

# Christ and Christmas

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Once I referred to Christmas in a church bulletin article by the abbreviation *Xmas*. One who read the article wrote inquiring, "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 is an appropriate time of the year to discuss this inquiry which 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 these activities, I participate, not because I am keeping the birthday of Christ, but because it is a holiday season, like Thanksgiving or July 4<sup>th</sup>. 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 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 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 and resurrection of Christ. It is the first day of the week, as His people gather around the Lord's table (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-29).

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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 *the Granbury Gospel*, weekly bulletin of the Granbury Church of Christ, Granbury, Texas, of which I was editor.

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