

## ***“HAVE YOU NOT READ?”***

*David Halbrook*

When the Pharisees asked Jesus a question, He sometimes asked them whether they had read the Scriptures. That was a bold question to ask religious leaders! It is worth asking today when we see manger scenes with three wise men.

Matthew 2:1 says, after Jesus was born... wise men from the East came.... God did not say how many wise men came. Human tradition adds to God's word, saying there were three and naming them. These men came to Jerusalem telling the news that the King of the Jews was born. After speaking to Herod they went to Bethlehem, and when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child (Matt. 2:11). Did you catch that? They saw Jesus at the house, not in the manger.

Those who display such manger scenes show that their faith is a mixture of Scripture and human tradition. When you realize that none of the apostles or churches in Scripture observed a “holy day” for Jesus’ birth, you must wonder why it is so common today. If you do not think this matters, have you not read God’s warnings? Read about this in next week’s article, posted today at our website.

### *Editor’s Note:*

1. The above article will appear in this week’s *Arkansas Weekly*. Find it and use it!
2. The funds we sent to the Philippines were delivered and divided among five churches in the city of Bogu on the island of Cebu. Harry Osborne (Oklahoma City, OK) and Jonathan Carino (Cebu City, Cebu, Philippines) travelled together to deliver the funds. Americans are typically assumed to be wealthy by Filipino people, so to enter a devastated and desperate area was somewhat risky for Harry and Jonathan, but they went. Consider sending a note of thanks to these men for delivering our funds. Also consider their families, whom they leave on trips such as these. Help your children to understand how the church helped and why.

Jonathan Carino  
1031-C Juana Osmeña Ext.  
Sacred Hills, Capitol Site Cebu City 6000  
Republic of the Philippines

Harry Osborne  
303 S. Czech Hall Rd.  
Tuttle, OK 73089

*We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM*

Church of Christ—Quail Valley  
4104 E. Harrison St.  
Batesville, AR 72501  
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelist:  
David Halbrook 569-4491

# The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

December 15, 2013

[WWW.QVCOC.COM](http://WWW.QVCOC.COM)

## ***GOD WARNS ABOUT HUMAN TRADITIONS***

*David Halbrook*

As Christmas approaches, people begin to think of their personal, family, or religious traditions. Not all traditions are sinful. The traditions that were given through the apostles must be stood in and held to (2 Thess. 2:15), but God warns us of the danger of other kinds of traditions. When Christmas is viewed as a family day, cultural or winter holiday, or (in rare cases) a private holy day, it is a harmless tradition. When Christmas is viewed as a holy day of the church it becomes a sinful tradition. The New Testaments helps us to see how to identify when Christmas becomes a dangerous tradition.

In Matthew 15:3, Jesus warns of human traditions which transgress the commands of God. If Christmas causes us to transgress God’s law, it is a sinful tradition. Christmas does this when it is viewed as equally or more important than the weekly Lord’s Day (Rev. 1:10; Lk. 24:1; Acts 20:7). Do you see the harm in man declaring a day to be holy and then elevating it alongside, or above, a day God declares to be holy? When men make Christmas and the Lord’s Day equally important they transgress God’s law by their traditions. Matthew 15:9 warns us that when man follows this type of tradition, it makes his worship vain.

In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns of empty deceit. Any religious lie is empty deceit. If Christmas fills our mind with empty deceit, it is a dangerous tradition. The Catholic Church identifies December 25 “as the birthday of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup> Some people, not limited to Catholics, make a birthday cake for Jesus on Christmas, showing they also identify December 25 as “Jesus’ birthday.” It is empty deceit to say “Christmas, December 25, is Jesus’ birthday.” God neither identified the day of Jesus’ birth, nor appointed a “mass” or any annual festival for Christ on December

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs\\_pi1lua.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_pi1lua.htm)

25. The website of the Catholic Church even says that Christmas was not a festival of the early church. That means that Mary and Peter did not celebrate Christmas. If they did not, why would we? It is empty deceit to say “Christ belongs in Christmas” or “Christmas is Jesus’ birthday,” and Paul warned us about empty deceit.

In Colossians 2:18, Paul warns of men *intruding into those things which he has not seen*. Sometimes people claim to have visions or special knowledge which they hope will cause people to automatically trust and follow them or their teachings. Before becoming a Christian, Simon the sorcerer successfully seduced the people into admiring him by claiming to have power which he did not have (Acts 8:10). In reality, people like this today are intruding into places they do not belong. Instead of convincing people to follow their teachings, they should be convincing people to follow Christ’s teachings. The people and churches who try to convince you that Christmas is a “holy day of the church” cannot show you even one verse, apostle, Christian, or church in the Bible who taught or observed Christmas. They intrude upon Jesus’ authority and create “holy days for the church” that Jesus, the head of the church, did not create. Even the people who claim Peter was “the head of the church” must admit that Peter never preached a Christmas sermon or participated in a Christmas mass. This shows that anyone who persuades you to observe Christmas based on “church tradition,” is *vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind* for he is *not holding fast to the Head* (Col. 2:18). Only the Head can declare a day to be holy for His whole church, and Jesus did not do so with His birthday. If we hold fast to the head of the church, we cannot hold fast to holy days, such as Christmas, that man declares to belong to the church.

In Colossians 2:20-23, Paul warns of human regulations, also called the commandments and doctrines of men, which have an appearance of humility and wisdom in self-imposed religion. Reading and remembering the birth of Jesus as an individual, family, or church is not the problem with Christmas. As has already been discussed, declaring it to be a holy day of the church is one of the biggest problems with Christmas. It is clearly the product of the commandments and teachings of men, not God. Some of the churches of Christ are imitating the religious traditions associated with Christmas while refusing to condemn the practice of adding such holy days to the church. They advertise their “Christmas service” or decorate their meetinghouse with ribbons and trees but claim to be innocent of observing sinful human traditions by saying “We don’t believe it is a holy day of the church.” In reality, they blend in with the world on these occasions, just like the Christian, sitting silently at the dinner dedicated to an idol, who inwardly thinks “I’m not honoring the

idol by eating—there’s nothing wrong with eating food” (1 Cor. 10:28-33). It is true that, outside of any external associations, there is nothing inherently sinful about a church reading, singing, and meditating about the birth of Jesus on December 25 or January 25 or July 25. But by using words and symbols in a society which has attached a sinful meaning to those things (just like the idolaters attached a sinful meaning to eating on that occasion), the distinction between man-made tradition/authority/religion and God’s tradition/authority/religion is absent from the world’s view and at best blurred from the Christian’s view. In this, God is not glorified (1 Cor. 10:31-33).

If Christmas were left in the home or life of individuals, there would be no objection as long as the facts of what God has said were not changed (Rom. 14:5-6). But it is rarely left there. The doctrines of men are obvious when Christmas is made a part of the “Holy Calendar” for churches. Upon that basis, the appearance of wisdom and humility is seen in special assemblies, rituals, sermons, fasts, and feasts. Some truth is taught and often kind deeds are done but such things *are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh* because they are all done in submission to the teachings and commandments of men and not of God. God not only cares what we do but also why we do it. If you give your poor neighbor a meal as a way of serving God, God is pleased. If you give your poor neighbor a meal as a way of serving Satan, God is not pleased. If you remember Jesus’ birth by reading Scripture to your family, God is pleased. If you remember Jesus’ birth by declaring it or participating in a “holy day for the church,” God is not pleased. When your mind is trained to follow the doctrines and commandments of men, then you are indulging in the flesh instead of holding fast to the Head. This is a subtle yet major problem with the modern, typical observance of Christmas.

Conclusion November and December allow Americans several opportunities to gather with family and form life-long memories by practices repeated annually. These traditions bond us with people whom God gave us to love. It is important to know the distinction between these and the traditions of man-made churches and to use this time of year to teach our children and the lost, dark world this distinction. By holding fast to the Head, the body is nourished, knit together, and grows with the increase from God (Col. 2:19).

Editor’s Note: This is an expanded version of the “next article” which will appear in the *Arkansas Weekly* on December 25. Both this, and an abbreviated version of this article, are available on our website now. Find a way to get friends and family to visit our website. We use our money to provide this teaching—let’s help others find it.