

JESUS CHRIST SAID: "THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE." (JOHN 8:32) IS CHRISTMAS BASED ON TRUTH?

***** w04 12/15 pp. 4-7 How Should Jesus Christ Be Remembered? *****

GREAT men are usually remembered for what they did. So why do many remember Jesus for his birth instead of for the things he did? Throughout Christendom, most people can remember the events surrounding his birth. It is true, Jesus' birth was incredible, but his early disciples attached much more importance to what he did and to what he taught. Surely God never intended Christ's birth to overshadow his life as a full-grown man.

If Jesus returned to the earth today, what would he think about the money making side of Christmas? 2,000 years ago, Jesus visited the temple in Jerusalem. He was angry and offended by the money changers and vendors who were taking advantage of a Jewish religious festival to make money. "Take these things away from here!" he demanded. "Stop making the house of my Father a house of merchandise!" (John 2:13-16) Clearly, Jesus did not approve of mixing retail and religion.

How did selling become such a big part of Christmas? The customs of many winter festivals were slowly added to the Roman holiday of Saturnalia where the people worshipped the false god Saturn: they had parties, they ate tons of food, they gave gifts, and they decorated their homes with green trees and plants. Doesn't that sound just like Christmas? As the 20th century rolled around, salesmen were happy to promote any custom that would make them money. What has been the result? The celebration instead of the meaning of Christ's birth has taken the main importance.

In most cases, even the mention of Christ has practically disappeared from the traditional Christmas. "[Christmas] is a world festival, of a family nature, and everyone celebrates what he or she sees in it," observes the Spanish newspaper El País. This comment reflects a growing movement throughout the world: while Christmas celebrations become more fancy, knowledge of Christ disappears. In spirit, Christmas festivities have largely slipped back to what they originally were in Roman times—partying, eating, and the exchanging of presents.

If traditional Christmas has little to do with Christ, how should true Christians remember the life of Christ? Jesus said that the first step is to learn about God and Christ. "This means everlasting life," Jesus said, "their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3. Once we know Jesus well, we no longer need to wonder how he would like us to remember him. Would it be by eating, drinking, and exchanging presents on the same date as an ancient pagan festival?

MAKE YOUR OWN DECISION:

1) Read Exodus 20:2,3 and you decide: Would a worshiper of Jehovah have ANY part in a celebration that is actually an ancient pagan festival to false gods?

2) Read Haggai 2:11-14 and you decide: Can we celebrate an unclean holiday and still worship the true God?

2) Read Matthew 22:37 and you decide: What are the reasons that you do not want anything to do with Christmas?

DID YOU KNOW?

WHERE DO CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS COME FROM?

Celebrated on December 25:

The Babylonians were first to celebrate the winter solstice with a 12-day festival of renewal, designed to help the false god Marduk “tame the monsters of chaos for one more year.” The Encyclopedia of the Catholic Religion (Enciclopedia de la Religión Católica) openly states: “The reason that the Roman Church decided to assign this date to the festival seems to be its tendency to replace pagan festivals with Christian ones. . . . The date of December 25 is the festival of the winter solstice that was celebrated as the birth of ‘the invincible sun’ in Rome.” Do you know how the Romans celebrated this worship to the false sun god? By feasting, partying, and the exchanging of presents. Since church authorities weren’t sure about how to get rid of such a popular festival without making the people mad, they “Christianized” it by simply renaming it as the birth of Jesus instead of the birth of the sun.

MAKE YOUR OWN DECISION:

1) From God’s point of view, what is December 25th in celebration of? Is the exchanging of presents on Christmas just a way to show people that you care?

Santa Claus:

The Oosthoeks Encyclopedia explains that: “Saint Nicholas is actually the pagan god Odin.” The Teutons believed that Odin their chief god, led the souls of the dead on a furious cross-country ride during the “twelve bad days” between December 25 and January 6 – the peak days of winter. Ancient people believed that they could make their gods happy by giving them presents during the cold, dark winter days. This would result in increased fertility for man, animal, and soil.

Odin traveled with his servant: Eckhard (the forerunner of the elves) and the two were believed to fill boots and wooden shoes placed by the chimney with gold. Odin was pictured as a tall person with a white beard. He wore a wide-brimmed hat pulled deeply over his eyes. In his hand he holds a magic spear. He is dressed in a white clothes and rides his loyal gray horse who magically flies through the air.

MAKE YOUR OWN DECISION:

1) Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 and you decide: does Jehovah approve of Santa Claus? Do you?



Christmas Music:

Christmas and its music are not from Jehovah, the God of truth. Then what is their source? Reason should suggest that they are from someone who wants to mislead as many people as possible. The Bible tells us that this is the goal of Satan the Devil. Satan knows the powerful effect music has on humans. In churches and temples around the earth he cleverly hides his God-dishonoring teachings and customs in sweet melodies and lovely lyrics.

If you study the lines of Christmas carols, you will find that they promote superstitious customs. Superstition is when someone believes that doing something will bring you luck from “the gods.” For example, the song “Deck the Halls With Boughs of Holly” is rooted in ancient pagan superstition. Holly was used for good fortune and the berries were kept for luck. Jehovah God does not approve of superstition because they make people slaves to fear and it keeps them from turning to him.

What about Christmas music that sings about Santa Claus? This fake person in a red suit is described to children as all knowing and all seeing. He knows when children are good or bad and he brings materialistic gifts to reward behavior. Such music gives “Santa” the all-knowing quality that *only* Jehovah God possesses. Would parents and children who truly love and respect Almighty God, sing about something so insulting and offensive to him?

MAKE YOUR OWN DECISION:

1) Read Isaiah 42:8 and Isaiah 44:6-8 and then you decide: Why do you think that Satan tries so hard to get people to love and sing Christmas songs?

The Christmas Tree:

In the 1300s, “Adam and Eve’s Day” was celebrated on December 24th each year. Local churches put on plays that told the story of Adam and Eve and their sin in the Garden of Eden. Since there was no way to provide an apple tree in the middle of winter, it was decided that a pine tree with apples tied to its branches would have to serve as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad in the center of the garden. Later, other ornaments were added to it such as “the star of Bethlehem” at the top, which represents the star that Satan used in a plot to try to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:1-12)

Ever since then, the red and green colors, the colors of apples hanging on a pine tree, have been the official colors of Christmas.

MAKE YOUR OWN DECISION:

1) Why do you think that Satan has made the Christmas tree the symbol of this holiday?

New Year’s Eve:

The first of January was dedicated to worship of the Roman god, Janus, the god of “beginnings”. He is pictured with two heads: one looks forward the other looks back, symbolizing a door between the old and the

new. Roman's celebrated the god of the New Year by throwing parties, getting drunk, and engaging in fornication.

The Greeks paraded a baby in a basket to represent the spirit of fertility and today the New Year's symbols are a newborn baby starting the next year and an old man symbolizing the year before.

The Chinese people believed that there are evil spirits around at New Year, so they let off firecrackers to frighten the evil spirits away.

Making a resolution to change some part of one's life dates back to the early Babylonians. They felt that a person could affect the luck they would have throughout the coming year by what they did or ate on the first day of the year.

MAKE YOUR OWN DECISION:

1) Read Jeremiah 8:19 and Jeremiah 44:3,4 and see how serious Jehovah's feelings are about rendering worship to other gods. How does this personally make you feel about New Year's celebrations?

***** DOES THE BIBLE DISCOURAGE FEASTING AND THE GIVING OF GIFTS?*****

The Giving of Gifts:

The Bible approves of the giving of presents, Jehovah himself being called the Giver of "every good gift and every perfect present." (James 1:17) Jesus indicated that good parents would give gifts to their children. (Luke 11:11-13) None of such giving, however, required special days. It stemmed from the heart.—2 Corinthians 9:7.

Family Gatherings:

Family gatherings can do much to unite family members, especially if they no longer live in the same house. Jesus and his disciples attended a wedding feast in Cana, doubtless a large gathering of family and friends. (John 2:1-10) And in Jesus' illustration of the prodigal son, the father celebrated his son's return with a family banquet, which included music and dancing.—Luke 15:21-25.

Enjoying a Good Meal:

The Bible frequently speaks of God's servants as enjoying good food with family, friends, or fellow worshipers. When three angels visited Abraham, he prepared a feast for them that included beef, milk, butter, and round cakes. (Genesis 18:6-8) Solomon described 'eating, drinking, and rejoicing' as a gift from God.—Ecclesiastes 3:13; 8:15.

*Clearly, God wants us to enjoy good food in the company of friends and family,
and he approves of the giving of gifts.
We have plenty of opportunities to do that at any time
throughout the year.*

MY FINAL FEELINGS ABOUT CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S ARE:

FOR MY TEACHER AND CLASSMATES:

***** We Are Not Deprived!*****

Comments have been made by school teachers and others that the children of Jehovah’s Witnesses are deprived by not being allowed to join in the fun of school celebrations of Christmas, Easter, and Halloween. Following is a small sampling of comments of children who are Jehovah’s Witnesses, expressing in letters why they themselves decline to have any part in celebrating these holidays.

“I know that all of the holidays have bad backgrounds. Jesus wasn’t born on Christmas. My family doesn’t have to do anything to compensate for such holidays. My family is always there for me whenever I need them. That is worth more to me than any gift that they could ever give me.”—Josh, age 15.

“Christmas. I’m not deprived because it’s not really Christian anyway. I’d rather know my parents gave me a present than some mysterious Santa figure. “ - Katie, age 10.

“As a youth I have never felt bitter about missing the celebrations of worldly holidays. I have not been told by my parents that ‘you can’t do this or that because you’re one of Jehovah’s Witnesses,’ but I have been familiarized with the Bible and Jehovah’s views on these holidays. As for gifts, in our house, gift-giving is all year long.”—Ryan, age 17.

“I’m going into fifth grade and I’m not sad to admit that I am one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. One time a boy said to me that I must feel bad because I didn’t get any gifts at Christmas, but I said I get gifts all year. Then he said I was lucky. I think there should not be a Jehovah’s Witness who feels sorry about being a Jehovah’s Witness.”—Jeff, age 10.

“My sister and I made celebrating our parents’ anniversary our own family holiday. I got the greatest joy out of planning presents and cards and things and helping my parents plan things to surprise each other than I ever did getting gifts from anyone. Giving is better than receiving.”—Rachel, age 16.

“When I was younger, some holidays were hard for me. But later I realized that the holidays can cause greed, arguments, and sadness. When there are set times for giving, you are never surprised with a gift. I would rather get special gifts at any time of the year. To celebrate or not to celebrate is just a small part of a much larger decision: whether or not to dedicate yourself to serve Jehovah. When I think of it like that, the right choice is clear.”—Ben, age 13.

“I love to get presents, and I do receive them all through the year. I’m not missing much when it comes to parties. I’m making Jehovah happy when I take a stand for the truth.”—Julia, age 12.

“Do I feel deprived? No, because we have other parties, and when people celebrate Christmas, the kids mainly think about Santa Claus, or at Easter they think about the Easter bunny, but I know they are from pagan religions. I like field service because it helps me focus on the truth.”—Sharon, age 8.

“I can honestly say that I have never felt uncomfortable about being one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. My family and I have lots of fun. When there are parties at school my mom takes me out to lunch. My parents bring treats to school for no special reason and all the kids then know we have fun. I’m very close to my parents and when kids ask why I don’t celebrate holidays I tell them that I celebrate every day. How could any Witness feel left out?”—Megan, age 13.

NOW IT’S YOUR TURN:

What are *your* feelings about not celebrating Christmas?
