religion. So who was Sol the sun-god? It was a continuation of the Baal worship from ancient days. It was present in Egypt and back to ancient Babylon. December 25 is the birth day of Tammuz, the son of Semiramis, and the rebirth of Nimrod. The ancient legend is that a green tree sprang up on Brumalia, with the stump symbolizing Nimrod (Baal) and the green tree Tammuz. This festival is nothing more than witchcraft institutionalized in the church today as Christmas. It is Baal worship. Many Christians hold up their noses over ancient Israel who worshiped YHVH and also worshiped the baals. They think they would never do such things themselves. However, they are practicing the same Baal worship that people were criticized in the scriptures for, over 2500 years ago.

Although the early Roman Catholic popes knew of the pagan origins of these celebrations that did not concern them, as they felt that substituting Christ in a pagan tradition would satisfy the new converts into their mainstream religion.

Jeremiah warned of this practice when he wrote of a passage that sounds much like a Christmas tree:

Jeremiah 10:3-4 For the customs of the people are a delusion; because it is wood cut from the forest,

the work of the hands of the craftsman with a cutting tool. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers so that it will not totter.

I don't wish to pour water on your parade, as many Christians celebrate the season with a pure heart and only wish to honor the Lord Jesus by being in church and being mindful of the beginning of the salvation of the world. Is it wrong to celebrate Christmas even with all the added tinsel and trappings of a man made holiday? You have to decide. Does God condone connecting His Holy Name, Jesus Christ, and a name above every name with a tradition that seeks pleasure of the flesh, but sprinkles in piety to season the stew? I am reminded of a verse that jumps out at me:

"Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them [the pagans in their customs] . . . that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the Eternal, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods" (Deuteronomy 12:30-31).

Jesus says in John 4:24,

4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him

4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth, meaning we must worship to the fullest of God's intent as revealed in His Word, with every act guided and determined by His revealed truth. Yet, how many corners do we cut when we feel it serves us better at the time? We do not add to it, or take away from it.

By blending in different worldly traditions in our misguided attempt to worship and honor God we are missing the mark. The world's theologians call this process syncretism, which means "the combination of different forms of belief or practice; the fusion of two or more original forms." Example is the incident of the Golden Calf found in your bible, that blends the worship of the true God with the worship of false gods, and the result is proclaimed to be worship of which the true God approves. Does God approve? What was the judgment of the Hebrew people when they tried to mix paganism with the worship of Jehovah? Exodus:

32:7 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

32:8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

God intended to wipe the children of Israel away in His hot anger, but Moses interceded for whole of the people, but punishment was instituted by Moses and the tribe of Levi. You can read verses 9-26, which ends with these verses to the judgment that was enacted for their great sin:

32:27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.

32:28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

32:29 For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

32:30 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

God and Moses were deeply offended when the people tried to celebrate the God in their own minds, by redefining Him and controlling Him to their own desires. I've had people tell me that they don't care if Christmas started as a pagan ritual as it's their way of praising God. Is not this person doing the same thing as the Israelites did in the wilderness when they substituted a golden calf, as god of their own desire, for the true God of Heaven? Are we doing the same thing? At this time of the year, let us examine our hearts and minds and determine, are we worshipping God in spirit and in truth, or are we making a god of our own desires as Israel did? I leave it to the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Merry Christmas?

This is pastor Mike Taylor, wish God's salvation in your life though Jesus Christ our Lord. If you have any need for prayer, for counseling, or just to listen, send me an email to realteam1999@sbcglobal.net, God bless you, till we meet at Jesus feet.