

Christmas: "By What Authority?"

David Halbrook

Last week, we challenged you to ask yourself the general question, "By what authority are you doing ___---by the authority of God or man?" Apply that question to Christmas.

Christmas is "traditionally" a holy day of the church, in memory of Jesus' birth, but who first had the idea of making Christmas a holy day of the church? Christ is the head of the church (and knows the importance of His birth!), but He did not assign any annual holy day to His church, only the first day of the week (*the Lord's Day* Rev. 1:10; Acts 20:7). Even Peter and Paul never heard of or wrote about a Christmas service. Why not, if it is a holy day of the church?

Be sure you understand---yes, we rejoice in the fact of Jesus' miraculous birth, but God gave no annual holy day in memory of it. Do you notice that Christmas is often elevated above the Lord's Day? No man-made holy day deserves more (or even equal) honor than the Lord's Day! This is why we ask you and your church, "By what authority do you celebrate Christmas as a holy day of the church---by man's or God's?" We are interested in your comments, questions, or even your answer to this question.

Editor's Note: If this seems like "beating a dead horse" to you then realize that this "horse" is alive and well among the majority of religious groups in Batesville, America, and the world. If you understand all of this, you know dozens, or hundreds, of people who do not. I hope this article helps equip you for the work of teaching or helps those lost in lawlessness to recognize it soon. Find and make use of our article in *Arkansas Weekly*.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians among us.

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and 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 21, 2014

WWW.QVCOG.COM

For the Truth's Sake: Honor Christ at All Times of the Year

Ron Halbrook

For the truth's sake, we should honor Jesus Christ as God's Son. "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil, 2:9-11). Many people are wondering: How can we honor Christ at special times of the year? The answer is simple: The same way we honor him at any time of the year! How is that?

(1) We honor Christ when we study God's Word and pray to Him in Christ's name. Those who "searched the scriptures daily" are "noble" in God's sight. Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Not only must we listen to God's voice in His Word, but we must also draw close to the Father through His Son as we "pray without ceasing" (Acts 17:11; Jn. 6:63; 1 Thess. 5:17). (2) We honor Christ when we obey the Gospel, and tell others that their sins can be forgiven too. When Jesus sent his Apostles "into all the world" to preach "repentance and remission of sins in his name," he gave the conditions of salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Those who are converted should go "every where preaching the word" (Mk. 16:16; Lk. 24:47; Acts 8:4). (3) We honor Christ when we worship God every Sunday and live as He directs throughout the week. After obeying the Gospel, we must "continue(d) steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." Under the guidance of inspired Apostles, "upon the first day of the week . . . the disciples came. together to break bread." That is, they partook of unleavened bread and juice of the grapevine to remember Christ's death. Consistent with such profession of faith, they "put off . . . the old man" and "put on the new man . . . in righteousness and true holiness" each day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Eph. 4:21-32).

"But, what about the tradition of religious holy days, like Christmas and Easter?" someone asks. The Father said nothing about such. The Son said nothing. The Spirit said nothing. God did warn against "commandments and doctrines Of HIM" He said of those who "pervert the gospel of Christ," "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." When Christ said human doctrines make worship his disciples feared some "were offended." "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:8-14; Col. 2:22; Gal. 1:7; 4:10-11). Much done at special times of the year to honor Christ, is no honor in God's sight!

(1) Christ is not honored by beer, wine, and liquor parties. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." It is a shameful disgrace at any time of the year to engage in "drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties" Prov. 20:1; 1 Pet. 4:3 NASV). (2) Christ is not honored by making debts we cannot pay. We may give gifts to anyone in December or any other time. But, it is always wrong to make promises we know we must break. "Providing for honest things" does not mean "buying" (?) gifts we can never pay for (2 Cor. 9:21). (3) Christ is not honored by "special" religious services unauthorized by Christ. Masses and other religious services unauthorized in the doctrine of Christ are sinful. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God" (2 Jn. 9).

Truth Magazine XX: 43, p. 674; October 28, 1976

Christian Vacation

Joe. R. Price

We are not discussing Christians going on vacations. We are discussing Christians taking vacations from putting the Lord first in their lives. Christians should never take a vacation from "*seek(ing) first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*" (Matt. 6:33).

We recently learned about the Allen Creek Community Church (AC3) in Marysville, WA, where regular worship services are suspended for one month annually. They call it "PAUSE" and explain, "we suspend our regular weekend services from August through Labor Day to give our volunteers a well-deserved rest & PAUSE" (Calendar of Events, August 2014). We are not surprised that a man-made denomination would PAUSE from worshiping the Lord in spirit and truth. But, we cannot be so blind as to think that New Testament Christians may do the same sort of things and escape God's judgment (Rom. 2:1-3, 21-24).

Apparently, some Christians think they deserve to PAUSE from worship. They choose to take off on a weekend and do not worship God. (Some only come to worship once when the church meets twice each Sunday.) Do they reason, "I go to worship services 51 weeks a year...what's wrong with taking one or two Sundays off?" I would venture to say the same thing that is wrong with being faithful to your wife 50 weeks out of the year, but being unfaithful to her two weeks each year! Is that too harsh? You tell me. Or, better yet, tell the Lord Jesus.

This really gets down to a matter of the heart. If we can PAUSE from worshiping God, then what prevents a PAUSE from anything else the Lord commands of us? Why not PAUSE from moral purity and living "*soberly, righteously and godly*" (1 Pet. 1:13-16; Tit. 2:12; Col. 3:17)?

"I deserve a break today"! This sort of excuse-making for doing other things than worshiping God and putting Him first in all things boils down to some clear troubles: a weak faith, selfishness and self-justification. Do we really believe we are so righteous that we "deserve a break" from serving the Lord? Wasn't this at the heart of the Pharisee's problem in Luke 18:9-14? He was not like other men...he was so active in God's work, fasting twice a week and paying his tithes! In his own mind he was faithful and righteous -- yet, he was the center of his attention. God did not justify him, nor will God justify us if we have the same self-righteous mindset (v. 14). We cannot successfully PAUSE from faithfulness by appealing to our record of obedience.

"It's a burden to be at every worship service." This excuse reflects a heart unwilling to sacrificially love God. It takes sacrifice to love God! "*This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome*" (1 Jno. 5:3). The Lord commands us to worship and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Jno. 4:24; Heb. 10:25). Shall we PAUSE from loving God? If worship is burdensome to you, a change of heart (repentance) is in order.

"I just need to get away." This Christian sees worship as a job. Only so much work, and then he gets weary. Being a Christian is not a job, it is our life, our calling (Eph. 4:1). So, "*Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart*" (Gal. 6:9).

Vacations from employment are good and helpful. But, there is no acceptable, Scriptural PAUSE from following God. Put Him first in all things, without making excuses (Lk. 14:15-27).

www.bibleanswer.com/2014_Vol_17_No_15_07Sep.htm