

Why We Don't Celebrate Christmas

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I. The origin of Christmas

1. Definitions

- A. Christmas - *etymology* - Late OE. *Cristes mæsse* the mass or festival of Christ. 1. a. The festival of the nativity of Christ, kept on the 25th of December. Usually extended more or less vaguely to the season immediately preceding and following this day, commonly observed as a time of festivity and rejoicing. (Oxford English Dictionary)
- B. Mass - *n.* 1. The Eucharistic service; in post-Reformation use, chiefly that of the Roman Catholic Church.
- C. *Christmas* comes from the Old English *Christ's Mass*. The etymology of the word alone should cause a Christian to stop and think about why he is celebrating a Catholic holiday.

2. Does Christmas come from the Bible?

- A. A quick word search will reveal that the word *Christmas* is not found in the Bible.
- B. Did the apostles celebrate it under a different name?
 - i. The only celebration of the birth of Christ recorded in the Bible was the celebration at the actual event (**Luk 2:7-20**) and around a year and half later by the wise men who came from the east and worshipped Jesus and brought gifts for Him (**Mat 2:1-2, 11**).
 - ii. There is no record of any apostle or any Christian in the Bible celebrating Christmas or the birth of Christ.
 - iii. There is no commandment in the Bible to celebrate Christmas or the birth of Christ.
- C. In that there is no commandment or example in the scripture to celebrate Christmas, the onus is therefore on the person who celebrates it to justify why he does so, not on the person who doesn't celebrate it to justify why he doesn't.
 - i. We often find ourselves defending our refusal to celebrate Christmas with other "Christians" who are questioning us about it.
 - ii. We should start going on the offensive instead of going on the defensive.
 - iii. The next time someone asks you what you are doing for Christmas, instead of saying "I don't celebrate Christmas" and then preparing to defend yourself when they ask why, we should instead respond with, "You celebrate Christmas? Why do you do that since God never commanded you to in the Bible?"
- D. Furthermore, the Biblical account of Jesus' birth shows that it was likely in the fall time (likely early September) because the shepherds were abiding in their fields by night (**Luk 2:8**), which they would not do in the cold, rainy season of winter in Israel (**Son 2:11**).
- E. See sermon called "Luke 1 (Part 1) – Luk 1:1-5" (pastorwagner.com/sermons/luke1-1/) for more information on the date of the birth of Christ.

3. So, if Christmas doesn't come from the Bible, where does it come from?
 - A. One only needs to read the first two sentences of the *Christmas* article in the Encyclopedia Britannica to find out the origin of the holiday.
 - B. "Christmas, on Dec. 25, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, is the most popular commemoration of the church year. Its observance as the birthday of the Saviour is attended with secular customs often drawn from pagan sources; indeed, both Christmas and Epiphany, which falls 12 days later on Jan 6, are transformed pagan celebrations of the winter solstice, and so closely linked that their origins cannot be discussed separately." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.704)

4. Christmas was not celebrated until over 300 years after the birth of Christ.
 - A. "Christmas on Dec. 25 is first known to have been celebrated in Rome in the second quarter of the 4th century, when it commemorated the birth of Christ; there was as yet no Epiphany. In the eastern part of the empire a festival on Jan. 6 commemorated the manifestation (Gr. *epiphaneia*) of God in both the birth and the baptism of Jesus (in Jerusalem, however, only the birth was remembered), and there was as yet no Christmas. In the course of the 4th century the celebration on Dec. 25 was adopted in the east (except in Jerusalem), and became the day when the birth was commemorated, Jan. 6 retaining its connection with the baptism." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.704)
 - B. "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it from their lists of feasts; Origen, glancing perhaps at the discreditable imperial Natalitia, asserts (in Lev. Hom. viii in Migne, P.G., XII, 495) that in the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthday; Arnobius (VII, 32 in P.L., V, 1264) can still ridicule the "birthdays" of the gods." (*Christmas*, [Catholic Encyclopedia](#))

5. December 25th was celebrated in Rome as the birthday of the unconquered sun (Natalis Solis Invicti) before it was hijacked by the Catholics and changed into Christmas.
 - A. "December 25th in Rome. — This was the date of a pagan festival in Rome, chosen in A.D. 274 by the emperor Aurelian as the birthday of the unconquered sun (*natalis solis invicti*), which at the winter solstice begins again to show an increase of light. At some point before A.D. 336 the church at Rome established the commemoration of the birthday of Christ, the sun of righteousness, on this same date." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.704)
 - B. "The idea that Christians chose to celebrate the birth of Jesus on 25 December because this was the date of an already existing festival of the Sol Invictus was expressed in an annotation to a manuscript of a work by 12th-century Syrian bishop Jacob Bar-Salibi. The scribe who added it wrote: "It was a custom of the Pagans to celebrate on the same 25 December the birthday of the Sun, at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and revelries the Christians also took part. Accordingly when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnised on that day.'" (*Sol Invictus*, Wikipedia, 11-3-2015)

- C. "The idea, particularly popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, that the solstice date of 25 December for Christmas was selected because it was also the date of a Roman festival of Dies Natalis Solis Invicti (Birthday of the Unconquered Sun) is challenged by the church." (*Sol Invictus*, Wikipedia, 11-3-2015)
 - D. "The well-known solar feast, however, of Natalis Invicti, celebrated on 25 December, has a strong claim on the responsibility for our December date." (*Christmas*, [Catholic Encyclopedia](#))
 - E. "In A.D. 354, Pope Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun. Christians honoured Christ, instead of Saturn, as the light of the world." (World Book Encyclopedia)
6. Christmas customs are rooted in paganism focused around solar observances.
- A. "Traditional Customs. — The traditional customs connected with Christmas have been derived from several sources as a result of the coincidence of the feast of the Nativity of Christ and the pagan agricultural and solar observances at midwinter. In the Roman world the Saturnalia (Dec. 17-24) was the time of merrymaking and exchange of presents (*see* Saturn). But, though Christmas festivities were indirectly influenced by these customs, the fact that Christmas was celebrated on the birthday of the unconquered sun gave the season a solar background, connected with the kalends of January (Jan. 1, the Roman New Year) when houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and presents were given to children and the poor. To these solstitial observances were added the Germano-Celtic yule rites when the Teutonic tribes penetrated into Gaul, Britain and central Europe. Yuletide brought its own tradition of feasting and mortuary customs, to combine with Roman solstitial and transitional New Year rites. Special food and good fellowship, the Yule log and Yule cakes, greenery and fir trees, wassailing, gifts and greetings, all commemorated different aspects of this festive season. Fires and lights, symbols of warmth and lasting life, have always been associated with the winter festival, both pagan and Christian. Evergreens, as symbols of survival, have a long association with Christmas festivities, probably dating from the 8th century when St. Boniface completed the Christianization of Germany and dedicated the fir tree to the Holy Child to replace the sacred oak of Odin." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.705)
 - B. Santa Claus is the reincarnation of Odin, a false Scandinavian god.
 - i. "Odin, one of the principal gods in Scandinavian mythology. ... The Roman historian Tacitus states that the Teutons worshiped Mercurius; and, if only because of the identity of *dies mercurii* (Mercury's Day) with Wednesday (Woden's day), there can be little doubt that the god Woden whose name was the earlier form of Odin is meant. ... Odin is the great magician among the gods and is associated with runes. In outward appearance he is a tall, old man, with flowing beard and only one eye. A wide-brimmed hat covers part of his face, and he wears a cloak." (*Odin*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 16, p.864)

- ii. "Only with great caution should the mysterious benefactor of Christmas night — Knecht Ruprecht, Pelzmärtel on a wooden horse, St. Martin on a white charger, St. Nicholas and his "reformed" equivalent, Father Christmas — be ascribed to the stepping of a saint into the shoes of Woden, who, with his wife Berchta, descended on the nights between 25 December and 6 January, on a white horse to bless earth and men. Fires and blazing wheels starred the hills, houses were adorned, trials suspended and feasts celebrated (cf. Bonaccorse, op. cit., p. 151). Knecht Ruprecht, at any rate (first found in a mystery of 1668 and condemned in 1680 as a devil) was only a servant of the Holy Child." (*Christmas*, [Catholic Encyclopedia](#))

C. Many of the customs of the Roman festival Saturnalia were incorporated into the Christmas holiday.

- i. "His [Saturn] great festival, the *Saturnalia*, became the most popular of the Roman festivals, and its influence is still felt throughout the western world. Originally on Dec. 17, it was extended first to three and eventually to seven days. The date has been connected with the winter sowing season, which in modern Italy varies from October to January. Remarkably like the Greek Kronia (*see* Cronus), it was the gayest festival of the year. All work and business were suspended. Slaves were given temporary freedom to say and do what they liked, and certain moral restrictions were eased. The streets were infected with a Mardi Gras madness; a mock king was chosen (*Saturnalicus princeps*); the seasonal greeting *io Saturnalia* was heard everywhere; presents were freely exchanged, principally wax candles and little clay dolls (*sigillaria*). The cult statue of Saturn himself, traditionally bound at the feet with wooden bands, was untied, presumably to come out and join the fun. The influence of the *Saturnalia* upon the celebrations of Christmas and the New Year has been direct." (*Saturn*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 19, p.1088)
- ii. "How much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia [Dec.25] following Saturnalia [Dec.17-24], and celebrating the shortest day of the year and the 'new sun'cannot be accurately determined. The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence....The pagan festival with its riot and merry making was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit and in manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Near East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun-worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival." (New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge)

D. The Roman Catholic Church is known for transforming paganism into Catholicism.

- i. "Do not destroy the temples of the English gods; change them to Christian churches. Do not forbid the harmless customs which have been associated

with the old religions; consecrate them to Christian uses." (Pope Gregory to Augustine, 597 A.D.)

- ii. "The most respectable bishops had persuaded themselves, that the ignorant rustics would more cheerfully renounce the superstitions of Paganism, if they found some resemblance, some compensation, in the bosom of Christianity. The religion of Constantine achieved, in less than a century, the final conquest of the Roman Empire: but the victors themselves were insensibly subdued by the arts of their vanquished rivals." (The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Edward Gibbon)

7. Christmas was not celebrated in America by Christians until the middle of the 19th century.

- A. "In the United States traditional Christmas customs were at first suppressed (as in England under the Commonwealth), because of the Puritan objection to them as pagan in origin, but since the middle of the 19th century the celebrations have become increasingly popular and commercialized. Christmas is traditionally regarded as the festival of the family and of children under the name of whose patron, St. Nicolas (*q.v.*), presents are given." (*Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 5, p.705)
- B. Christmas was outlawed in Boston on May 11, 1659.
- C. "For preventing disorders arising in severall places within this jurisdiceon, by reason of some still observing such ffestivalls as were superstitiously kept in other countrys, to the great dishonour of God & offence of others, it is therefore ordered ... that whosoever shall be found observing any such day as Christmas or the like, either by forbearing of labour, feasting, or any other way, upon any such account as aforesaid, every such person so offending shall pay for every such offence five shillings, as a fine to the county." (*When Christmas Was Banned In Boston*, [American Heritage](#))

8. Muslims have more understanding of Christmas than most Christians do.

- A. The following is from the Islamic website AboutIslam.net.
- B. "Christmas was a pagan custom which was adopted into Christianity; it has nothing to do with reverence and love of Jesus, the mighty Messenger of Allah that we Muslims hold in the highest regard and respect. If Jesus were to come today, whether or not he would identify himself with those who celebrate Christmas is a question one should ask seriously." (Can Muslims Celebrate Christmas?, [AboutIslam.net](#), 12-24-2023)

II. What saith the scripture about honoring God by incorporating pagan practices into His religion?

1. As the aforementioned quotes demonstrate, the practices and customs of Christmas are merely the imitation of the ancient pagan festivals of Natalis Solis Invicti and Saturnalia which the Catholic church adopted into their religion.
 - A. The scripture forbids such wickedness.

- B. God foresaw men's propensity to worship Him like the heathen do and prohibited it in the law of Moses (**Deu 12:29-32**).
- i. God specifically forbade Israel from serving Him like the nations whom they conquered served their gods (**Deu 12:30**).
 - ii. They were to worship Him exactly how He commanded them, and they were not to add to it nor take from it (**Deu 12:32**).
 - iii. False religion should be destroyed, not embraced, imitated, or incorporated into God's religion (**Exo 34:12-15; Deu 7:5; Lev 18:3**).
 - iv. By learning the way of the heathen, Israel ended up sacrificing their children to devils (**Psa 106:34-38**), just as God warned would happen (**Deut 12:31**).
 - v. Christians may not know or remember the wickedness of the heathen religions that worshiped the sun and sacrificed their children, but God does.
 - vi. They should think about that the next time they celebrate Natalis Solis Invicti under the pretense of celebrating the birth of Christ.
- C. God doesn't want His people to learn the way of the heathen (**Jer 10:2-4**).
- i. What does this sound like to you? A Christmas tree?!
 - ii. What does God say about Christmas trees? Learn not the way of the heathen!
 - a. Green trees have been associated with pagan idolatry since ancient times.
 - b. God hates worship done with green trees (**1Ki 14:22-24; 2Ki 17:10-12; Jer 2:20**).
 - c. Cheap artificial trees that won't rot are no better (**Isa 40:19-20**).
 - d. Child sacrifice accompanied worshiping under green trees (**2Ki 16:3-4; Isa 57:5**).
 - e. Is it any wonder that abortion (child sacrifice) is rampant in a society that is enamored with Christmas and its green tree worship?
 - iii. Israel learned the way of the heathen when Aaron made them a golden calf and then proclaimed that it would be used in a feast unto the LORD (**Exo 32:5-6**).
 - iv. Paul called that practice of incorporating heathenism into God's religion idolatry and forbids Christians from doing such evil (**1Co 10:7**) (more on this later).
- D. Not learning the way of the heathen is also a NT precept.
- i. We are not to do as the heathen do (**Mat 6:7**).
 - ii. We are not to be yoked with unbelievers, nor their idolatrous religions (**2Co 6:14-18**).
 - iii. The things that the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God (**1Co 10:20-21**).
 - a. The Romans who worshiped the sun during Natalis Solis Invicti were worshipping devils.
 - b. Christians who celebrate Christmas, which is Natalis Solis Invicti renamed, are worshipping devils.
 - c. You can't have it both ways; you're either worshipping devils or God.

- d. God hated sun worship so much that it was punished by death in the law of Moses (**Deu 17:2-5**).
- iv. We are to do all things whatsoever Jesus commanded us (**Mat 28:20**).
 - a. If we do all things Jesus commands, we can't leave anything out.
 - b. If we do whatsoever he commands, we can't add in anything extra.
 - c. We are to keep the ordinances as delivered (**1Co 11:2**).
 - d. Christmas was never commanded by Jesus or the apostles, and in that it's a religious observance, it ought not to be done.
- E. God will severely judge those who mix elements of His religion with heathen religion and sin (**Dan 5:1-6 c/w Dan 5:22-31**).
- F. Do-it-yourself religion is not pleasing to God (**1Ki 12:28-33**).
- G. God warns us against the celebration of religious holydays (holidays) (**Col 2:14-17; Gal 4:8-10**).
- H. When you find something that the world loves, you have likely found something that God hates.
 - i. Things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God (**Luk 16:15**).
 - a. Shouldn't it seem strange to Christians that atheists, agnostics, and many other unbelievers all love Christmas?
 - b. You can bet that if the Bible commanded people to celebrate Christmas, the world would hate it.
 - c. The fact that the world loves Christmas is good evidence that God hates it.
 - ii. When the two witnesses in Rev 11 (possibly God's word and His church) have lost all their influence, the world starts celebrating Christmas (**Rev 11:10**).
- I. We are hypocrites if we condemn the idolatrous practices of other religions and at the same time incorporate them into our own (**Rom 2:1; Rom 2:21-22**).

III. The celebration of Christmas is a form of idolatry which church members must abstain from.

1. As the above quotes show, Christmas is a “Christianized” version of a sun-worshipping pagan holiday.
2. Christmas is essentially Baal worship, since Baal was the sun god.
 - A. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) says the following about Baal.
 - i. "bā'al (לַבַּעַל, ba'al; Βάαλ, Báal, or Βαάλ, Baál): The Babylonian Belu or Bel, “Lord,” was the title of the supreme god among the Canaanites." (*Baal*, ISBE)
 - ii. "The Babylonian Bel-Merodach was a Sun-god, and so too was the Can Baal whose full title was Baal-Shemaim, “lord of heaven.” The Phoenician writer Sanchuniathon (Philo Byblius, Fragmenta II) accordingly says that the children of the first generation of mankind “in time of drought stretched forth their hands to heaven toward the sun; for they regarded him as the sole Lord of heaven, and called him Beel-samēn, which means 'Lord of Heaven' in the Phoenician language and is equivalent to Zeus in Greek” Baal-

Shemaim had a temple at Umm el-Awamid between Acre and Tyre, and his name is found in inscriptions from the Phoenician colonies of Sardinia and Carthage." (*Baal*, ISBE)

- iii. "As the Sun-god, Baal was worshipped under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshippers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being. Hence, human victims were sacrificed to him in order to appease his anger in time of plague or other trouble, the victim being usually the first-born of the sacrificer and being burnt alive. In the Old Testament this is euphemistically termed "passing" the victim "through the fire" (2Ki 16:3; 2Ki 21:6). The forms under which Baal was worshipped were necessarily as numerous as the communities which worshipped him. Each locality had its own Baal or divine "Lord" who frequently took his name from the city or place to which he belonged. Hence, there was a Baal-Zur, "Baal of Tyre"; Baal-hermon, "Baal of Hermon" (Jdg 3:3); Baal-Lebanon, "Baal of Lebanon"; Baal-Tarz, "Baal of Tarsus." At other times the title was attached to the name of an individual god; Thus we have Bel-Merodach, "the Lord Merodach" (or "Bel is Merodach") at Babylon, Baal-Melkarth at Tyre, Baal-gad (Jos 11:17) in the north of Palestine. Occasionally the second element was noun as in Baal-Shemaim, "lord of heaven," Baalzebub (2Ki 1:2), "Lord of flies," Baal-Hammān, usually interpreted "Lord of heat," but more probably "Lord of the sunpillar," the tutelary deity of Carthage. All these various forms of the Sun-god were collectively known as the Baalim or "Baals" who took their place by the side of the female Ashtaroth and Ashtrim. At Carthage the female consort of Baal was termed Penē-Baal, "the face" or "reflection of Baal." (*Baal*, ISBE)

3. The church must separate from idolators (**1Co 5:11**).

- A. Idolator *n.* – 1. A worshipper of idols or images; one who pays divine honours to an image or representation of a god, or to any natural object as a deity.
- B. An idol can be something that represents God and is used to worship God, such as was the golden calf that Aaron made and then proclaimed that "to morrow is a feast to the LORD" (**Exo 32:5-6 c/w 1Co 10:7**).
- C. Incorporating paganism into God's religion is therefore idolatry.
- D. One can (but should not) serve the LORD and at the same time serve false gods like Baal.
 - i. In Samuel's day, Israel had been worshipping Baal and Ashtoreth AND the LORD (**1Sa 7:3-4**).
 - ii. In other words, Israel had been incorporating pagan sun worship with the worship of the true God.
 - iii. This is precisely what celebrating Christmas is: incorporating pagan sun worship with the worship of the true God.
 - iv. If Israel were to be saved from their enemies, it would only be by forsaking their pagan worship and worshipping God only.
 - v. If churches are to be spared judgment, it will be by forsaking pagan worship and worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.

- vi. Judgment must begin in the house of God (**1Pe 4:17**).
- vii. If Christians will not stop polluting God's holy name (referring to a sun-worshipping holiday using God's name, *Christmas*) with their *gifts* (Christmas gifts) and *idols* (Christmas trees), then God's counsel to them is to go serve their idols and leave Him out of it (**Eze 20:39**).
- E. Additionally, covetousness—which is idolatry (**Col 3:5; Eph 5:5**)—is a driving force behind the celebration of Christmas.
- F. Those who are commonly known to practice idolatry by incorporating paganism into God's religion, such as celebrating Christmas (pagan sun worship), will be put out of the church (**Gal 5:19-21**).

IV. What constitutes celebrating Christmas?

1. Doing the following things would definitely be considered celebrating Christmas.
 - A. Having a Christmas tree in your home
 - B. Decorating your house for Christmas
 - C. Taking kids to see Santa Claus
 - D. Giving or receiving gifts on or close to Christmas day that are obviously intended to be Christmas gifts
 - E. Christmas caroling
 - F. Going to Christmas parties of companies or organizations
 - i. If it's called a *Christmas* party or is decorated with Christmas things, don't go.
 - ii. If it's an end of the year party and it is not Christmas themed, it may be okay to go.
 - G. Having Christmas dinner with family if they are getting together for the celebration of Christmas
 - H. Participating in civic Christmas celebrations
2. What about going home for Christmas or getting together with family at that time of year?
 - A. Many people have time off of work at Christmas time, and some would like to travel to see family at that time.
 - B. Church members sometimes ask if doing this is permissible.
 - C. The answer is: it depends.
 - i. If your family is getting together on December 25th for the purpose of celebrating Christmas, you should not attend that gathering.
 - a. If you attend such a gathering, you will be giving the impression to your family or other observers that you approve of celebrating Christmas.
 - b. A family member who might have a secret conscience issue with celebrating Christmas could be led to violate his conscience and continue to celebrate Christmas because he sees you doing it.
 - c. This is similar to being invited to a feast at an idol's temple.
 - (i) Even though we know that an idol is nothing (**1Co 8:4**), some people without that knowledge might eat the food as it were offered to an idol and defile their conscience (**1Co 8:7-12**).
 - (ii) Therefore, we should abstain from eating meat sacrificed to idols or eating meat in an idol's temple because of the

construction others might put on it (**1Co 8:13; 1Co 10:28-33**).

- d. The same reasoning applies to going to a Christmas dinner with one's family.
 - e. We should abstain from doing so because it might give them the impression that it's okay to celebrate Christmas.
 - ii. If your family is getting together on December 25th simply because they all have the day off of work, and they are not doing so to celebrate Christmas, then it would be fine to go.
 - iii. If you want to travel to see family at Christmas time during your vacation time, plan your trip so that you are not there on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day when they are exchanging gifts and celebrating the holiday.
 - iv. If for some reason you must be at a family member's house during a Christmas celebration, make it clear to everyone that you do not celebrate Christmas and go to another room of the house while they partake of their pagan festivities.
3. What about receiving a gift from a family member around the time of Christmas?
- A. Again, it depends on the circumstances.
 - i. If the gift(s) is given on or near Christmas, wrapped in Christmas wrapping paper, and accompanied by a "Merry Christmas" greeting, this would obviously be unacceptable. Such gifts must be refused.
 - ii. If, for instance, it is a (non-Christmas) calendar sent to you in the beginning of December with no wrapping paper and no Christmas greeting, and if the person who sent it to you knows you do not celebrate Christmas and in his or her heart is *not* giving you a Christmas gift, then it is fine. My mother does this every year, and I have no problem with it.
 - iii. If your parents send you several gifts (or even more than one) in December, you should strongly suspect that they are doing so for Christmas because most people do not send someone multiple gifts for no reason. In such a case, you should most likely decline the gifts and tell them to not send any more in the future or they will be thrown away or returned.
 - B. Discernment is necessary on this one.
 - C. If you decide to accept a gift near the end of the year, just make sure that the giver knows in no uncertain terms that you do not celebrate Christmas, and that you can with a pure conscience accept it without a question in your mind (**Rom 14:22-23; 1Ti 1:5, 19; 2Ti 1:3**).
4. What about giving or receiving gifts on New Years Day?
- A. Some Christians who do not celebrate Christmas choose to give gifts to their children on New Years Day or New Years Eve.
 - B. While this may not technically be celebrating Christmas, a Christian should ask himself, "if there was no Christmas, would I be giving gifts to my children on New Years?"
 - i. If the answer is "no," then Christmas is the reason for giving gifts on New Years, in which case New Years has become Christmas under a different name, and therefore it should not be celebrated.

- ii. If the answer is truly “yes,” then it would be okay to give gifts on New Years. However, such a Christian should do some serious soul-searching and ask himself why he has chosen to give his children gifts on New Years. While performing this introspection, beware of the all-too-common practice of self-deception.
- C. I have been at the home of Christians over New Years when they were giving their children gifts; and to me, it looked just like Christmas morning without the tree.
- D. Beware of postponing some Christmas festivities by a few days in order to find a loophole in the law.

V. Answering arguments for celebrating Christmas

1. “You celebrate Thanksgiving and other holidays, so why can’t you celebrate Christmas?”

A. Celebrating non-pagan, secular holidays is fine.

i. Jesus attended the feast of the dedication, otherwise known as Hanukkah (**Joh 10:22-23**).

- a. This was a national holiday in Israel which celebrated the cleansing and rededication of the temple when the Maccabees defeated Antiochus Epiphanes who had taken control of the temple and polluted it with idolatry.
- b. “Hanukkah; [HAHN-uh-kuh; ‘dedication’]. The eight-day festival celebrating the completed cleansing of the defiled Temple in 164 B.C. after the victory of Judas Maccabaeus over the Seleucids in 167 B.C. The festival is mentioned only in Jn. 10:22, where it is called the ‘Feast of Dedication.’ Hanukkah is still celebrated annually by the Jewish people. Today it is called the Festival of Lights, commemorating the story of the flame which burned for eight days in the Temple lampstand despite the fact there was only one day’s supply of oil.” (*Hanukkah*, The Revell Bible Dictionary, p. 468)
- c. Jesus attending the Feast of the Dedication would be akin to Americans celebrating Independence Day.

ii. Celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday is also fine because it is not a pagan holiday, nor is it a “Christianized” holiday which is part of our religion or worship of God.

B. What about other holidays which have pagan origins such as Valentine’s Day, etc.?

i. Whether or not a holiday has pagan roots is not what determines whether a Christian can celebrate it, but rather if the holiday has been incorporated into the worship of God (**Deut 12:29-32**).

- a. Valentine’s Day originated in paganism, but it is not incorporated into the worship of God; therefore, it doesn’t fall under the same scriptural censure as Christmas and Easter.
- b. I personally do not celebrate Valentine’s Day, and I do not recommend that church members do either, but I cannot forbid it as your pastor.

ii. Paganism has seeped into our culture in many areas.

- iii. The names of the days of the week and some of the months of the year are named after pagan gods (see series on Pagan Names - <https://pastorwagner.com/holidays/#pagan-names>).
 - a. Is it wrong for Christians to call the days of the week or months of the year by the names of pagan gods?
 - b. The issue comes down to whether doing or saying a thing is an act of worship or honoring God or not.
 - c. Using pagan names for the days of the week or the months of the year is not an act of worship.
 - d. Many Bible characters in both the Old and New Testament were named after pagan gods (see Pagan Names series).
 - e. Using the pagan names for the days of the week and months of the year is no more an act of worship of pagan gods than is calling Daniel, Belteshazzar; Hananiah, Shadrach; Mishael, Meshach; Azariah, Abednego; Hadassah, Esther; and Apollo, Artemas, Hermas, Hermes, and Zenas by those names which were given to them after the names of pagan gods.
 - iv. Celebrating Valentine’s Day or other holidays which are said to have pagan origins is not an act of worship of God, but honoring the birth and death of Christ by keeping the pagan holidays of Christmas and Easter is, and therefore it must not be done.
2. “You celebrate other peoples’ birthdays, so why can’t you celebrate Jesus’ birthday?”
- A. It is not wrong for a man to celebrate his own birthday.
 - i. There is no prohibition of birthday celebrations in the Bible.
 - ii. Just because there are examples in the Bible of the wicked celebrating their birthdays (**Gen 40:20; Mat 14:6**) doesn’t mean that it’s wrong to do so. The wicked do all kinds of things that are lawful to do.
 - iii. It appears that Job’s children celebrated their birthdays (“his day”) (**Job 1:4 c/w Job 3:1-3**).
 - iv. Job offered a sacrifice for them in case they had sinned during the feasting and cursed God in their hearts (**Job 1:5**), but it does not say that they sinned by celebrating “every one his day.”
 - v. Therefore, I see no Biblical reason why a Christian cannot celebrate his or another’s birthday.
 - B. What about celebrating Jesus’ birthday?
 - i. If a person wanted to set aside a day of the year to remember the birth of Christ, there would be nothing wrong with that (see next section on Romans 14).
 - ii. But to celebrate Jesus’ birth by celebrating a pagan sun-worshiping holiday which God hates is another thing altogether.
 - iii. Furthermore, who celebrates someone’s birthday by giving everyone gifts except he whose birthday it is?
3. “Romans 14 says that we have liberty to celebrate any day we want to the Lord, so celebrating Christmas is fine.”

- A. Appealing to Romans 14 is a common objection offered by professing Christians who want to celebrate Christmas despite knowing that it is a “Christianized” pagan holiday.
- B. They say that we are at liberty to esteem one day above another as long as we regard that day unto the Lord (**Rom 14:5-6**).
 - i. They claim that they esteem December 25th above other days and celebrate the birth of Christ on that day to the Lord.
 - ii. They say that we should not judge them for it (**Rom 14:10, 13**).
- C. There is a fatal flaw in this argument.
 - i. One verse of scripture cannot be interpreted by isolating it from the rest of scripture.
 - a. No verse of scripture is to be privately interpreted apart from the rest of the body of scripture (**2Pe 1:20**).
 - (i) Private – 1. Withdrawn or separated from the public body
 - (ii) Interpretation *n.* – 1. a. The action of interpreting or explaining; explanation, exposition.
 - b. To be properly understood, a verse must be compared with other verses in the Bible that weigh in on the topic under consideration (**1Co 2:13; Isa 28:9-10**).
 - ii. The liberty to esteem one day above another is not the liberty to practice idolatry on that day “to the LORD” (**Exo 32:2-6 c/w Neh 9:18 c/w 1Co 10:7 c/w Act 7:41**).
 - iii. It is not the liberty to worship God the way that the heathen worship their gods on that day (**Deut 12:29-32; Jer 10:2-4; 1Co 10:20-21**).
 - iv. Romans 14 also gives Christians the liberty to eat whatever they want, to the Lord (**Rom 14:6 c/w Rom 14:2-3**).
 - a. However, it does not give them the liberty to eat blood unto the Lord, because eating blood is elsewhere forbidden in scripture (**Act 15:20, 29; Act 21:25; Gen 9:4; Lev 7:26-27; Lev 17:10; Deut 15:23**).
 - b. Just as Romans 14 does not permit a Christian to eat blood because eating blood is elsewhere prohibited in scripture; likewise, Romans 14 does not permit a Christian to celebrate a “Christianized” pagan holiday because doing so is prohibited in scripture.
- D. What is Romans 14 condoning?
 - i. Romans 14 permits a Christian to set aside a particular day and regard it to the Lord.
 - a. This could be selecting a particular day to spend thinking about God’s provision and praising Him for it.
 - b. This could be celebrating the anniversary of one’s baptism or of the founding of one’s local church.
 - c. This could even be selecting a day in the beginning of September and remembering the birth of Christ on that day by reading the account of His birth in the Bible and spending time in prayer thanking God for sending His Son into the world.
 - ii. As has already been stated, Romans 14 is not condoning celebrating a pagan sun-worshipping holiday with a Christian name.

4. “Colossians 2:16 says to not let anyone judge you in respect of an holyday (holiday), so Christians should not let someone judge them for celebrating the Christmas holiday.”
 - A. Col 2:16 is referring to Jesus taking away the law of Moses when He died on the cross and abolished it (**Col 2:14 c/w Eph 2:15 c/w 2Co 3:6-14**).
 - i. The Pharisees had been infecting the Gentile churches and trying to bring them under Moses’ law which was a yoke of bondage (**Act 15:1, 5**).
 - ii. Paul and the other apostles had contended with them and determined that the Gentile Christians did not need to keep the law of Moses (**Act 15:2, 7-11, 19-20**).
 - iii. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (**Rom 11:13**), was writing to Gentile Christians in the church at Colosse and telling them to not let anyone judge them concerning ordinances of the law of Moses — which was abolished by Christ, and which Gentiles were never under in the first place — including meat and drink (the dietary law), holydays (the Old Testament feast days), new moons (Old Testament feast days – **Psa 81:3-4**), and sabbath days (only given to Israel – **Exo 31:12-17**) in **Col 2:16**.
 - iv. Those things in the law of Moses were a shadow of Christ (**Col 2:17**), and when Christ came, they were fulfilled and done away with.
 - B. Col 2:16 is telling Gentiles to not let anyone judge them for NOT KEEPING JEWISH HOLYDAYS which were fulfilled and taken away by Christ.
 - C. Col 2:16 is *not* telling Gentiles to not let anyone judge them for KEEPING the “Christianized” pagan holidays like Christmas and Easter.
 - D. Using Col 2:16 to justify the celebration of Christmas and to condemn those who judge one for doing so is the pinnacle of Biblical ignorance and wresting of the scriptures.

VI. How should we celebrate the birth of Christ?

1. Since God has not commanded us to celebrate the birth of Christ, then there should be no formal celebration of it.
 - A. Creating a formal celebration of it would be do-it-yourself religion by inventing a celebration that we think God might like.
 - B. This would be adding to Jesus’ commandments, which is forbidden (**Mat 28:20**).
2. There is, however, a way to celebrate the birth of Christ Biblically.
 - A. We can do this *every day* by honoring Jesus Christ and showing our love for Him by keeping His commandments (**Joh 14:15, 21**).
 - B. This includes believing on Him, repenting of our sins, and being baptized in His name (**Act 2:37-38**).
 - C. This includes making our best effort to always obey Him and do what He says in His word (**Luk 6:46**).
 - D. When we do this, we honor Jesus Christ who was born into this world to be our Lord and Savior.