**Is Christ The “Reason For The Season?"**

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday November 25th, 2018

Text: I Cor. 2:2; Jn. 12:27, 32

### Intro

1. As Christians we recognize Christmas (Dec. 25th) is NOT a “religious holiday.”
2. But the religious world celebrates it as such, which creates confusion and causes questions.
3. This lesson is designed to answer those questions to strengthen our faith.
4. It’s not a subject talked about normally; most avoid the subject to “Be separate.”
	1. *II Cor. 6:16-17:* “Come out from among them and be separate!”
5. I Cor. 2:2: Paul said, when in Corinth, he taught “Christ crucified.” *(Not “born”)*
6. But we should address questions and concerns as to why we don’t celebrate it as the rest of the world does. (“He is the reason for the season;” “Keep Christ in Christmas”)
	1. Some Christians have nothing to do with it at all; don’t celebrate.
	2. Others celebrate their own family traditions; even call it a “winter holiday.”
	3. My family always celebrated it as the commercial holiday: Santa, elves, reindeer, etc.
	4. We are addressing the errors of it celebrated as a *“religious holiday.”*
7. Jesus emphasized His cross, not the manger; so is Christ the “reason for the season?”

#### History of Christmas

* 1. If Christmas is Christianity’s religious holiday, why is it not talked about or observed in the early church? *(No epistles covering how it is to be observed or practiced)*
	2. 204 A.D.: *‘Commentary on the Prophet Daniel’* by Hippolytus (170-235 A.D.)claimed Wed Mar 25 is when Christ was conceived *(Sun created the 4th day; Mal. 4:2).*
	3. 221 A.D.: Sextus Julius Africanus, a historian from Alexandria, Egypt, composed a chronicle of world events that listed the birth of Jesus on December 25th. *(Conc. Mar 25)*
	4. Saturnalia (Saturn) was the Roman festival of the agricultural god that ran Dec. 17-23.
		1. Started out as a one-day event.
		2. Included role reversals: slaves became “masters” for a day. They didn’t want just “one day” so the festival grew to a week!
		3. Emperors tried to shorten the days and risked revolt.
		4. Caligula tried to shorten it down to 3 days, people near revolted.
		5. Nero tried to shorten it to 5 days, people near revolted.
	5. Saturnalia was replaced by Sol Invictus (The Unconquered Sun), a festival of the sun god on Dec. 25 by Emperor Aurelian (270-275 A.D.) in 274 A.D.
		1. Sol Invictus was on coinage from Aurelian to Constantine (306-337 A.D.), who even proclaimed Sunday (“Day of the Sun”) as a Roman day of rest (321 AD).
		2. Many Catholics were still participating in the pagan festivals so Pope Julius I (337-352 A.D.) declared Dec. 25th a holiday *(Feast of the Nativity)* in 350 A.D. after confirming it was Jesus’ birthday *(from the writings of Sextus Julius),* thus giving Catholics a reason to celebrate. *(Mal. 4:2: “Sun of righteousness”)*
		3. Catholics still defend the decision. Pope Benedict XVI (Dec., 2008), said it is simple math from day of conception on Mar. 25th (Hippolytus in 204 A.D.)
	6. Christmas in the U.S. was sparsely celebrated in the early years of the nation because it was looked at as mostly Catholic.
		1. 1823: “A Visit from St. Nicholas” (‘Twas the Night Before Christmas) by Clement Clarke Moore (or Henry Livingston, Jr.: Authorship dispute ongoing).
			1. Intro of Santa Claus (a Dutch mythological character based on St. Nicholas) and focus on Christmas Eve caused a great stir.
			2. With focus on Christmas Eve, many “Protestants” looked at the holiday with new non-religious eyes, as a family or “child-centered” holiday.
		2. 1939: “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” by Robert L. May (Coloring Booklet) for Montgomery Ward.
			1. Further cemented the figures of Christmas in folklore and holiday mythology with a shift from religious nature celebrated by Catholics.
			2. Santa, the reindeer, the elves, toy shop and North Pole became even more commercialized and seen by many as the “reason for the season.”
	7. It’s interesting:
		1. In the beginning, Catholics developed Christmas to celebrate apart from pagans
		2. Protestants celebrated the folklore of Christmas apart from the religious aspect to be separate from Catholics!
		3. Now the religious world all together celebrates it as a “religious” holiday!
	8. The day of Jesus’ birth is not revealed in Scripture!

#### Some Errors of Christmas Tradition

* 1. Time
		1. Though Scripture does not reveal when Christ was born, it does gives clues that it did not happen in the winter.
		2. Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, would have been serving as priest in the temple 8 weeks after the spring sacred season since he belonged to the course of Abijah, the 8th priestly course to serve in the temple during the Jewish year. (I Chr. 24:10; Lk. 1:5, 8-9) 24 divisions, each served for 1 week *(2 weeks/yr.).*
			1. Conception of John the Baptist took place after his priestly service, 2 months & 1 week after Passover (March-April) in May-June (Lk. 1:23-24) – Passover month was the 1st month of the Jewish year – Ex. 12:2
			2. Mary was told of her coming pregnancy with Jesus in Elizabeth’s 6th month of pregnancy (Lk. 1:26), which would have been Nov-Dec.
			3. John likely was born in the spring, Feb-Mar, and Jesus in the fall six months later, Aug-Sept.
			4. *If Zacharias was in his 2nd shift (Nov. - Dec.) then John born the following Aug. - Sept., and Jesus the next February – March.*
		3. The Shepherds were tending their flocks in the fields at the time of Jesus’ birth (Lk. 2:8-12: Living or staying in the fields at night).
			1. Jewish month of Chislev (Nov. – Dec.) was cold, rainy (Ezra 10:9, 13: People trembled, or shivered; Jer. 36:22: Fire was needed)
			2. Sheep were not kept in the fields at night any later than November 1st.
			3. During the winter months they were kept in sheep-folds, not out in the open fields.
			4. Jesus was born in warmer months.
		4. The date Dec 25th was chosen by men, not appointed by the Lord!
			1. The church, under guidance of the apostles, did not celebrate it.
			2. No mention of His birth date for over 200 years, and no celebration of His birth for over 300 years!
	2. The Nativity
		1. Earliest recorded Nativity Scene was in 343 A.D.
		2. Three wise men bearing gifts visiting the child in the manger.
			1. No one knows the number of wise men, just that there were more than one *(Mt. 2:1-12).*
			2. The number of three is based on their three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Mt. 2:11). Any number could have presented those same gifts.
		3. Their journey was made after Jesus was born (Mt. 2:1) and He wasn’t in a manger but a house (Mt. 2:11). (Herod slew males under 2 yrs. old – Mt. 2:16)
		4. It was the shepherds who came to the manger *(Lk. 2:8-16).*
	3. Sad truth: many in denominations recognize these discrepancies, and freely admit that the Nativity scene is flawed but that they will display it anyways out of honor for His birth!
	4. Christmas as a religious holiday is man-made, not God-ordained!

#### Christ’s Birth Introduced the World’s Savior

* 1. The birth of Christ introduced the world’s Savior & ushered in God’s plan *(Phil. 2:5-11).*
		1. Jesus was pre-existent in the form of God but chose to “empty Himself” and come to earth in the flesh to accomplish the will of God.
		2. *God in the flesh:* Born of a woman: He experienced all aspects of humanity.
		3. *God in the flesh:* Born of the Spirit: He retained His Deity.
	2. The virgin birth was miraculous, confirming to the world that the Savior had come!
		1. Would have been awesome to be there to hear the angel chorus (Lk. 2:13-14)!
	3. Without His birth, there would not be a cross!

#### Emphasis On the Cross, *NOT* the Manger

* 1. The emphasis was on Christ’s cross, not His manger: His birth not a religious holiday!
		1. I Cor. 4:6: “You may learn not to exceed what is written.”
	2. Where did Jesus emphasize His birth?
		1. Mt. 12:38-40: When asked for a sign, He didn’t point to the miraculous nature of His birth, but pointed to His death, burial, and resurrection!
		2. Jn. 12:32: He being “lifted up” would draw all men to Him! (Emphasis: cross)
	3. He predicted His death
		1. Mt. 16:21-23: He predicted His death and resurrection.
	4. He declared His purpose for coming
		1. Jn. 12:27: He was born that He might fulfill the will of God.
	5. Emphasis of Apostles:
		1. Peter – *Acts 2:22-36:* Christ crucified; Acts 4:2: Resurrection.
		2. Paul – *Acts 13:26-39:* Christ crucified; Acts 17:2-3: Death & Resurrection.
		3. Epistles – I Pet. 1:3, 18-19; 2:24; I Cor. 2:2: Christ crucified for our sins!
	6. The cross, *NOT* the manger, reconciled mankind to God!
		1. Eph. 2:13-16: His blood on the cross accomplished reconciliation!
	7. It is His death, burial, and resurrection that is the good news (gospel)! *(I Cor. 15:1-4)*

## Conclusion

1. Christians do not place a particular day of the year on the death of Christ, as we do not His birth, for we celebrate and honor His death & sacrifice every first day of the week!
	1. He set it up that way in the way He wanted to be remembered *(Mt. 26:26-29).*
	2. His whole life, death, burial, and resurrection is remembered every week!
2. We believe He was born (Gal. 4:4) but the emphasis is on His death, burial, & resurrection.
	1. He lived and died so that we may live with Him in eternity!
	2. The cross shows us the enormity of sin, and the depths of God’s love *(Jn. 3:16).*
3. Nothing wrong with celebrating this time of year with family, gift giving, paid days off, and family traditions, but it does “exceed what is written” *(I Cor. 4:6)* to celebrate it religiously.
	1. To celebrate it with family traditions is not pagan: the worshipers of Sol Invictus are long gone, there are no more Romans, and those who worship nature were celebrating solstices long before the Romans, and still do today!
	2. Col. 2:16: Saints can celebrate festivals!
4. “Is Christ the reason for the season?” The reason is man-made (many reasons), thus Christ has nothing to do with it! *(Jn. 12:32: He declared the cross would draw all men to Him!)*
5. Choose to obey Him *(and remember Him)* daily, not just once a year!
6. If you are not a Christian, you need to be to enjoy the blessings of the cross! Obey the gospel!
7. If a Christian in error, Repent & be renewed. Remember from what you have been saved from!
8. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!

**Sources:**

* Sextus Julius Africanus: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08565a.htm>
* [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911\_Encyclop%C3%A6dia\_Britannica/Africanus,\_Sextus\_Julius](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Africanus%2C_Sextus_Julius)
* Date of Christmas on Dec. 25: <http://www.ancient-future.net/christmasdate.html>
* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturnalia>
* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_invictus>
* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twas_the_Night_Before_Christmas>
* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolph_the_red-nosed_reindeer>
* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Claus>
* THE ORIGIN OF AMERICAN CHRISTMAS MYTH AND CUSTOMS: [http://web.archive.org/web/20110430004539/http://www.bsu.edu/web/01bkswartz/xmaspub.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20110430004539/http%3A//www.bsu.edu/web/01bkswartz/xmaspub.html)