

## **SHOULD WE OBSERVE CHRISTMAS AS A RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY?**

It is the time of year when this country and other countries around the world begin to focus on Christmas. No doubt, you will hear statements such as, "Let's put Christ back in Christmas," or "Jesus is the reason for the season." Should Christians celebrate Christmas as the birthday of Christ, thereby celebrating Christmas as a religious holiday? Does the Bible authorize such a practice? Let us seek the Bible answer.

First, the Bible is silent regarding the exact date of Christ's birth. There are some things about which we can be certain concerning the birth of Christ. He was born of a virgin in the city of Bethlehem. His bed was a manger. These are certainties regarding the birth of Christ. There are other things surrounding the birth of Christ about which we cannot be certain, for the Bible is silent in regard to these matters. We do not know how many wise men came to see the baby Jesus. Although three gifts are mentioned, there may have been only two wise men, or as many as two thousand. We do not know the day on which Christ was born, either. It is just as likely that Jesus was born on July 25th as he was on December 25th.

Second, nowhere does the Bible exalt the birth of Christ to the status of a holy day to be observed by God's people. Certainly those who were present at the birth of Christ and immediately thereafter considered his birth a momentous and glorious occasion. I am not attempting to downplay the importance of Christ's birth. But nowhere in the Scriptures do we find Christians exalting a specific day as Christ's birth, nor do we find mention of Christians celebrating the birth of Jesus as a religious holiday.

Third, New Testament Christians observe only one day in a religious context. That day is the first day of the week, Sunday. The Bible explicitly states that Christians are to commemorate the Lord's death (1 Cor.11:23-28). Christians commemorate the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection when we come together around the Lord's table to partake of the Lord's Supper. This is to be done every first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mk.16:9), and those who follow him come together on the first day of the week to remember that great triumph over death (see Acts 20:7; 1 Cor.16:1,2).

To the Christian no day is more important than Sunday. The New Testament gives no authority for observing Christmas, Easter, Lent, Good Friday, etc., as religious holidays. That does not mean that we as Christians cannot enjoy this time of year. There is nothing wrong with

getting together with those we love to exchange gifts and enjoy one another's company. Just remember that had God wanted us to know the date of Christ's birth, or if He desired that we celebrate such, He would have told us in His word.

*Patrick Morrison*