

# "CHRISTMAS"

by GROVER STEVENS

Sometimes it is necessary to notice some things that the Bible does not teach in order to understand what it does teach. This is the case on the subject of "Christmas."

Denominations all over the land are observing Christmas as a sacred day and with elaborate celebrations of all kinds are trying to duplicate the events which surrounded the birth of the Messiah. Some believe this so firmly that it is nothing short of blasphemy for one to speak out against it; for one to challenge the scripturalness of the passion plays that have gained worldwide recognition is branded anti-Christian!

## The Origin of Christmas

A heathen festival that was kept on Jan. 8th, was slowly converted into the festival of the Birth of Christ. When the Bishop of Rome started to observe the festival on December 25, the date as we know it soon became established.

## The Date of Christmas

"Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church, and before the 5th century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether on January 6, March 25, or December 25" (Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 5, Page 641). Adam Clarke, noted commentator on the Bible says that the birthday of Christ "has been placed by sects and learned men in every month of the year." In regard to the birth of Christ, the Bible simply says, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the King." Don't you think that the Lord intended for us to celebrate the birthday of Christ that He would not have kept the date from us, and that He would have given some instructions as to its celebration?

There is not a word in the Bible about remembering His birth, but there is plenty said about remembering His death. The church during the time of the Apostles did not observe "Christmas," but they did remember His death and resurrection. We have a positive command to remember the fact that He gave His life for our sins. Great emphasis is placed upon His death because it brought to us life, liberty, freedom from sin, the scheme of redemption, and brought heaven within our reach. His life alone could never have done this — His death was essential. We remember His death by observing the Lord's Supper the first day of each week. Jesus said, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26, Acts 20:7).

## The Holy Crib

In 1223 St. Francis of Assisi made the first "picture" of Christmas, when he filled the church chancel with hay and placed an ox and ass in the manger," then induced a young mother to sit beside them with her baby.

## The Name of Christmas

The name of "Christmas" was given to us by the Roman Catholic Church. It means "Christ" plus "Mass." Mass is the "unbloody sacrifice" of Jesus Christ according to Catholic Catechism. In the Mass the priests of the church of Rome go through a melodramatic ceremony in which they are crucifying Christ, hence making the "unbloody sacrifice." This is climaxed by their taking bread and wine and turning it into the actual (?) "flesh and blood" of Christ shed in their theatrical "crucifixion." Christmas, then, means the "mass of Christ," and was so designated by the Roman Catholic Church.

## Protestants and Jews

### Borrow from Rome

Protestant denominations accept the doctrines of Rome on Christmas and Easter just as if the word of the Pope were as good as Jesus Christ's. They will repudiate the Pope as the "Vicar of Christ on earth," but will accept him or his word on the doctrine of Christmas and Easter.

Jews, who do not even believe in Christ, will erect a stable and put a babe in a manger, and have Mary sitting by tending to her baby. This is for money, of course.

## Santa Claus and Surreptitious Giving

"Saint Nicholas was bishop of Myra, in Lycia (Asia Minor), who was honored by the Greeks and the Latins on the 6th of December. A legend on his surreptitious (secret) bestowal of dowries upon the three daughters of an impoverished citizen . . . is said to have originated the old custom of giving presents in secret on the Eve of St. Nicholas, subsequently transferred to Christmas Day. Hence the association of Christmas with "Santa Claus," an American corruption of the Dutch form "San Nicholaas" (san — Santa and colaas — Claus), the custom being brought to America by the early Dutch colonists" (Ency. Brit., Vol. 16; p. 416).

## The Christmas Tree

Trees seem to have had a sacred place in most all heathen religions. They are supposed to keep the "evil spirits" away according to an ancient superstition. (Maybe that is the reason people are so nice and good during

Christmas season.) The decorations came from various legends. Candles were supposed to represent the glittering of stars, other decorations represented blossoms, fruit, etc.

## To the Christian

Christmas Day (December 25th) to the Christian is of no religious significance what soever. To me, the significance of "Christmas" lies in the fact that it is a holiday. I "observe" it because it is nationalized and not because it is Christianized. Some things are not wrong within themselves, but so many things are no more than husks of superstition and paganism and they should be discarded together with all other practices not found in the scriptures. It is so easy for us to take on the color of our surroundings and become like the "denominations around about us." The church needs to learn along these lines.

So far as giving and receiving are concerned, it is a custom that ought not be confined to December. The spirit of kindness, benevolence, forgiveness, love and joy that usually characterize the pre-Christmas days is the spirit of the true Christian every day of the year.

Anyway, let me take this opportunity to say . . .

HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON  
to you all!