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## **Christians & Christmas**



*“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ which means, ‘God with us.’ ”*

*Matthew 1:22-23 NIV*

## Christians & Christmas

Isaiah 7:14 (NIV) *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.”*

Matthew 1:18-25 (NIV) *“<sup>18</sup>This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, **but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.** <sup>19</sup>Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup>But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, **because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.** <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him **the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.**’ <sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup>‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, **and they will call him Immanuel’ which means, ‘God with us.**’ <sup>24</sup>When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup>**But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.**”*

For many, December 25th, the day we call Christmas has become a source of much confusion. This is because many have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas and have gotten caught up in the bright lights, glittery trees, the excitement of children and the mad push seen in shopping malls by those buying gifts. However, contrary to the opinions of some, and the confusion surrounding Christmas day, Christmas is a time Christians have set apart to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In fact, if you don't believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and if Jesus is not your Lord and Savior, Christmas loses its meaning entirely and there is no point in you celebrating the birth of some Jewish carpenter's son. In truth, I am always amazed at how so many people can say “Merry Christmas” with a warm smile, go out of their way to give gifts and yet not believe in the very reason for the season, the birth of Jesus Christ.

On the flip side of the coin, there are those that know that Christmas is the day set apart by Christians to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, but reject Christmas as celebrated today because some of the practices and/or things that have been attached to Christmas as we know it today. Although there are many that reject Christmas as celebrated today, I shall focus on two (2) groups that reject Christmas as celebrated today as well as their reason(s) for their rejection. The two (2) groups are as follows:

1. Jehovah's Witnesses – Unbeknownst to the average Jehovah's Witness, the Watchtower (the organization Jehovah's Witnesses belong to) has consistently launched an all out attack against the historical Jesus found in the Bible. They deny his deity (that He was God) although the Bible clearly says He was God (John 1:1; John 20:28; John 10:30; John 5:18; Hebrews 1:8). They deny his literal, physical resurrection from the dead in the same body in which He was crucified. Instead, they say Jesus rose from the dead as an invisible spirit creature (Luke 24:6, John 20:19-20).

If that's not enough, they deny the literal, physical return of Jesus despite the clear teaching of scripture (Zechariah 14:4 compare with Acts 1:11-12; Matthew 24:30; Revelation 22:7, 12). Even the cross, the upright stake with a crossbeam, that Jesus died on for the sins of the world is denied by Jehovah's Witnesses and called a pagan symbol; hence the reason you will never see a Jehovah's Witness wearing a cross. These examples clearly expose to the honest student of the Bible the "anti-Christian" nature and teaching of the Watchtower/Jehovah's Witnesses.

It is from the same "anti-Christian" position that the Jehovah's Witnesses attack the "**gift giving**" that is done at Christmas by Christians to imitate the wise men or Magi who gave gifts to Christ (Matthew 2:11). The witnesses argue that the word "Magi" should be translated as "astrologers" and say that God would not lead people to Christ to give gifts through astrologers. However, Jehovah's Witnesses ignore the fact that the "Magi" or "astrologers" (if you want to call them that) were led to Christ by God with a star that went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where Jesus was (Matthew 2:9).

In addition, the devil through Herod had in mind to kill baby Jesus. Herod had sent the Magi to find the baby Jesus and report back to him (Matthew 2:7-8). However, after finding the baby Jesus, the Magi was warned in a dream (that must have been from God) not to go back to Herod (Matthew 2:12). It is also worth noting the fact that the Magi "bowed down and worshipped" the baby Jesus. So whether or not Jehovah's Witnesses chose to call the Magi astrologers does not take away from the fact that God guided them to the baby Jesus and through a dream He spoke to the Magi. On a side note, although Jehovah's Witnesses reject the idea of gift giving at Christmas, I have yet to see a Jehovah's Witness refuse a Christmas gift.

2. The Misinformed Christian – There are many sincere Christians today that reject Christmas as celebrated today because of the things that have been attached to Christmas. These Christians love the Lord and believe all of the essentials of the Christian faith (the deity of Christ, the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus, and

His literal, physical return, etc.). However, they do not accept the things that seem to cloud the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ. To be specific, here are the things attached to or associated with Christmas that clouds the true meaning of Christmas that some sincere Christians will not accept:

- Santa Claus – Many will ask, what does a fat, bearded white man in a red suit called “Santa Claus” have to do with the birth of Jesus? On the surface, it’s a sound question, one that I too once asked. However, after some research I have a better understanding of “Santa Claus.” “Santa Claus” is the German / English equivalent of “St. Nicholas,” a man known for his kindness to children in need as well as a commitment to Christ through persecution and martyrdom. These two facts honor Christ and do not cloud the Christian message. It is because of “St. Nicholas’ ” kindness to children in need that children are told “Santa Claus” (St. Nicholas) is coming to town and they had better be good for goodness sake for he knows when they have been bad or good.

However, there are some things about Santa Claus (St. Nicholas) that have been added to the Santa Claus of today, that are to be rejected by Christians. First, the idea that Santa Claus is all knowing and knows who’s bad or good is completely false, only God is all knowing. Secondly, the idea that Santa Claus can be everywhere present is also false and should be rejected by Christians. Thirdly, the sled, reindeer and climbing down chimneys are false. It is each Christian parent’s job to decide when to tell their children the truth about Santa Claus.

- Christmas Trees – Based on Jeremiah 10:2-4 (NIV), where we read, “<sup>2</sup>*This is what the Lord says: ‘I do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by signs in the sky, though the nations are terrified by them. <sup>3</sup>For the customs of the peoples are worthless; they cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel. <sup>4</sup>They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so it will not totter.’ ” From these verses, some believe Christmas trees are forbidden. On the surface, it does sound like Christmas trees are forbidden based on these verses of scripture. However, a closer examination shows that it’s not Christmas trees being condemned at all, it’s idols and those that worship them that are being condemned. Verse three sheds light on this; there we read, “...*They cut a tree out of the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel.*” The trees here that were taken from the forest were carved into idols that were adorned with “silver and gold” (verse 4) and worshipped. There are two (2) things that Christians are clearly not doing with Christmas trees:*

1. They are not carving them to resemble a god or object of worship, which is idolatry and a violation of the second commandment (Exodus 20:4).
2. They are not worshipping Christmas trees as their god, which would violate the first commandment (Exodus 20:3).

Here is the history of the Christmas tree by the Christian Research Institute:

“The Christmas tree originated in Christian Germany about 2,000 years after Jeremiah’s criticisms of wooden idols. It originated from two (2) Christian symbols found in homes at Christmas time. The first was a ‘paradise tree,’ an evergreen which was hung with apples which represented the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. The second symbol was a ‘Christmas pyramid.’ This of course was a triangular shelf holding Christmas figurines and decorated with a star. By about the 16<sup>th</sup> century, these two symbols had been combined into the Christian Christmas tree.” In truth, the Christmas tree is not essential to Christmas. That said, Christians may choose not to have one, while others choose to have one. Either way, there is no sin committed.

- Gift Giving / Commercialism – For many Christians, gift giving at Christmas is far too commercial. In addition, they resent the pressure put on them to spend money they sometimes do not have, because people expect gifts from them. I can certainly understand where they are coming from. However, because giving at Christmas is abused by some, we as Christians cannot lose sight of what the gifts remind us of, the greatest gift ever given, Jesus Christ. While it is true that we must be sensible in our gift giving by not creating a financial burden for ourselves by overspending, we can give within our means to remind our friends and loved ones of God’s precious gift to us, Jesus Christ.
- Jesus was not born on December 25th – While it may be true that Jesus was not born on December 25th as some have said, there is no biblical command forbidding us to set aside a day to celebrate the birth of Jesus. In Romans 14:5-6 (NIV), we read, “<sup>5</sup>*One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* <sup>6</sup>***He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord...***” Therefore, let’s get past the date and focus on the event celebrated, the birth of Jesus Christ.

Finally, Christmas is the day that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ (John1:1, 14). Because there was **“no room for them in the inn,”** Jesus was born in a stable, wrapped in cloths and placed in a trough called a manger that was used to feed animals.

The King of Kings and Lord of Lords stepped from eternity into time on Christmas day. There was nothing kingly about his birth, just humility. After all, God allowed Mary, Jesus’ mother’s water to break and her to give birth to Jesus in a stable, a usually unsanitary smelly place. Why? Because God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to be born of a woman and to die for our sin debt on Calvary’s cross. So for this Christmas and every Christmas, remember Jesus is the reason for the season!!

God Bless,  
Pastor D. M. Duncan

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