

Christ and Christmas

Dub McClish

I received a letter from an out-of-state recipient of the *Granbury Gospel*. Enclosed was a copy of our paper in which I had referred to Christmas by using the abbreviated form, "Xmas." The correspondent inquired, "What happened to Christ?" and stated, "It has always been a pet peeve of ours for anyone to take Christ out of Christmas, especially for a Christian to do so." This inquiry comes at an appropriate time of the year and represents a common and widespread misunderstanding concerning the observance of Christmas as a holy day.

It is wonderful to see and be a part of the spirit of joy and gaiety that always springs up as December 25 approaches. The gift-giving, the holiday spirit, and the attitude of love and good will are all enjoyable and positive. I must confess that I even enjoy decorating a tree and the house for this festive season. However, in all of these activities, I participate, not because I am keeping the birthday of Christ, but because it is a holiday season, like Thanksgiving or July 4th. Now, before I am judged a heathen by our friends, I will explain my rationale for this position.

Who put Christ in Christmas, anyhow? It wasn't God or the apostles. There is not even a hint in all of the Bible that God intended for men to observe the birth of His Son in a special way or on a special day. There is no possible way for any man even to know the day of Jesus' birth, yet God could have easily preserved the exact date had He wanted it celebrated. Rather than celebrating the **birth** of Christ, an irony (by human standards) of the Gospel is that God wants men to celebrate the **death** and **resurrection** of His Son. It is through His death that our redemption is purchased and through His resurrection our hope of eternal life is made real. God did preserve the day on which His people are to specially observe the death of Christ. It is the first day of the week, every week, as His people gather around the Lord's table (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:26).

The observance of December 25 as the birthday of Christ is part of that large mass of human tradition that has grown up around the Gospel through the centuries. "In the 5th century the Western church (Roman Catholic, DM) ordered the feast to be celebrated on the day of the Mithraic rites of the birth of the sun and at the close of Saturnalia, as no certain knowledge of the day of Christ's birth existed" (*Encyclopedia Americana*, V. VI, p. 622). This clearly shows that Christ was never in Christmas until Roman Catholicism put Him there. May

we enjoy this season of the year and keep its spirit alive all year, not because Christ is in Christmas, but because Christ is in us!

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in the December 7, 1978, edition of *Granbury Gospel*, weekly bulletin of the Church of Christ, Granbury, Texas, of which I was editor.]

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