

December 22, 2019

Christmas Season

The time of the year commonly referred to as “Christmas Season” is upon us. From the standpoint of the time and emphasis it receives, “Christmas **Season**” is a more correct expression than “Christmas **Day**.”

To some, this is a season of much **spiritual** significance. However, the spiritual or religious significance which many attach to it is not based upon the word of God, but rather upon Catholicism and Paganism. Though we, by faith, know that Christ was born of a “*virgin*” (Matt. 1:21-23) we do not know the day nor the time of the year. According to known weather conditions in and around “*Bethlehem of Judea*” (where Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1-5), plus our knowledge of certain events when took place at the time of His birth (“*shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night,*” Luke 2:8), it seems exceedingly **improbable** that Jesus was born in the month we call December. Christ Himself instituted the Lord’s Supper, which is a memorial of His “*death till He come*” (I Cor. 11:23-26), and he authorized that it be observed on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). However, Jesus did not ordain that we observe His **birth**. Hence to borrow a day from Rome, plus all the ensuing Catholic and Pagan corruptions of the same, and then observe such from a **religious** perspective is to go “*beyond the doctrine of Christ*” (2 John 9). This, of course, does not mean that we are unthankful that Christ was born! Indeed, we are most thankful that Jesus was born of a virgin, for apart from the **birth** of Christ, there could have been no **death** of Christ. And apart from His **death**, there could be no “*remission of sins*” (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7). So at **this** time of the year, and at every time of the year we should be thankful for the birth of Christ. But every expression of thanksgiving for Jesus’ birth should be in keeping with what Christ has authorized in the Scriptures (Col. 3:17).

To others, “Christmas Day” is a national holiday which allows families and friends opportunity to be together and to enjoy one another’s company. In an age of travel, such as this, when various members of nearly every family are separated by much distance, the opportunity afforded by a national or legal holiday to be joyfully reunited with loved ones can serve a good purpose. Certainly blood must not flow thicker than faith, but “*the faith*” also demands proper family responsibility on the part of each individual (I Timothy 5), while at the same time directing each to seek “*first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt. 6:33).

This writer does not mean to infer that no Christian can partake of any of the other seasonal practices which, by nature, are inherently right — such as sending greeting cards and exchanging gifts. It is difficult for me to brand practices, which are inherently **right** on July 25 as being inherently **wrong** on Dec. 25, provided that one’s activities does not stem from a sense of **religious** duty, or denote a spiritual significance. It is one thing to send a simple “season’s greeting” card as a gesture of good will, and something else to send a card featuring comments about “the birth of the Christ child.” It is one thing to have simple decorations, and another to erect a manger scene in front of one’s house. In the judgment of this writer, the non-religious observance of this time period in the year is analogous to first century Christians eating meat taken from animals “*offered in sacrifice unto idols.*” The simple eating of the meat was not inherently sinful, provided one was able to “*eat, asking no questions for conscience sake,*” (I Cor. 10:27-28).

On the other hand, there are many faithful Christians who, “*for conscience sake,*” plus

the fear of causing someone to stumble, make a determined effort not to “celebrate” Christmas in **any** sense, either religious or otherwise. I applaud the fact that their convictions are not for sale. In my judgment, this is a realm wherein the principles of Romans 14 should be applied. That chapter deals with matters which are neither commanded nor condemned, but regarding which concerned brethren have conscientious scruples. In that context, neither the meat eater nor the non-meat eater was to condemn the other, and both were to “*follow after things which make for peace*” (Rom. 14:19). By application, we suggest that neither the observer or the non-observer of the **secular** trappings of this season should condemn the other; each should follow the things “*which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another*” (*ibid*).

*** —B. Witherington