

PLAIN SPEECH

Volume 3 – Issue 10 – 20 December 2009

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

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COMMON MISTAKES MADE AT CHRISTMAS TIME

In five days millions will be “doing” Christmas. I used to believe otherwise; but, in the final analysis, whether or not individuals “do” Christmas is up to them (**Rom. 14:1-5**). However, don’t get it twisted! Just because one is authorized to set apart a day for relaxing and gift giving doesn’t mean one may mistake liberty for license. Yet, many people do confuse the two and end up embroiled in all sorts of error at Christmas time. This article will underscore some of these common mistakes.

One common mistake people make at Christmas time is believing that Dec. 25th is Jesus’ birthday. While the Bible is silent regarding the exact date of Christ’s entry into the world, it’s equally true that Dec. 25th is not the logical choice based upon the biblical clues we have. Relative to the birth of Christ the Bible reads: “*And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”* (**Lk. 2:7-11**). Those who know anything about the workings of that part of the world know shepherds and their sheep leave the fields for the sheepfold long before what we today call Dec. 25th.

Another common mistake people make at Christmas time is believing that people should attach religious significance to Dec. 25th by commemorating Christ’s birth on said day. Just look at all the nativity scenes out there to see this mistake in action (which are themselves a perversion of scriptures – **cf. Mt. 2:1-11**). Now listen, I realize the day Christ was born was a joyous day (**Lk. 2:7-11**). Further, I realize the birth of Christ is important since it’s mentioned in scripture (**Mt. 1:18**). However, the same scriptures do not tell us to set aside a certain day to remember our Lord’s birth. Quite the contrary! The New Testament tells Christians to remember the Lord’s death on a special day – every first day of the week (**Ax. 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-25**).

Still another common mistake people make at Christmas time is believing that Christmas is something we read about in the Bible. Folks, you can read the Bible from cover to cover six million times and you’ll never find a reference to Christmas. In fact, rather than being from the mind of God, Christmas stems from paganism. This fact is well documented. For instance, Lawrence Kelemen, in his paper The Real Story of Christmas, writes, “*Roman pagans first introduced the holiday of Saturnalia, a week long period of lawlessness celebrated between December 17-25.... In the 4th century, Christianity imported the Saturnalia festival hoping to take the pagan masses in with it. Christian leaders succeeded in converting to Christianity large numbers of pagans by promising them that they could continue to celebrate the Saturnalia as Christians. The problem was that there was nothing intrinsically Christian about Saturnalia. To remedy this, these Christian leaders named Saturnalia’s concluding day, December 25th, to be Jesus’ birthday.*” Many other examples could be given. No, Christmas cannot be read about in the Bible. Even the “Christmassy” Catholic Church knows this (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03724b.htm>).

Still another common mistake people make at Christmas time is incorporating Christmas into the setting of the local church. We’ve seen that Christmas is not from the Word of God. Therefore, if brought into the context of the local church, sin occurs (**Rev. 22:18**). Further, we’ve seen that Christmas must not be celebrated as the birthday of Christ. The benefits of Christmas, then, must find their fulfillment on a purely social level. Social activity is not an authorized work of local churches (**Col. 3:17**). Thus, anything connected to Christmas must be kept away from the context of local churches. Many “brethren” do not get this.

Still another common mistake people make at Christmas time is seeking to bind their weak consciences on others (I’ve been there). Amongst members of the church (and I use that expression very loosely here) it’s common to find people condemning others to hell (at least privately) who set aside Dec. 25th as a day for family and fun. The statements made go like this: “*Christmas is pagan*” or “*1 Thess. 5:22 forbids Christmas.*” Christmas is pagan in origin. So are many things in our society; i.e. our calendar (Sun-day, Moon-day, Thor’s-day) and arena sports. No one I know who uses the pagan argument is consistent. Why do they not condemn others to hell who go to an NFL football game on Moon-day night? God does not forbid us from engaging in something just because of its pagan roots (**1 Cor. 8:1-8**). As for **1 Thess. 5:22**, it must be interpreted in view of the principles outlined in **Rom. 14** and **1 Cor. 8-10**, not by the conscience of some “conservative.” While we need to handle our freedoms properly, we also need to remember that they are just that – freedoms - freedoms which God allows.

Other common mistakes people make at Christmas time, to name just a few, include: lying to their children (**Rev. 21:8**), over-emphasizing the material (**Col. 3:1-2**), blowing off the assembly (**Heb. 10:24-25**), attending drinking parties (**1 Pet. 4:1-4**), and thinking that Christmas unity equates to Christian unity (**1 Cor. 1:10; Jer. 6:14**).