

# Would Jesus Approve Of Christmas?

Most of the Christian world will soon be celebrating the Christmas holiday. Some, however, will not, and in what I view as a wrong and self-righteous spirit, will actually CONDEMN anyone who does as a heathen, pagan or heretic. The debate over Christmas is one that has gone on for centuries. Now, I understand, there ARE well-meaning, sincere and faithful Christians who choose to NOT observe the holiday because they believe it is wrong. So let's briefly investigate that as we ask the question: "would Jesus approve of Christmas? Or does He hate it?"

Some say that Christmas began with the sun worshipers in the time of Nimrod at the Tower of Babel. Later, it coincided with the Roman Feast of the Birth of Sol, the sun god. Those who stand against Christmas will tell you the early church never celebrated the birth of the Savior, but that in the fifth century, it was made a "Christian" holiday by the apostate Church, as a way to make the church more appealing to the worldly. We're told even the name, Christmas, means a Roman Catholic "Mass of Christ."

Other nay-sayers will bring up the idea of the Christmas tree, and quote Jeremiah 10, "Learn not the way of the Heathen . . . For the customs of that people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not..." Does this describe a Christmas tree?

Still others will bring up the idea of giving gifts, and declare that they cannot, in good conscience, celebrate Christmas because at Christmas we give gifts to ONE ANOTHER, rather than to God. So, they assert, this gift-giving is not

honoring to the Lord. Further, the commercialism of Christmas entices our selfishness, greed and lust. So, they say, Christmas could never be an acceptable way to worship the Lord.

And of course there are those who bring up the fact that Santa Claus is not real... but rather a fictional character derived from Saint Nicholas. Some will even claim St. Nicholas is simply another name for Satan.

If you choose to abstain from Christmas, that is your choice, and you are free to do so. The celebration of Christmas is NOT mentioned in Scripture, you're right. We are not commanded to observe it. When it comes right down to it, in Romans 14 we read, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Yes, God gives us that liberty, and as Christians, EVERY day should be holy as unto the Lord.

But what if we DO celebrate Christmas? Does partaking in this holiday forever brand us as heathens and pagans? Must we repent of years of merry-making at Christmas time? Does the Lord, as some will loudly declare, truly despise Christmas and the celebration of it? Let's use some common sense.

First of all, Scripture makes it very clear that God looks first and foremost upon the heart, upon our intentions. The vast majority of people I know are Christians, and the vast majority of them DO celebrate Christmas. In doing so, not a single one of them does so to honor Nimrod or the sun god Sol. Not one.

Further, while I do have some Catholic friends, most of my friends and all of my family are protestants... and we all celebrate Christmas. Does this mean we are actually worshipping the Roman Papacy, as some accuse? Of course not. We worship with sincere hearts, in spirit and in truth, and our faith remains in Christ alone... not a sun god... not

Nimrod... not the Pope.

What about the dreaded Christmas tree? Isn't THAT proof that Christmas is for heathens? Read the Scripture. It is talking about making for oneself an idol out of wood – not decorating a Christmas tree. For goodness' sake, the Lord Jesus had not even been born into this world yet, nor the thought of "Christmas" as a holiday even considered in the days that Jeremiah penned those words.

In my family, we decorate a Christmas tree every year. We hang pretty things on it, including craft items our kids made in school and church while they were growing up. Each ornament contains a family memory. The lights of the tree, like the lights on homes, businesses and street corners are not symbols of satan. They are lights, people. They're pretty. They're colorful and bright at a time of year that otherwise can be cold, lifeless and dull. Yes, we have a tree. It smells great. It looks pretty, and yes, we put presents beneath it. But in all my years, we've never yet bowed down to it to worship it as an idol.

And what about the giving of gifts to one another, rather than to God? What would Jesus say about that? Once again, as in all things, we need to look upon the heart, the intention behind all that we do.

Friends, I love Christmas. I always have. Certainly the holiday can – and has been – corrupted in many ways. For some today, it is purely a secular celebration, an overindulgence in materialism, gluttony and spending. That's sad. But that is not the Christmas I know.

Whether it began this way or not, in our family, Christmas is a celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Yes, we know He wasn't born on December 25th. But that's the day we observe as Christmas. In Titus we read, "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings

about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” Indeed, Christians are great at fighting, accusing and demeaning one another, and that is a shame. That is not how the Lord would have us to live as the Body of Christ. Rather, let our hearts be pure and our intentions honorable. Why must we forever argue and accuse over foolish things that only cause hurt and division within the body of Christ?

I love the songs about the birth of Jesus. I think it would be great to sing them all year long! But reserving the sacred hymns of Christmas for this time of year makes this time of year special, and more endearing. I guess my favorite would have to be “O Holy Night.” What a wonderful song of praise!

I love the lights and decorations around town, the smell of pine needles, the warmth of a glowing fire in the fireplace. And I love taking time to think of each of my loved ones, one by one, considering what they would like... thinking of ways I can bless them. If I don't get a single present under the tree for myself, that's fine with me. I just love giving gifts and blessing others. It blesses my heart far more than receiving things for myself.

And contrary to the thinking of those who would despise Christmas and dismiss it as pagan, in reality, today it is the PAGANS THEMSELVES who want to do away with Christmas. It is the heathen that try to stamp it out. It is the atheists who demand no one utter the words “Merry Christmas,” because to do so is so horribly offensive. THEY are the ones trying to stop Christmas from coming...because, they argue, it is TOO CHRISTIAN, and though they say they do not believe in God, the truth is, they hate Him, and THAT is why they seek to silence any mention of Christmas!

But Christmas is here to stay, my friends. And I am thankful that it is. In a world where for 364 days of the year we are all so self-absorbed, so consumed with the worries and cares of this life, I thank the LORD for Christmas... for what it has

come to stand for – the birth of our Savior – His gift of grace, mercy and lovingkindness, GOD WITH US...and for the joyous traditions we celebrate each year as we, too, show grace, mercy and lovingkindness one to another.

As a child growing up in my parents' home, we always had Christmas. We would decorate the tree as a family. And I remember each year we'd get the Sears Wish Book catalog... filled with wonderful toys and fun things we could dream of. I remember rehearsing for weeks for the Sunday School Christmas program, and then the night it finally came, after the program everyone would get a bag of Christmas candy and a popcorn ball, a gift from the church. And what joy when the last day of school came before Christmas break.

My parents first had three girls and then three boys. I'm number five... the middle child among the boys. I don't remember a time when my sisters lived at home... they had all moved out and lived in other towns by the time I came along. But as a kid growing up, I recall the anticipation of having all my sisters – and their husbands – come home for Christmas. My Mom was the best cook ever. I know most people think that, but in my case it really was true! We always had a wonderful feast, and of course, the Christmas cookies and treats, recipes no one could ever duplicate. I remember going in to town and always finding a way to make my meager piggy-bank savings come out to equal a gift for everyone on my list. Taking my treasures home, and wrapping them with eager anticipation, imagining how much my Mom, Dad, brothers and sisters would each love the simple gift I had chosen for them.

Over the years, Christmas has changed. Both my parents are gone now, and the old house is no longer our gathering place. In fact, all of MY children are now grown and out on their own too... so MY house is where Christmas happens now. It's a beautiful time of year. Its a time of giving, a time of sharing, a time of loving one another and of being together.

School, jobs, careers... these may take us far away from one another... but we can always return HOME at Christmas time.

It's a wonderful blessing, Christmas. It can also be a very sad time for those who have no family and few, or no loved ones left in the world. And it is for ones such as this that Christians reach out and provide for even the least of these. Christian organizations sponsor Christmas meals, gather gifts for poor children, comfort the widows and orphans, and even provide a special gathering place to celebrate, so that no one need be alone on Christmas. Now, I ask you: do you not think Jesus would approve?

Sometimes, I'm afraid, we simply take ourselves too seriously. Now, I didn't say we take SCRIPTURE too seriously, one could never do that. But sometimes, in our desire to be accepted by God, we want to make sure we don't do anything wrong... we want to be pleasing to Him, we want to make sure we take no missteps. An admirable desire. But friends, Christ came, as a humble human baby, born in a manger, He lived to minister, teach and serve, and He died to save mankind from death and hell. Yes, we must strive to be Christlike in all we do. We must live by the Word of God. But we can never earn our way to heaven. I fear that is what some are trying to do, who abstain from Christmas. They want to suffer for the Lord, by not taking part in the celebration... choosing instead to perhaps just be silent, read Scripture alone, denying themselves any part of anything that resembles "fun." AND pointing the finger of doom toward any who dare worship the sun god or take part in a "Christ Mass."

WHAT does that accomplish? Who, I ask you, is blessed... by THAT? What would Jesus do? There are ways to observe Christmas that the Lord will honor and bless... and of course, as in all things, there are ways we can corrupt it. It's not about the stuff. Its not about Black Friday. Its not about getting... It is a time to come together, to come HOME again, to reunite with those we love. Its about cherished

relationships. Its about giving and its about blessing others as Jesus has blessed us. In this world of broken relationships, dysfunctional and fractured families, the Lord knows, we NEED this. I wish you all a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year... May the Lord be ever present in your homes, and in your hearts this Christmas season, and for always.

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