

Christmas – Dec. 2020

An incident that took place on Christmas day a few weeks ago, motivated me to write down what I thought about the celebration of Christmas. A certain lady who testified that she had recently been converted, had her mother in tears because she refused that her children, who were very young, receive the Christmas presents that their grandmother wanted to give to them on Christmas day, because, according to her, Christmas was a heathen celebration. Her conduct caused much unhappiness in her family.

The unscriptural influence on the origin of Christmas and the Christmas tree cannot be denied and research will also confirm that it is unlikely that 25 December is the real date of the birth of Christ Jesus, but because so many people get sentimental about hanging lights and decorating the Christmas tree, I decided when my children were still young, to be very careful not to alienate them and others by having a negative, legalistic attitude towards Christmas. Rather than concentrating on what was wrong, I decided to use the traditional symbolism to emphasise the positive message of salvation through Christ Jesus. For example, by using **Is. 53:2**, which reads:

“For the Servant of the God grew up before Him like a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground...” (Ampl. Bible)

as a point of departure, I explained to my family that to me, the green Christmas tree represents a new beginning in Jesus Christ who was born as baby and who came to make atonement for the sin of the world. The lights that usually decorate the tree, to me symbolise the fact that Jesus came, as the Bible states, to be the Light of the world (**Joh.1:6-9**). It is furthermore easy to associate the traditional star on top of the tree with the star of Bethlehem that led the wise men to the birthplace of Jesus (**Matt.2**). The traditional handing out of the presents that are placed around the tree, reminds us of the presents that the wise men brought to Jesus and it also reminds us of God’s ultimate present, Jesus Christ, who was given to the world to be crucified to make atonement for sin.

The angel figures that are such popular Christmas decorations, remind us of the role that they played as messengers during the time of the birth of Jesus (**Matt.2:13, Luk.2**).

Without making a fuss about it, I explained to my family that it was difficult to determine the exact date of Jesus’ date of birth and because of several reasons, it was probably not 25 December. We as believers though, need not get anxious about having to know the exact date of His birth, for we have the privilege of rejoicing in the fact of His coming everyday of our lives. Although there is no New Testament command prescribing that a specific day must be celebrated as Christ’s birthday, His death must be proclaimed by celebrating communion, which is also known as the Lord’s Supper (**1 Cor. 11**).

I am of the opinion that we as believers should be careful that we do not hurt people during the festive season with a calloused, critical attitude towards Christmas and instead of promoting reconciliation and goodwill, we promote division by majoring on minor issues. Those who condemn the Christmas tradition must just remember that, like someone said:

“Sometimes you might win an argument, but lose a soul.”

In spite of the secularisation and commercial exploitation of Christmas, it is still a time when carols like *Silent Night*, *Joy to the world* and *Away in a manger* can be heard in many places. I do not know of people who sing songs during Christmas time to commemorate gods like Osiris, Semiramis, Ra, Tammuz or St.Nicholas. Most people have not even heard of these names! Although it is true that the singing of carols, for many, has just become a traditional ritual, empty of any spiritual content, the sentimental atmosphere that it creates, provides an opportunity to witness for Christ and present the Gospel message in a diplomatic manner. It is also important to keep in mind that Christmas is one of a few traditions that still bring families together and which presents the opportunity to promote reconciliation and goodwill amongst people.

If one has an issue with Christmas trees and the handing out of presents on Christmas day because of possible heathen associations, to be consistent, one must also be careful and not be involved in using the names of certain days of the week, or some of the names of the months, for they are also associated with certain heathen gods. I have no problem with using the names of Wednesday and Friday, for it does not imply that I revere the heathen gods Wodin and Frig! So also, in the same sense, it does not mean that I worship Mohammed when foods carrying the Halaal sign are found in my pantry! In order to get away from the heathen influence in the world, one will have to get out of it, because Scripture informs us that the whole world is in the power of the evil one (**1 Joh.5:19**). Fortunately Jesus taught that nothing that physically enters us from the outside can make us unclean, for:

"Don't you know that nothing that goes into a person from the outside can make him unclean? Because it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and is expelled as waste." (By this he declared all foods clean.) He continued, "It's what comes out of a person that makes a person unclean, because it's from within, from the human heart, that evil thoughts come, as well as sexual immorality, stealing, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, cheating, shameless lust, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness. All these things come from inside and make a person unclean" (Mark 7:15-23).

For me the problem does not lie in Christians having a Christmas tree and that they hand out of presents on a special day of the year, but in the fact that in many homes Christ is not honoured and served as He should on the other days of the year. Christmas has been hijacked by the secular world for unholy purposes and instead of it being an opportunity to emphasise the Gospel message, it has become a “mas” without Christ. It depends on each person’s personal commitment whether he or she puts Christ back into **Christmas**.

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